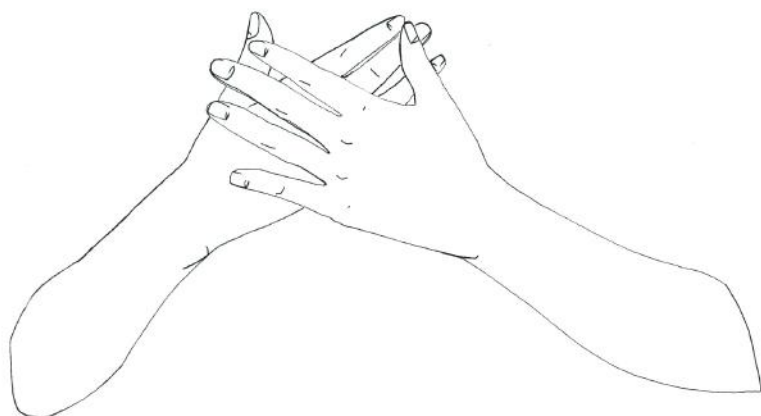

THE BODY AND SHAME

PHENOMENOLOGY, FEMINISM,
AND THE SOCIALLY SHAPED BODY



LUNA DOLEZAL

The Body and Shame

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*Phenomenology, Feminism, and the
Socially Shaped Body*

Luna Dolezal

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Luna Dolezal
Dublin, 2014

Introduction

Shame as a topic of inquiry is compelling because it reaches to the heart of what it means to be human: each of us has experienced the pain of shame, it burns brightest in our memories ready to resurface, and to be relived, at any moment. We live our lives painstakingly avoiding shame; indeed, some thinkers argue that it shapes every action and encounter. As a result, shame helps make us who we are.

Although shame is an emotion that is always manifested and experienced through the body, some experiences of shame arise explicitly as a result of the body. Body shame, as I will designate it here, is a particularly interesting form of shame. An intensely personal and individual experience, body shame only finds its full articulation in the presence (actual or imagined) of others within a rule and norm governed socio-cultural and political milieu. As such, it bridges our personal, individual, and embodied experience with the social and political world which contains us. Hence, understanding body shame can shed light on how the social is embodied, that is, how the body—experienced in its phenomenological primacy—becomes a social, cultural, and political subject shaped by external forces and demands. In short, when investigating the nature of embodied subjectivity and the relation between the subject, body, others, and world, body shame is not only important, but is paramount.

As such, body shame will be the focus of this work. It will be argued that body shame is a process which can provide phenomenological insights into the manner through which the body is shaped by social forces, addressing a question not yet adequately answered by phenomenological accounts of embodiment: If my lived experience is one of agency, action, and intrinsically meaningful intentionality in the world, how is it that the diffuse, pervasive, and yet often invisible external socio-cultural forces have such a strong hold on the body? That is, what exactly is it that shapes the body according to

external social, cultural, and institutional pressures? In short, through investigating body shame, I wish to perhaps offer an answer to the question recently posed by the phenomenologist Elizabeth A. Behnke: “Can there indeed be a phenomenology of the socially shaped body?”¹

Despite its significance, shame often remains unacknowledged and hidden—itsself *shameful*—and theoretical inquiries into the nature and significance of shame have been, until very recently, underdeveloped.² Perhaps in philosophy this is due, in part, to enduring attempts to connect with ideals and universals which are not corrupted by the changeability and irregularity of subjective human experience; and, furthermore, a traditional concern with the *metaphysical*, that is, the immaterial and the incorporeal, that lies beyond the contingencies of the physical and social world. Shame is both embodied and social, and recent changes in philosophical inquiry, particularly the development of phenomenology, which investigates embodied and intersubjective relations, have provided a framework through which experiences such as shame can be investigated with philosophical rigor.

