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Guilt and Guilts

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Summary. – The main thesis of the present chapter is that two different kinds of guilt exist – altruistic guilt and deontological guilt. According to appraisal theories of emotion, the two senses of guilt differ not in the activating event, but only by virtue of its interpretation in the context of individual goals, beliefs, or desires. In this perspective, deontological and altruistic guilt differ in the goals that could be threatened: the altruistic goal of benefitting another or the deontological goal of the “Do not play God” principle. Although altruistic guilt and deontological guilt emotions are quite distinct, both are normally present in the majority of guilt emotions experienced by people in their daily lives. In the second part of the chapter, we showed the complexity of the cognitive structure of these senses of guilt, and how the manipulation and revision of such cognition allows the manipulation of the emotions. We addressed such cognitive components both directly and indirectly, through the cognitive strategies people can employ to cope with those guilt feelings.

In the current paper we focus on the feelings of guilt, altruistic guilt and deontological guilt, and in particular on their cognitive factors. According to appraisal theories of emotion (e.g., Scherer, 2001), the two senses of guilt differ not in the activating event, but only by virtue of its interpretation in the context of individual goals, beliefs, or desires. Our analysis addresses such cognitive components both directly and indirectly, through the cognitive strategies people can employ to cope with those feelings. To analyze how people try to cognitively deal with the feelings of guilt is a means for explaining and predicting a great part of people’s behavior, including its social implications. Cognitive strategies of controlling and coping with an emotion are attempts at altering the appraisal processes implied in that emotion. In fact, the alteration of cognitive appraisal processes is

likely to induce the alteration or even the inhibition of the corresponding emotions (e.g., Lazarus, 1968; Lazarus, Averill, & Opton, 1970). So, by analyzing the strategies one can employ to modify one's appraisal of a given state of affairs implied by guilt emotions, we aim at reaching a better understanding of the original appraisal and of the emotions-related beliefs.

TWO SENSES OF GUILT: DEONTOLOGICAL GUILT AND ALTRUISTICAL GUILT

The feeling of guilt is usually linked to the conviction of having injured someone or broken some moral imperative or norm (e.g., Izard, 1977; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Haidt, 2003). From Freud (1930/1961) on, guilt has often been viewed as an intrapsychic and "solitary" process (an emotion caused by the conflict between the ego and the superego), whose "privateness" has been considered as proof of its intrapsychic nature (Buss, 1980; Lewis, 1971). By contrast, without underplaying the role of private self-evaluation, Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton (1994) argue that the feeling of guilt is social in that both injury and transgression are social events.

It is thus possible to identify two main traditions of research on guilt: the intrapsychic theory (Izard, 1977; Lewis, 1971; Monteith, 1993; Mosher, 1965, 1966; Piers & Singers, 1971; Wertheim & Schwartz, 1983) and the interpersonal theory (Baumeister *et al.*, 1994; Hoffman, 1982, 1998; Niedenthal, Tangney, & Gavanski 1994; Tangney, 1999; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). The intrapsychic theory states that guilt results from the violation of internalized moral norms, which develop during growth until forming what Freud called the super-ego. According to this perspective, a sense of guilt would create the expectation of punishment. Its evolutionary function is the respect of others' rights and of authority. The interpersonal theory posits that guilt results from the awareness of having caused unjustified harm to another, or, in a more general sense, of not having behaved altruistically (selfish behavior); it is based on empathy (Weiss *et al.*, 1986). In this viewpoint, a sense of guilt would be aimed at repairing harm and expressing positive feelings towards the victim. Its evolutionary function is to establish non-aggressive relationships and its aim is altruism (Baumeister *et al.*, 1994). The two traditions share the idea that a sense of guilt can be considered a single emotion.

