

Some Affective Bases for Guilt: Tomkins, Freud, Object Relations

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MY CONTRIBUTION TO THIS SPECIAL ISSUE BEGINS BY RETREATING slightly from the topic and turning quickly to the intimately related one of shame. I do this, no doubt somewhat guiltily, because I find it easier to think about shame than guilt. In fact, I dislike thinking about guilt for many reasons, the most salient being: I am made uncomfortable by the proximity between the legal meanings of guilt and the psychic ones as explicated by the great moderns (Nietzsche, Freud); the felt need to accommodate their ideas on the subject in my own writing; the impossible virtuosity demanded by such debt dynamics, payback, making equivalent, and so on. It seems like a hopeless, discouraging situation, a particular kind of hopelessness or malaise which these writers would precisely identify as the symptoms of a guilty conscience: there are promises I must keep, contributions to civilization I must make. Thinking about guilt, they (and you) might say, makes me feel guilty.

And this would be true, as far as it goes, but to leave it at that would be both more self-aggrandizing and less precise than I would like. I find it more useful to say that thinking about guilt makes me angry, or perhaps contemptuous, or frightened, or excited, or ashamed—or combinations of some or all of these affects held together differently to compose dis-

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tinct emotions; that is, what goes under the name “guilt” may include a number of different ways of feeling and ways of thinking about feeling. In classical psychoanalytic theory guilt can appear to be less a substantive emotion with a shape, texture, and movement of its own than a symptom of a structure: the conscience-constituting relation between super-ego and ego in Freud’s later structural model of the psyche. But according to Silvan Tomkins, whose affect theory I will be working within this essay, guilt names several distinct feelings that have tended to be collapsed together: the core affect of shame when interpreted in a specifically moral field, a punitive contempt directed toward the self, and a feeling often following on anger and violence that accompanies an intention to atone or repair that which has been damaged. This essay will bring Tomkins’s understanding of these affective bases of guilt into relation both to Freud’s writing and the less normative approaches of object relations theory. My goal here is to unfold aspects of Tomkins’s affect theory as it offers greater descriptive and theoretical scope and variety for the difficult task of understanding socio-psycho formation than the classical psychoanalytic assumptions about repression; my sense is that these latter may continue to be serving as silent operating assumptions for much literary and cultural criticism.

Guilt has not played much of a role in the turns to affect in literary and cultural criticism of the last ten years. As very different as the writing that falls under this loose rubric has been, much of it shares a couple of important characteristics: an active interest in thinking about relations between psychic and social domains that are not exclusively linguistic, and a shyness about, or a more staunch rejection of, the category of “the subject,” although often this may come with a marked interest in subjectivity or subjective experience. In bringing Silvan Tomkins’s affect theory into my own critical writing, I have been wanting to make use of his acute phenomenological accounts of feeling, his broad grounding in twentieth-century empirical psychology, social science, and philosophy, and his specific revision of the psychoanalytic theory of the drives. Informed by mid-twentieth-century cybernetics and systems theory, Tomkins steered a course between the two prevailing psychological theories of his moment, behaviourism and psychoanalysis, both of which tend to undertheorize the role that consciousness plays in human behaviour and experience.¹ Like Freud, Tomkins wanted a theory that included the possibility of motivational error, or the idea that we may be wrong about our own desires or

1 For an introduction to Tomkins in the context of cybernetics, see Sedgwick and Frank 1–28.

wishes. But where Freud located this possibility in the relation between conscious and unconscious processes as they record and realize the forceful struggle between our base biological drives and a civilizing mechanism of repression, Tomkins located the possibility for motivational error in the structure of a biologically based affect system and its independence from what he calls the human feedback system. “The distinction,” as Tomkins puts it, “is not between higher and lower, between spiritual and biological, but between *more general* and *more specific biological motives*” (1:29). The social and the biological are intricately threaded together for both theorists, but for Tomkins these are not hierarchically, epistemologically, or historically opposed or anterior one to the other.