Phenomenology is unique in that it considers consciousness and the body together as aspects of an integrated and projective unity. Unlike the impersonal third-person, detached and scientific viewpoint which had been the dominant paradigm for theoretical investigation with respect to the body—and which is still relevant in some disciplines such as biomedicine—phenomenology takes first-person intuitive experience of phenomena as the starting point for its investigations. It attempts to determine the essential features of what we experience, recognizing the inseparability, and co-constitutive nature, of body and mind. Constantly questioning the world and attempting to uncover habituated structures of perception and action, phenomenology proposes an active and creative relation to the world.

Seeking to avoid arbitrary metaphysical hypotheses about the body or dogmatic ideas based on political or theological presuppositions, and turning instead to lived experience, phenomenology has reconfigured our philosophical understanding of embodiment and subjectivity. In doing so, phenomenology moves away from the questions that traditionally occupied philosophy, that which Foucault in his later writings referred to as the “formal ontology of truth.”³ Concerned with discovering ‘truth,’ which is allegedly ahistorical, atemporal, universal, and uncorrupted by the contingencies and irregularities of human experience, philosophy traditionally asks questions such as: “What is the world? What is man? What is truth? What is knowledge? How can we know something?”⁴ Phenomenology moves away from these formal ontological concerns and offers a means to address the continuously pressing philosophical question: “What are we in our actuality?”⁵ Phenomenology’s short answer to this question is that we are *lived bodies*, or *body subjects*, and any understanding of the nature of human existence or features of that existence must consider the body and Being together. Phenomenology, hence, attempts

to describe lived experience while recognizing its inherent complexity and ambiguity.

Essentially, the phenomenological approach is central to the ideas explored in this book. Through employing phenomenology, experiences such as shame will be reflectively and systematically considered from within, as lived phenomena with embodied, affective, and cognitive resonances, revealing important insights into the nature of subjectivity.

Alongside the development of phenomenology, a radical anthropological transformation in what it means 'to have' and 'to be' a body has occurred throughout the twentieth century. In modern Western society, dramatic changes in life span and standards of health, alongside previously unimaginable advances in biomedicine, technology, labor and work practices have radically altered the manner in which we experience and live through our bodies. As a result, in recent times, there has been much theoretical attention turned to the body and a proliferation of writing about embodiment from a variety of different disciplines.

The body, as such, has been regarded in a variety of ways. It is considered variously as a physical object, as a living organism, as a cultural artifact, as a scientific or biological entity and as an expressive subject, among many other descriptions.⁶ How we understand, perceive or relate to the body is dependent on the antecedent perceptual style, or tacit frame of reference, which informs in advance a certain investigation. This perceptual style is necessarily socially and conceptually informed, whether it is philosophical, political, biological, medical, sociological, theological, and so on. Any attempt to make a thorough analysis of the lived body, and the nature or features of embodied subjectivity, must acknowledge that the body can be regarded from a multiple of different perspectives, and that these perspectives can offer distinct, or even contradictory views. The frameworks through which we view and investigate the human body yield multiple conceptualizations. As the philosopher Shaun Gallagher asserts, when discussing or analyzing the lived body, "[t]he philosophical task then seems to be to account for the unity of the various *Abschattungen* [adumbrations] of the body."⁷

My own theoretical curiosity about the body comes from my own experience and recognition that the body can be regarded and experienced in a variety of ways and a curiosity about how these various *Abschattungen* fit meaningfully together. My experiences as a body practitioner have led me to consider how introspective body practices, such as meditation and yoga, can have transformative potential for how one constitutes the world through action and perception. Practices such as yoga, which involve cultivating an *inner* awareness of the body can transform one's relationship to the *outer* body, which is enmeshed in frameworks of normative standards dictating appearance, behavior, and comportment. The individual experiences I have had through introspective body practices have not only demonstrated the

inseparability of the body and mind, but also, interestingly, the inseparability of the self to others and to a broader rule and norm governed socio-cultural milieu. No amount of introspection can reveal a body or self untouched by an external milieu. However, the nature of the relationships between self-other and self-world can be examined and transformation and change are possible.

Furthermore, my embodied experience as a woman in Western late modernity has brought my body to my attention in a very different way. Often regarded as an aesthetic object seen in an objectified and alienated manner, my relationship to my body as an object has been difficult. At times obsessive, this relationship has centered around experiences of body shame. Within what would commonly be considered a ‘normal’ experience of the body—I suffer from no disability, disfigurement, pathology, or deformity—I have struggled constantly with body shame in various guises, as I surmise have many, if not most, women. I do not exaggerate when I say that it has been a defining part of my subjectivity and personhood, and continues to be so despite my extensive research and reflection on these topics.

As such, through my research and lived experience, I have come to appreciate the centrality of affect and inter-corporeality in defining and shaping subjectivity and identity. The human subject is not a self-contained subjectivity marching through life making a series of rational and conscious decisions, one after the other. Instead, our conscious life is infused with emotional significance and heavily shaped by normative forces within an intersubjective realm, and necessarily so. Emotion and affect are not barriers to reason and rationality, but in fact foundational to thought, identity formation, and decision making. In his book, *Descartes’ Error*, Antonio Damasio demonstrates precisely this point: emotions are essential to rational thought.⁸ Making wise decisions is dependent on emotion and feeling; they are necessary, as Damasio astutely argues, with assisting us to predict uncertain futures and to help us make sense of a complex and uncertain social world. Emotions are not just significant for individuals, but are also what binds the social world together. As Sara Ahmed discusses in her book, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, “emotions work to shape the ‘surfaces’ of individual and collective bodies.”⁹ Ahmed discusses the significance of emotions for world-making, particularly with respect to shaping bodies.

Hence, my recent philosophical research has centered around the body and emotion, and this interest has taken several paths reflecting the experiences that in many ways have shaped me. First, I have a strong interest in exploring the insights gained from the phenomenological study of embodiment, where the descriptions of lived experiences, which have a necessary affective dimension, are central and the interconnectedness of the body and self to others and to the world is acknowledged. Through a process of “awakening,”¹⁰ similar to the insights gained through introspective body practices, phenomenology offers access to new conceptions of experience that reveal

important *existential* truths which can elucidate the structures of existence and lived experience. Second, my experiences of my body as an object—an artifact of prevailing social norms regarding appearance and femininity—have drawn me to investigate how the body is shaped and constrained by socio-cultural and political forces and structures. I have been particularly fascinated by feminist discussions of embodiment, which explore the issues of normalization, internalization, objectification, alienation and body ideals. I have found great personal reassurance in feminist analyses that demonstrate that concerns around appearance are far from trivial for the women who experience them. On the contrary, these concerns are often a defining feature of subjective experience.

This work draws together these various strands of theoretical inquiry about the body and attempts in a broad sense to shed some light on the *why* and the *how* of embodiment, with a focus the affective dimension of bodily being. As such, this work attempts to address the questions: Why do we take on certain styles of embodiment? And, how does this occur? In doing so, the focus will be to discuss body shame as a process which can provide phenomenological insight into how the body is shaped by social forces.

NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

My methodology will be to consider the theoretical approach of phenomenology alongside social theory and social constructionism. While phenomenology is primarily concerned with hidden constitutive performances of consciousness that are not culture specific and are common to all human beings, social theory encompasses ideas which aim to explain social behavior, how societies change and develop, while exploring constructs such as power, social structure, gender, race and ‘civilization.’¹¹ Social constructionism, in particular, is concerned with reflectively revealing historically and socially relative structures of knowledge and truth, demonstrating how they are the product of particular power relations. With respect to the body, social constructionism reveals how comportment and disposition are contingent on the power dynamics within social relations, some of which may be oppressive and devoid of rational warrant or justification. Looking at these approaches together is complementary because universal capacities (uncovered by phenomenological analysis) are always conditioned and restricted by contingent social forces (which can be described by social theory and social constructionism).

Broadly speaking, my methodology aligns with recent formulations of an emerging field of phenomenological inquiry, namely *feminist* phenomenology. Feminist phenomenology is an approach that combines insights regarding embodied experience, through phenomenological investigation, with reflec-

tions about the discursive structures which frame that experience, through feminist theory. As embodied experience is always shaped by a broad range of factors, which have political and social significance, such as age, gender, race, sexuality, ability, ethnicity, among others, feminist phenomenology attempts to reveal not only the taken for granted structures of lived experience, but also the sedimented or 'hidden' assumptions that inform our experience with respect to these categories.¹² As a result, exploring questions about the body, identity and social relations through phenomenology *and* social theory gives a richer and more complete account of the comprehensive conditions of situated embodied existence.