Tomkins proposed that humans and other animals have evolved affect systems that are distinct from both the drives and cognition.² Humans, according to Tomkins, are born with eight or nine innate affects that act as the primary motives: the negative ones, fear-terror, distress-grief, anger-rage, shame-humiliation, and contempt-disgust (which he later divides into two, disgust and dissmell); the positive ones, interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy; and the reorienting affect of surprise-startle. These are at once individual and shared; individual in that they are experienced in or on an individual physiology, and shared in that they take place primarily on the skin and musculature of the face and in the tones of the voice and are communicated both to the self and to others, or sometimes to the self as an other. This may help to explain why Tomkins was not at all interested in reproducing the often-made mid-twentieth-century distinction between shame and guilt or, as it emerged in anthropological writing, between “shame cultures” and “guilt cultures.” This distinction comes from the concluding “Interpretive Statement” to Margaret Mead’s edited volume *Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples* (1937) in which she roughly distinguished between groups who primarily rely upon guilt as an internal sanction on behaviour from those who primarily use shame as an external one (493). In Mead’s writing this distinction sounds messy and provisional—in a preface to a paperback reissue of the book (in 1961) she appears apologetic for the “outmoded usages” (vii) of the “psychoanalytically oriented social science” (vii) of the earlier moment. Still, the opposition, once made, caught on. Mead’s teacher, colleague, and lover Ruth Benedict crystallized and popularized the distinction in her World War Two study of Japan, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*

2 For an important discussion of the different freedoms and constraints on freedom in affect and drive systems, see the chapter “Freedom of the Will and the Structure of the Affect System” (Tomkins 1:108–49).

(1946): “True shame cultures rely on external sanctions for good behavior, not, as true guilt cultures do, on an internalized conviction of sin” (223). Despite anthropology’s dehierarchizing, relativist ambitions for the notion of culture, this distinction accompanies an evaluative hierarchy in which an allegedly more “primitive” or historically prior shame culture turns out to be, in evolutionary terms, less successful than a more “civilized” or advanced guilt culture.³

While Tomkins was clearly aware of the shame/guilt distinction and did not entirely reject it, he was interested in producing more variety: “Contrary to some theoretical distinctions between shame and guilt as based on internalization versus externalization, the same affect may be internalized or externalized independent of whether the content concerns morality or inferiority” (3:52). Or as he put it thirty years earlier: “It is not our purpose to blur or lose these distinctions [between shyness, shame, and guilt], but rather to express them in such a way that further differentiations not now recognized either in common speech or in theory can more easily be detected and communicated. It is analogous to a reference to table salt as NaCl or as salt” (2:151). Tomkins’s new table of affective elements does not require a geometry of internal and external for its differentiations. For one, he does not initially distinguish guilt from shame at the level of affect. For him, these two feelings (along with shyness, discouragement, embarrassment, and others) share an underlying biological identity despite the fact that they are experienced very differently. These differences emerge from how the core affect of shame is co-assembled with other components: shame (or more generally, shame-humiliation) may be embedded in distinct “total fields” to acquire different “flavours” or phenomenological qualities (2:118). Shyness, for example, names the feeling of shame when it is co-assembled with a perception of being in the company of a stranger; guilt names the feeling of shame when it is co-assembled with a perception of immorality; what we tend to call shame in English appears to be co-assembled with a perception of failure, inferiority, or negative evaluation. Each of these involves the basic shame response

³ Benedict casts this in terms of portability: outside of the environments of the heavily codified shame cultures, the supposedly ultra-vigilant audience-oriented Japanese cannot adapt and learn new behaviours, whereas those emerging from guilt cultures who have acquired fully internalized mechanisms of self-evaluation can more quickly relax in increasingly cosmopolitan environments. For a reading of Benedict’s book as an expression of Cold War liberalism, see Shannon. For a sustained mid-century exploration and critique of Mead’s initial schema, see Piers and Singer. For another use of the shame/guilt distinction, this one applied to Ancient Greece, see Dodds.

which Tomkins describes as “an act which reduces facial communication” (2:119). The shy child looking through his or her fingers may be taken as emblematic of this response, but so might the guilty shifty-eyed student accused of plagiarism or the discouraged colleague who hangs his or her head down upon reading yet another letter of rejection from a granting agency.