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC

I did not initially intend to write a book about shame and I experienced some reluctance in doing so. As something which produces so much discomfort, we go to great lengths to avoid and circumvent shame. Indeed, as shame itself is shameful, just its mention can cause unease. Perhaps this explains how it is that, until the twentieth century, shame was for the most part not investigated with any seriousness within most disciplines and why, even today, I experience some reluctance in broaching shame as a topic of theoretical inquiry. However, I could not keep ignoring the significance of body shame. Not only is it a compelling topic for investigation in that it speaks to my personal experience, but my research has led me over and over again to consider body shame as key to understanding embodied subjectivity in terms of individual, intersubjective, social and political relations.

In fact, shame seems to be increasingly relevant to our contemporary social landscape and this is reflected in a surge in interest in shame research. In the psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic setting, shame is now recognized to be ubiquitous.¹³ The prevalence of psychiatric disorders which have shame as a central component, such as Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD) or Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD), are on the rise. In an image-saturated cultural landscape that is increasingly dominated with spectacle and obsessed with appearances, it is not surprising that body shame is of increased relevance to the contemporary subject of neoliberalism. In fact, some argue that shame is the central affect of neoliberalism, driving the machinery of the insecurity-consumption cycle. The "spectacle of the public putdown," as Philip Mirowski points out, has become a central cultural pedagogy as demonstrated by its predominance in reality television shows, tabloid newspapers, and popular magazines.¹⁴ Cultivating experiences of insecurity and vulnerability, through shaming strategies, seems to be a powerful force of contemporary consumer culture.

The recent upsurge in affect theory, and its links to cultural politics, has demonstrated how shame is of inordinate relevance in social and political movements, where the oppression of marginalized groups is often not the result of legislation or overt political maneuverings, but happens more invisibly through the cultural deployment of affects like shame. In fact, movements such as ‘Gay Pride’ or ‘Black is Beautiful’ and events such as the Special Olympics demonstrate that shame, and overcoming shame (which is often centered on the body), has an important role to play in terms of the validation of subjectivity, both personally and politically. Becoming aware of shame—which is often unspoken, subliminal and invisible—and its consequences can be of great significance for the self and the broader milieu.

However, the relation between the embodied self, shame and the world is, as we shall see, not without complexity. On the one hand, shame is necessary, we cannot live or grow without it, nor should we endeavor to do so. Here, shame is an integral part of experience; it is everywhere, facilitating social interaction and making possible a coherent and stable social world. However, there are also times when shame can be limiting, where too much shame can be restricting and must be overcome for life to have the possibility of dignity and fulfillment. As a result, there are many competing ideas about shame: it is fundamental to the heart of being human: it gives us integrity, compelling us to act within socially sanctioned parameters and facilitating social order; however, at the same time, when shame centers on the body and self, it can be profoundly limiting and negative, inhibiting subjective experience; lastly, shame can be downright oppressive, it can be used to manipulate and disadvantage a social group, such as instilling the crippling insecurities and anxieties that plague many women with respect to standards of appearance and attractiveness. Overall, my reflections on body shame in this work will follow these diverging lines of inquiry: body shame as necessary in some instances and as compromising or oppressive in others.

I will introduce body shame as a philosophically significant force within the self, exploring the double movement at the core of the experience of all types of shame: it is painfully individualizing while uncontrollable relational. Shame, it will be seen, is a permanent, necessary and structuring factor of identity. However, it is a double-edged force; it contains the potential for individual and social transformation, while also containing the potential for world-shattering personal and social devastation. Shame is about visibility. When one experiences shame, one is seen (by oneself or others) to be doing something untoward or inappropriate. Through reflecting on shame about the body, this work will in fact give an account of the various modes of bodily visibility and invisibility that occur in lived experience. Through the following chapters, I will give an account of the phenomenology of bodily visibility, invisibility and (in)visibility as relevant to the features of embodied experience and also to the social and political realm.

Underscoring visibility, body shame is a particularly potent form of shame. Not only is the body the part of ourselves that is immediately observable to others, it is that which makes meaningful and oriented subjective experience possible. Describing not only the chronic shame of those who believe their bodies to be somehow defective or socially deficient, body shame also occurs in acute cases where during social interaction one's self-presentation falters or fails. What is more often described as embarrassment, shame, in this acute sense, is a mechanism of social control which ensures bodily order. Body shame is an important, though philosophically rarely explored, aspect of embodied subjectivity and social relations. Often an invisible and silent force, it is unacknowledged, but lurking, in much theoretical inquiry. In philosophical discussions regarding the nature of embodied subjectivity, shame, until very recent times has received little consideration. This lacuna is something I hope to address.

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

It is worth noting an issue regarding terminology when considering body shame. In its acute form, where shame arises as a result of minor and unexpected infractions as a result of the body or comportment, body shame is more commonly termed 'embarrassment.' There is a large body of literature discussing the differences between embarrassment, shame, and other negative self-conscious emotions. For the purposes of simplicity I will employ the term 'shame' throughout this work to indicate a whole range of negative self-conscious emotions including embarrassment, humiliation, mortification, chagrin, and so forth. Employing the term 'shame,' I do not wish to offer an exaggerated account of social reality and at times 'shame' may in fact indicate 'milder' or less intense affects such as embarrassment, chagrin, or social anxiety. Furthermore, throughout this work, I will often use the term 'body' as shorthand for body subject, that is, to indicate an incarnate and complex subjectivity. However, I do not intend the term 'body' to be a reductive one. Lastly, I will use the terms 'emotion' and 'affect' more or less interchangeably, while recognizing that affect designates an emotion that influences behavior or action.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

In writing this work, I have hoped that it may be accessible to scholars working in a wide range of disciplines. Although my approach to shame is largely philosophical, my hope is that I have introduced the theoretical frameworks that are being employed in such a manner that expertise in neither phenomenology nor social theory is a prerequisite for engaging with

the ideas central to this text. As such, my hope is that those working in feminist theory, sociology, or cultural studies, among other humanities and social sciences, will find my discussion of phenomenology illuminating. Likewise, I hope that phenomenologists, who are not familiar with feminist scholarship regarding embodiment or the politics of race relations and cosmetic surgery, may find the latter chapters informative. As such, this text should be considered as introductory, in some sense, as it introduces a range of philosophical approaches and theorists. However, my aim in this work is to present an original thesis regarding the 'socially shaped body' through rigorously exploring the origins, manifestations, and consequences of body shame. In doing so, I hope to fill a lacuna in the current literature. Although there are many theorists who discuss the body and shame, to my knowledge there is no systematic theoretical account of body shame. Likewise, although the literature on cosmetic surgery is extensive, there is little writing connecting cosmetic surgery to body shame. Although the topics covered in this book are broad and somewhat eclectic, and this may be considered a drawback for scholars approaching this work from a particular discipline, I believe the theoretical scope of this work reflects the complexity and diversity of its subject matter. Shame, as a topic of inquiry, cannot be confined to one discipline or approach.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

Through a discussion of body shame, and the concomitant themes of bodily visibility, invisibility and (in)visibility, I will reflect on three related issues around shame and embodiment: first, how the body can be a source of shame; second, how the body experiences shame; and, third, how the body is, in turn, shaped by that experience. There are six chapters in this book. Chapters 1 to 3 will give an overview of the concept of body shame through exploring several philosophical accounts of embodiment. Through these chapters, it will be contended that body shame is a necessary and constitutive part of embodied subjectivity. Chapters 4 to 6 comprise of an analysis of how body shame plays a role in social relations, outlining a phenomenology of self-presentation and exploring the cultural politics of shame with respect to varying experiences of bodily (and social) visibility, invisibility and (in)visibility. In doing so, these chapters will explore shame and the body in the context of race relations and in a feminist analysis of shame and gender, with a critical focus on the practice of cosmetic surgery, a practice that demonstrates how the body can be literally shaped by shame. I offer a brief summary of each chapter here below in some detail.