Tomkins defines shame as an auxiliary affect that is activated upon the partial inhibition of positive affect: “The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy” (2:123). Constituted in relation to positive affect, shame is characterized by the possibility of a return to the interest or enjoyment that has been partially inhibited or reduced. Because of this, Tomkins understands shame to be the negative affect most associated with rewarding socialization. By contrast, contempt, a negative affect that distances the self from its object, appears more often in punitive socialization. “Much of what has been called guilt we would call internalized contempt” (2:152): Tomkins distinguishes not only between the feelings of shame and guilt as distinct interpretations of the affect of shame but also between a version of guilt based on shame and a version of guilt based on contempt. These affects, equally social, produce different kinds of field effects or interactions both among individuals and intrapsychically (among one’s several or many selves, one might say). Especially contempt, when internalized or self-directed, produces what Tomkins calls “the dynamics of the bifurcated self” (2:152) and a remarkable variety of possible internal schisms or splittings which can become the condition for contemptuous relations with others.

These dynamics of the bifurcated self bear a striking resemblance to Freud’s understanding of the self-beratements of melancholics in “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917) which, along with *The Ego and the Id* (1923), helped to elaborate his structural model of the psyche in which guilt names the mostly, but not entirely, unconscious terrain of the Oedipus complex and the critical or punitive relations between super-ego and ego.⁴ In fact, the shame/guilt distinction (which continues to be explored and empirically examined in social psychology⁵) comes from a reading of the ur-text for psychoanalytic approaches to culture, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

4 See the entry for “Sense of Guilt, Guilt Feeling” in Laplanche and Pontalis 414–15.

5 For a summary of the role that the distinction plays in recent social science, see Harris and Braithwaite. Scheff’s entry for “Shame and the Social Bond” in the same encyclopedia makes little mention of the distinction and is more concerned with emotion as such.

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(1930). There Freud ranges widely over both phylogenetic and ontogenetic accounts of the formation of *Kultur* or civilization, offering speculative histories of its evolutionary origins as well as more grounded analyses of the “sense of guilt” that works as both a sign and a reciprocal cause of civilization. For Freud, ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny in his suggestion that “the process of human civilization and the development or educative process of individual human beings [...] are very similar in nature, if not the very same process applied to different kinds of object” (104). This process works by inhibiting what Freud comes to call the aggressive instinct, an inhibition that causes the instinct to turn inward.⁶ The means employed to inhibit aggressiveness themselves both produce and are products of civilization: when aggression is internalized and a super-ego established, the individual conscience that emerges induces those further renunciations of instinct that make civilization possible. Malaise or the sense of guilt, in this understanding, is a necessary accompaniment to civilization; it is the price we continually pay, and one we pay the first time we experience the pain of the Oedipal drama. No doubt I am simplifying Freud’s text, especially the subtler distinctions he produces in the last two chapters (differences between and relations among remorse, the sense of guilt, the super-ego, conscience, and so on). Nonetheless, I hope the simplification does not detract from my main point, that the anthropological use of Freud that produces the distinction between shame and guilt as a distinction between external and internal sanctions on behaviour correlates repression with civilization; at the same time that Freud offers a powerful tool for diagnosing the illness of civilization, this tool inscribes a hierarchy in which more repressed cultures are more civilized, with all the flip-flopping evaluations of and nostalgias for the primitive that accompany it.

Tomkins’s re-differentiation of the terrain of the shame/guilt distinction permits ways to think about socio-psychic formations that do not depend upon the topologies of internal/external, formations that turn out to be both less ethnocentrist and more explicitly political than those that emerge from the early anthropological moment of “culture and personality,” though no less evolutionary in kind. Between the publication of volumes two and three of *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, Tomkins revised his initial understanding of the affect of contempt-disgust, separating it into two distinct drive-auxiliary affects, disgust and “dis smell.” This latter, a neologism by analogy with disgust, involves drawing one’s head and body

⁶ See Butler for an exploration of this psychic turn in Freud, as well as Hegel, Nietzsche, Althusser, and Foucault.

away from a bad-smelling object; contempt, in this later understanding, becomes a learned combination of dissmell and anger (3:21–25). At the same time, anger comes into focus for his strange and potentially useful study of ideology. Tomkins defines an ideology as “any organized set of ideas about which human beings are at once most articulate and most passionate, and for which there is no evidence and about which they are least certain” (“Ideology and Affect” 111). An ideology depends on a resonance between a highly organized set of ideas and a more loosely organized set of feelings or ideas about feelings that he calls an ideo-affective posture. In a remarkable chapter on “Ideology and Anger” Tomkins rewrites the philosophical tradition of master-slave dialectics (especially Nietzsche’s materialist version in *On the Genealogy of Morals* [1887]) to produce a thoroughgoing affective understanding of the apparent universality of what he calls the humanist versus the normative ideologies (3:229–53). Tomkins defines this polarity in terms of the positive or negative idealization of the human species as the source of value and knowledge. Uncharacteristically, he expends considerable effort identifying and trying to understand the emergence of this ideological polarity that, he suggests, has contingently emerged as more or less universal. He traces its emergence over two thousand years of social specification and stratification, battles between warrior hunter-gatherers and sedentary groups in which sets of affects become magnified, wrapped up in specific strategies, and aligned with gender, age, and class.

The basic elements of Tomkins’s story sound compatible with Norbert Elias’s history of state-formation in *The Civilizing Process*, although Tomkins writes in the political context of Cold War North America rather than pre-World War Two Germany.⁷ The threat of anger and violence plays a critical role: “The major dynamic of ideological differentiation and stratification arises from perceived scarcity and the reliance upon violence to reduce such scarcity” (3:235). His story is both too complicated to describe in detail in this space and makes almost too much sense in the current global environment of adversarial energy politics. In brief, anger, along with the affects of excitement, dissmell, and disgust, become magnified as against enjoyment, shame, distress, and fear. In particular, anger’s role as an affective means (of creating threat to prevent scarcity for warrior groups) is converted into an end, aestheticized, and sacralized in an ideal-

⁷ Thanks to Robert Brain for observing that Tomkins’s career almost exactly spanned the Cold War. This helps to offer political context for Tomkins’s characteristic interest in producing something other than only binary oppositions.

ization of power and glory. The goal of minimizing scarcity is transformed into the goal of monopolizing violence, a goal primarily adopted by large social organizations, religious institutions, and modern nation-states: “Large-scale societies are necessarily stratified to the extent that they require government from centralized authority [...]. The resultant stratification, though responsible for high culture and civilization, has exacted severe prices from the exploited populations” (3:236).

Effectively, Tomkins’s differential reading of guilt as a variety of shame and as a variety of self-directed contempt or anger helps to define an ideological polarity and, by implication, a potentially further differentiated space of ideology, rather than a single monolithic civilization. Like Freud, Tomkins theorizes that what we call civilization is accompanied by marked aggression or anger (toward the self and toward others), but, unlike Freud, this does not imply a single mechanism of repression that converts this aggression into civilization or gives cultural form to instinct (either libido or aggression). That is, there is no inevitability about this formation—Freud’s inward turn becomes one (extremely important) kind of self-relation, one wrapped up in a polarized normative ideology powered by contempt or anger. But Tomkins’s theory permits one to further specify this psychoanalytic terrain in terms of an already differentiated and dynamic affect system in which affects may inhibit or amplify themselves or other affects, take different kinds of objects, or operate at very different time scales. No single affect or feeling (say, guilt) can possibly be the sign of culture as such. As interested as he is in the particular set of affect strategies that attempt to solve the problem of large-scale social organization and perceptions of scarcity in terms of monopolizing power and violence (strategies of simultaneously minimizing negative affect and maximizing positive affect that produce the seemingly universal ideological polarity), Tomkins also identifies different strategies: the optimizing ideology of moderation (that he associates with Aristotle and Confucius) or the “satisficing” ideology that aims at a radical reduction in demand (that he associates with Taoism and Stoicism). In other words, different civilizations or varieties of sociality emerge at least in part with and from different affect strategies. Tomkins appears to be ambivalently drawn to “the thesis that the middle of the road represents the most radical ideology rather than a compromise position” (“Ideology and Affect” 124), and his theory as a whole may be taken to refocus our attention on the middle ranges of affects themselves, between the constraining inevitability of the drives and the seemingly limitless, but ungrounded, freedoms of cognition. The conceptual middle ground of affective socio-psychic dynamics may be