Chapter 1 will introduce shame as a philosophical and existential concept, in particular introducing the idea of body shame, which will be the main

focus of this work. In this chapter, I will give an overview of some philosophical conceptions of shame, defining the concept of shame in general and of body shame more specifically. I will address issues related to terminology and shame variants, outlining the basic features of the shame experience. I will then turn to define and discuss body shame, examining acute and chronic cases. Body shame is a complex experience which involves not only personal and individual experience, but also intersubjective relations and the broader social and cultural field. Therefore, while chapter 1 will offer a broad overview of shame within a general philosophical framework, the following two chapters will examine four leading philosophical accounts of embodiment through which the three layers or aspects of body shame—the personal, the intersubjective and the socio-cultural—will be explored.

In chapter 2, I will begin with a phenomenological account of embodiment which gives primacy to individual experience. I will give an overview of the phenomenological approach in general, reviewing the phenomenological attitude and the phenomenological reduction. I will also outline phenomenological descriptions of the characteristics of embodiment, through the pioneering work of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's description of the embodied subjectivity as developed in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, particularly with respect to motor intentionality. From there, I will enter into a discussion of bodily invisibility and visibility from a phenomenological perspective, discussing themes such as the body schema, body image, skill acquisition and habitual action. These key phenomenological features of embodiment will be seen to be integral to understanding and elucidating the shame experience.

Although the phenomenological descriptions offered by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty give important insights into certain features of embodied subjectivity, this account, as I present it in chapter 2 is limited. In fact, I do not give any sustained attention to Merleau-Ponty or Husserl's ideas on intersubjective embodied relations. Instead, for this, I will turn to the work of the existential philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, primarily his discussion of the body and others in *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre's phenomenological ontology is concerned with the role of the Other in the constitution of individual and embodied subjectivity. Sartre argues, as we shall see, that reflective self-awareness only arises as a result of intersubjective relations; the subject must be 'seen' by others in order to be able to 'see' the self. In particular, I will discuss Sartre's account of the Look in order to elucidate the role of visibility (both literal and metaphoric) in intersubjectivity and shame. Interestingly, unlike Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, shame is not insignificant to Sartre; he discusses it at some length and posits shame as a structural, and necessary, part of intersubjective embodied relations. Through Sartre's reflections, the significance and role of body shame in intersubjective relations will be fur-

ther elucidated, especially with respect to the themes of social visibility, the seen body, objectification and alienation.

However, shame necessarily extends beyond personal and intersubjective experiences; it arises only within a context of shared social and cultural norms. Neither Sartre nor the phenomenologists spend much time considering how phenomenological characteristics of embodiment, such as the experience of bodily 'invisibility' or the formation of the body schema, are determined by broader social structures such as institutions and social customs. Hence, in chapter 3, I will turn to consider the ideas of Norbert Elias and Michel Foucault, two thinkers who give sustained attention to describing the social shaping of the body. Both Foucault and Elias use analyses of historical change and socio-cultural structures in order to better understand contemporary modes of body management. Criticizing phenomenological approaches to embodied subjectivity, Foucault offers a critical historical analysis of the manner in which bodies are embedded into social systems and institutions and how those structures can color and shape aspects of embodied life. As we shall see, in his account of the disciplined body, in his seminal work *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, punishment and fear of social retribution are key in understanding how the subject takes on certain styles of bodily being in order to comply with broader social norms and forces. Although Foucault does not explicitly discuss shame in his analysis of discipline and embodiment, key to his theory are several features of the shame experience, such as objectification, alienation, internalization, and normalization.

Norbert Elias, on the other hand, explicitly draws out how shame is an important mechanism at play when understanding how the body subject takes on modes of body comportment within particular social contexts. His theory of the civilizing process, described primarily in *The Civilizing Process* draws connections between the visible body, social control, body shame, normalization, and internalization, making salient the interdependence of bodies and the importance of belonging. As we shall see, the civilizing process is driven by a desire to avoid social exclusion or stigma and to secure and maintain social standing, facilitating acceptance and recognition within the social group.