one very important way of differentiating cultures and ideologies, as well as individuals, from one another. And Tomkins's theorizing of this middle ground permits one to ask a quite general question: To what degree does any social theory include affect theories, or assume and promote a set of specific affect strategies? How useful might it be to analyze the ideo-affective postures at the base of any given ideology or social formation?

I have suggested that Tomkins, in moving away from shame/guilt as it distinguishes between cultures, moves toward shame/contempt (or shame/anger) and the affect strategies that enlist and magnify them to form part of a basic differentiation between explicitly ideological poles (humanist versus normative or left versus right). I have also suggested that descriptive access to a complex affect system can be a more useful way of thinking about socio-psychic formation than classical psychoanalytic theory and its singular mechanism of repression. In the remaining section of this paper I will unfold Tomkins's third understanding of guilt as a variety of shame that motivates what he calls damage-repair scripts. I will try to show how this understanding is compatible with object-relations theory as worked out by Melanie Klein and others who have taken up her writing. Object-relations, along with other psychoanalytically informed twentieth-century psychological theory, aims to offer richer affective variety than what sometimes seems to be Freud's willingness to reduce all feelings to anxiety, love, and aggression.

According to a number of writers, Klein tended to under-represent some of the important differences between her theory and Freud's, differences that became more articulated in distinct schools of psychoanalysis during and after World War Two: the British-based object relations school and the u.s.-based ego-psychology (or classical psychoanalysis).⁸ R. D. Hinshelwood explains that whereas for classical psychoanalysis the super-ego is the only true internal object, for Kleinians there are many internal objects that come in and out of focus for a number of different purposes: "This internal society becomes, on one hand, a resource of objects for identification [...] and, on the other, a set of experiences about what the ego consists of and contains (good and bad)" (332). The sense of a large variety of internal states and kinds of self-relation, and not just a reigning trio of love, aggression, and anxiety, comprises a significant point of connection and rich compatibility between Tomkins's theory and Klein's.

⁸ My understanding of Klein's work comes mostly from Hinshelwood and Likierman.

Another significant difference between Kleinian thought and that of ego-psychology rests in a marked contrast in understandings of development and therapeutic goals.

Tomkins describes one of the basic freedoms of the affect system, what he calls “affect-object reciprocity,” this way:

The first freedom between affects and objects is their reciprocal interdependency. If an imputed characteristic of an object is capable of evoking a particular affect, the evocation of that affect is also capable of producing a subjective restructuring of the object so that it possesses the imputed characteristic which is capable of evoking that affect [...]. The object may evoke the affect, or the affect find the object. (1:133–34)

While the term “object” in Tomkins’s use and in Klein’s is not identical, Tomkins appears to be addressing what Kleinian theory describes in terms of projective and introjective identification: the to-and-fro movement of psychic objects from within the boundaries of the ego to without and vice versa. This irreducibly subjective aspect of experience—what I want to call *the compositional aspect of affect in perception*—causes all sorts of problems for the scientific reception of both Klein’s and Tomkins’s theories: “It is this somewhat fluid relationship between affects and their objects which offends human beings, scientists and everyman alike, and which is at the base of the rationalist’s suspiciousness and derogation of the feeling life of man. The logic of the heart would appear not to be strictly Boolean in form, but this is not to say that it has no structure” (1:134).

Another significant difference between Kleinian thought and that of ego-psychology rests in a marked contrast in understandings of development and therapeutic goals. For Kleinians, the therapeutic goal is “to integrate aspects of the personality which are either split off from each other or in constant conflict with each other” (Hinshelwood 291). This integration of parts of the self which have been defensively split off aims for “freer and more flexible identification with the assimilated objects that make up the self” (279). By contrast, ego-psychology understands development more in terms of adaptation than integration, in the extreme case, “stressing a normalized and non-conflictual entrance of the individual into society” (291). Freud’s writing is characteristically inclusive of both possibilities, and in *Civilization and Its Discontents* he does not decide between integration and adaptation: “Integration in, or adaptation to, a human community appears as a scarcely avoidable condition which must be fulfilled before this aim of happiness can be achieved” (105). Freud tends to cast these socio-psychic relations in terms of civilization, adaptation, and an heroic and unfortunate dependency on community, whereas the Kleinian analyst Wilfred Bion’s work on group psychology offers a different

approach to thinking about this terrain: he reconsiders questions of groups and culture in terms of the extremely difficult but everyday task of making emotional contact with the group in which one lives (141). Hinshelwood describes this as “the essentially dynamic mode by which the individual attains membership of a group on the basis of projective and introjective identifications” (289).

I will draw attention to one other salient difference between classical psychoanalysis and object relations theory. In classical psychoanalysis, primary narcissism describes a state in which the ego has no discernible boundaries. In this meta-psychology the ego only comes into existence at some point when it can recognize itself as a psychic unity. By contrast, for Klein, the infant is born with an ego or self which it may experience in more integrated or more fragmented states. These states are phantasies or experiences of the infant’s own integrity. Where classical psychoanalysis struggles to theorize the emergence of the distinction between self and other and hence relationality as such, for Kleinians, object-relations exist from birth.⁹ As the infant matures it develops through stages of increased stability or integration, established in often difficult relation to the ego’s splitting or fragmenting due to extremely powerful destructive tendencies. Klein took up Freud’s notion of the death drive to explain and characterize these destructive tendencies. However, I would suggest casting these in Tomkins’s terms of affects rather than drive or instinct. Instead of a single death drive, we may think of a variety of innate, negative affects, most of which are with the infant from birth, that threaten any more coherent or integrated sense of self: the rending cries of distress, the burning explosions of rage, the shrinking or vanishing compressions of terror, the transgression of the boundary between inside and outside the body in wretching or disgust.

Eventually, though not immediately from birth, shame-humiliation joins this array of negative affects; it appears some time between the third and seventh months of the first year of life, around the time the infant comes to recognize the mother’s face. Unlike these other negative affects, however, it would appear that shame works to help compose a sense of self, even while it renders that self unbearably visible or exposed: the particular self emergent in experiences of shame is definitionally relational and is comprised in relation to positive affect.¹⁰ The self-composing aspect of

9 For philosophically informed empirical research that argues that an infant’s sense of self exists from birth, see Gallagher and Meltzoff.

10 For a discussion of shame and its “double movement: toward painful individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality,” see Sedgwick 37.

the affect-auxiliary shame depends upon the vital roles that the positive affects, interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy, play in infant perception. Tomkins suggests that interest-excitement supports the infant in sustained acts of attention over time, acting as a motive for what he calls “perceptual sampling” (1:347), as well as for the many and various acts of perspective-taking which permit the infant to become acquainted with an object. Enjoyment also plays a crucial role for infant perception: it provides “some containment” for the infant’s distractibility and lets the perception remain in awareness longer (1:487). For Tomkins, positive affects play important roles in perceptual development (and, more generally, learning), and shame as it emerges with these new capacities (to recognize whole objects, and in particular the mother’s face) motivates the repair of damage or interruption to the circuit of positive affect and therefore motivates a vicariously emerging, more integrated sense of self.