There is an interesting tension between phenomenological and social constructionist accounts of embodiment, such as that offered by Foucault. These accounts seem to give two opposing, yet undeniably existent, views. On the one hand, phenomenology describes the body subject as a constituting agency, where the body acts as 'the organ of the will' opening a field of meaningful engagement with the world. On the other hand, social constructionism describes a body shaped and constrained by external social contingencies; the body that Foucault describes (in his early work at least) is, for the most part,

docile and disciplined and there is scant attention paid to how the subject experiences the power structures which shape and tame the body.

Forging a connection between these opposing views through an understanding of the role of body shame and the phenomenology of self-presentation will be the focus of chapter 4. Through a discussion of the phenomenology of self-presentation it will be seen that shame is an integral part of social experience; it is everywhere, facilitating social interaction and making possible a coherent and stable social world. Although body shame is necessary and an inevitable part of human and social existence, there are also times when shame can be limiting, where too much shame can be restricting and must be overcome for life to have the possibility of autonomy, dignity, and fulfillment. Hence, I will finish chapter 4 with reflections on the cultural politics of shame, looking at how chronic shame about the body can be oppressive and used to manipulate and disadvantage marginalized social groups. My focus in this chapter will be race relations and exploring the consequences of embodied stigma.

In chapter 5, I will shift my focus to a discussion of recent feminist analyses of beauty and body norms, examining the crippling insecurities and anxieties that plague many women with respect to standards of appearance and attractiveness, particularly in the context of Western neoliberal consumer societies. In this chapter, I will discuss the relationship between shame, gender, and the female body, exploring the themes of objectification, alienation, and narcissism as they relate to the experience of female embodiment. I will then turn to examine beauty imperatives, normalization, and homogenization, discussing the manner in which women's bodies are subject to control through the internalization of social norms. From there, the relationship between shame and female embodiment will be considered. It will be argued that body shame plays a central role in female embodiment and that this can have negative consequences for women in terms of their agency, transcendence and subjectivity. In short, I will attempt to shed some light on why there are such profound gendered differences when considering the experience of body shame.

Chapter 6 will be concerned with a feminist analysis of cosmetic surgery and body shame. In this chapter, I will firstly discuss the notion of the body as a project, where the body is seen as an entity that can be self-reflexively worked on in ongoing projects of self-transformation and realization. I will then turn to discuss cosmetic surgery as part of this landscape of practices, exploring the manner in which cosmetic surgery is often regarded as a practice that can ameliorate psychological dissatisfaction with body image and alleviate chronic body shame. Examining the conflation of beauty and biomedicine as occurs in cosmetic surgery practices, particularly as it affects women, I will explore issues of normalization, internalization, and objectification. Considering body shame as a key component of women's decisions to

undergo cosmetic surgery will be instrumental in highlighting concerns around pathology and normality in these practices, demonstrating that body shame is often exacerbated, rather than eradicated, by the cosmetic surgery industry. Finally, I will reconsider the arguments that cosmetic surgery offers some sort of psychological cure, demonstrating that if women are making decisions about cosmetic surgery from a place of body shame and emotional vulnerability, then the rhetoric of empowerment and personal responsibility frequently employed by the cosmetic surgery industry must be critically examined.