For Klein as well, the middle of the first year of life is a very important moment. Meira Likierman puts it this way: “Klein believed that the infant, with her fragmented mode of experiencing reality and relating to the mother, undergoes a crucial psychic integration towards the middle of the first year of life, thus being enabled to recognize the mother as a whole being” (113). This integration is both a subjective experience—an awareness of a mother who integrates in herself good and bad—and an objective designation of a change in the infant’s mental structure. It is an ego-maturation, a gathering of fragmented ego-parts into a more co-ordinated psychic identity that is an evolutionary given and that accompanies and depends on the infant’s perceptual and affective capacity to recognize the mother’s face. Importantly, for Klein, this integration triggers aggression, ambivalence, and depressive states—“primitive guilt, rooted in [the infant’s] attribution of the loved object’s loss to her own destructive aggressiveness” (Likierman 113). In Klein’s understanding, the depressive states that follow from psychic integration and the new experiences of the whole, flawed object give rise to defensive strategies that seek to annihilate these perceptions and the frustrating awareness of the more limited, and painful, reality that this awareness brings. Integration accompanies a fluctuation between depressive states and the (manic) defenses against them, until a more stable understanding of the flawed object permits a more secure relationship or experience of it, along with a commitment to reparative processes.

Tomkins third understanding of guilt, then, broadly corresponds with this understanding of the role of guilt in the reparative processes of the depressive position. In a chapter on “Monopolistic Humiliation Theory”

Tomkins considers what he calls “recurrent breakdowns of defense” (2: 463) and what follows these breakdowns: attempts to develop unified new defenses or strategies. He describes one of the triggers for these attempts at repair in terms of “the small, soft voice of the intellect—periodically insistent and intrusive” (2:474). At moments of honest self-confrontation the monopolizing response subsides to permit some insight into the nature of the defense: “This is one of those rare moments when the accelerating overorganization temporarily halts, and the individual, becalmed, sees clearly that he has embroiled himself and others in needless warfare and misery” (2:475). This encounter permits the possibility of integration or repair; in fact, for Tomkins, “The essential dynamic of unification in theory construction, in science and in affect theory construction alike, is error and inconsistency” (2:463), and the intention to repair or integrate that can follow. Tomkins terms the affect strategies that motivate this intention damage-reparative scripts which are based around the affect of shame. Again, it would seem that shame and its partially inhibited relation to positive affect rests at the core of the basically mixed perception that integrates what is good and what is bad in an object and seeks to sustain enjoyment and its repair.

I would like to conclude with this understanding of guilt as a variety of shame that motivates an intention to repair what has been damaged, for in supplementing psychoanalytic thinking with Tomkins’s affect theory my own intentions have been reparative. This essay has worked toward reconceiving a drive-based understanding of guilt along affective lines to create greater variety than what this earlier understanding has made available. Relatedly, it has worked toward differentiating Freud’s powerful, influential, and too-monolithic notion of civilization by bringing to critical attention Tomkins’s useful ideas of ideo-affective posture and ideology. And finally, it has proposed the mutual compatibility between Tomkins’s affect theory and object relations, in part by translating the psychoanalytic idea of the death drive in terms of the negative affects. My reparative intentions accompany a strong sense that so much twentieth-century criticism has been informed by psychoanalytic reading methods, especially as these were synthesized, transformed, and made more broadly linguistic and cultural by deconstructive and historicist practices. I do not mean to imply that we are all really (unconsciously) doing any particular kind of criticism but, rather, that psychoanalytic methods continue to inform what we do, both positively and negatively, in our quite specific senses of what counts as a critical act or a reading. These methods occupy a strange place for those of us who do not understand ourselves to be

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“doing” psychoanalytic criticism or theory and who have little interest in the dynamics of mastery and discipleship that circulate around the figure and writing of Freud. And while many of us have good reason to be skeptical or dismissive of the masculinism, European ethnocentrism, heterosexism, and insistence on normative Oedipal development elaborated under some psychoanalytic rubrics, we may still not be willing to give up on the critical reading methods, and the multiple forms of attention, awareness, and knowledge, that these methods permit. As a reader (or viewer or auditor), what I find most valuable in Tomkins’s theory is how it inflects and transforms these reading practices by offering a vocabulary of affect that lets me pay attention to what happens when I read and to move from this attention toward an expression or articulation of this sense of what happens. Affect theory continues to feel promising as it opens up a space for a reparative co-ordination of psychic and social understandings, one based not on any scarcity of feeling but on abundance, variety, increasing differentiation, and possibility.

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