I will cover a lot of conceptual ground in this work, and naturally, due to space restraints, many of the topics I broach will not be able to be explored fully. In particular, I will not discuss child development or the formation of reflective self-consciousness in infants. I will not attempt to unify body shame with other varieties of shame,¹⁵ nor will I spend any time differentiating shame from other self-conscious emotions such as embarrassment or guilt. Furthermore, I will not discuss at any length theories of emotions or of emotion types, nor will I entertain any psychoanalytic discussions of shame. Likewise, I will not discuss the origins, or exhaustively define, the features of the concepts of stigma, recognition, acceptance, and belonging. Although I will discuss intercorporeality and the interdependence of bodies, I will not explore the mechanisms of mimicking or intersubjective skill acquisition, nor will I discuss any theories of mind, though there has been much interesting work done on these topics within cognitive science and neuropsychology. In chapters 5 and 6, I will discuss the oppressive potential of chronic body shame. Although I have chosen to focus my discussion on beauty norms, female embodiment and cosmetic surgery, there are several other topics that are equally relevant and interesting that I have chosen not to discuss at length, such as race, eating disorders, sexual violence, disability, transgender, and old age, among other instances of embodied stigma. These omissions do not indicate in any way a lack of importance of these issues. Furthermore, in my analysis of chronic body shame, beauty ideals and cosmetic surgery, again due to space restraints, I will mention but not explore at length several issues in bioethics, such as autonomy, medical consent, medical necessity, and the treatment/enhancement distinction.

There are obviously many other theoretical approaches that could be taken when exploring body shame, especially as it is a topic of inquiry that straddles a multitude of disciplines. However, in this work, I hope to bring philosophical, and particularly phenomenological, reflection into dialogue with social theory, reconciling individual experience with patterned structures that are often outside of the realm of conscious awareness and intentional action. Although it is primarily as a result of my own interests and concerns that I have brought the concept of body shame to bear on contemporary feminist concerns regarding oppressive body norms, body shame has

wider implications for theoretical work on the body. In particular, understanding body shame introduces a new way of thinking about the social constitution of the body.

NOTES

1. Elizabeth A. Behnke, "The Socially Shaped Body and the Critique of Corporeal Experience," in *Sartre on the Body*, ed. Katherine J. Morris (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 231.
2. Phil Hutchinson's recent book *Shame and Philosophy* does something to address this lacuna in the philosophical literature. However, Hutchinson does not explicitly address body shame and its significance. See: Phil Hutchinson, *Shame and Philosophy: An Investigation in the Philosophy of Emotions and Ethics*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
3. Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (London: Tavistock, 1988), 145.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. For a discussion of the body as a "many-layered structure" see, for example: J. N. Mohanty, "Intentionality and the Mind/Body Problem," in *Phenomenology: Critical Concepts in Philosophy—Volume 2*, ed. Dermot Moran and Lester E. Embree (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), 324.
7. Shaun Gallagher, "Lived Body and Environment," in *Phenomenology: Critical Concepts in Philosophy—Volume 2*, ed. Dermot Moran and Lester E. Embree (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), 283. *Abschattungen* is a term employed by Husserl to denote the various aspects, perspectives or profiles of a physical object. This object cannot be seen or understood all at once, but presents itself through a range of possible views or *Abschattungen*. It is commonly translated as 'adumbrations.'
8. Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, (New York: Avon Books, 1994). For a detailed critical discussion of Damasio's account of emotions as patterns of bodily changes and their role in guiding decision making and behavior see: Matthew Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 108–112.
9. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 1.
10. William R. Schroeder, *Continental Philosophy: A Critical Approach* (Oxford Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 175.
11. Austin Harrington, "Introduction: What is Social Theory?" in *Modern Social Theory: An Introduction*, ed. Austin Harrington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1.
12. See, for example: Linda Fisher and Lester Embree, eds. *Feminist Phenomenology*. (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000).
13. See, for example: Helen B. Lewis, ed., *The Role of Shame in Symptom Formation*. (East Sussex: Psychology Press, 1987).
14. Philip Mirowski, *Never Let a Good Crisis Go To Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown* (London: Verso, 2013), 133. See also: Martijn Konings, Martijn. "Rethinking Neoliberalism and the Crisis: Beyond the Re-Regulation Agenda," in *The Great Credit Crash*, ed. Martijn Konings (London: Verso, 2010), 23.
15. As shame experiences can be so diverse, the 'unity problem' for shame, where a common trait shared by all shame experiences is sought out, is a topic of much speculation. See, for example: Julien A. Deonna and Fabrice Teroni, "The Self of Shame," in *Emotions, Ethics and Authenticity*, ed. Mikko Salmela and Verena Mayer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2009), 35.

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