In what follows we argue that the intrapsychic theory focuses on one specific sense of guilt, deontological guilt, while the interpersonal theory focuses on another distinct sense of guilt, altruistic guilt. Accordingly, we suggest that two different kinds of guilt exist: altruistic guilt and deontological guilt (Mancini, 2008; Basile *et al.*, 2011). These two guilt emotions are quite distinct, and although both

are normally present in the majority of guilt emotions experienced by people in their daily lives, they could appear alone. Altruistic guilt is the interpersonal sense of guilt, related to altruism and particularly with the tendency to feel empathy, and arising from the distress of others (Hoffman, 1981; 1987). It is triggered by the belief of not having been altruistic, for causing harm to another, or of not helping another (Baumeister *et al.*, 1994; Friedman, 1985; Gilligan, 1977; Hoffman, 1981; 1998; O'Connor & Bush, 1989; Sampson, 1983; Tangney & Dearing 2002; Weiss, 1983; 1993; Weiss *et al.*, 1986).

It is characterized by a feeling of sorrow, even of anguish for the victim. It implies the tendency to minimize the number of victims and to alleviate their suffering, possibly at one's own expense. It tends to evolve into compassion.

Deontological guilt is the intrapsychic sense of guilt, which arises out of the assumption of having slighted moral authority or norms, or of having overturned the natural order, thus violating the "Do not play God" principle. It implies that one could have acted differently, and brings feelings of unworthiness and expectations of punishment. It might be alleviated through confession or apology. It may also evolve into moral disgust for oneself.

What are then the main differences between the two guilt emotions? In altruistic guilt there is always a victim that suffers harm and the assumption of not having been altruistic. In deontological guilt there could be no victim at all (e.g. incest between consenting siblings) and even action for the victim's benefit (e.g., in euthanasia), but there is the assumption of having violated the "Do not play God" principle (Mancini, 2008).

According to appraisal theories of emotion (Scherer, 2001), the two senses of guilt thus differ only by virtue of the interpretation of the activating event in the context of individual goals, beliefs, or desires. In this perspective, deontological and altruistic guilt differ in the goals that could be threatened: the altruistic goal of benefitting another or the deontological goal of the "Do not play God" principle.

ASSESSING GUILT

Nowadays, as stressed by Tangney & Dearing (2002), the measurement of guilt represents a real challenge. Guilt is an internal emotional state that is very difficult to assess directly. In fact, unlike other "primary" emotions (e.g. fear, disgust), guilt does not involve a specific facial expression (Izard, 1977). So, we have to look instead to people's verbal reports, and thus many problems arise. For example, often people tend to tell us something about their feelings of guilt, confusing it with shame (also many psychologists are rather unclear about the distinction between shame and guilt!).

However, in the last 20 years, there has been a relevant increase in research on guilt, due also to the development of a number of new instruments, which we will review in the next paragraphs. As we will see, measurements of guilt can be classified into two general categories: 1. Those which assess emotional state (i.e., feeling of guilt in the moment), and 2. those which measure an emotional or dispositional trait (i.e., guilt-proneness) (Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

State Guilt Measures.- So far, a great number of dispositional measurement of guilt exists, yet far less work has been done to develop measurements of "state" guilt. The most widely used measurement of guilt is the *Differential Emotions Scale* (DES; Izard, 1977). Various forms of this scale exist, some relying on single word descriptors of key emotions (e.g., guilt, sadness), and others drawing on clusters of closely-related emotion words used to describe each key emotion (e.g., for guilt: repentant, guilty), each rated on a 5-point scale in reference to the respondent's current state of emotions.

A second instrument is the State Shame and Guilt Scale (SSGS; Marschall, Sanftner, & Tangney, 1994). The SSGS is composed of a brief phenomenological descriptions of shame and guilt (e.g., *I feel remorse, regret; I cannot stop thinking about something bad I have done*) experiences, each rated on a 5-point scale.

Using a somewhat different approach, Kugler & Jones (1992; Jones, Schratte, & Kugler, 2000) have developed a State Guilt scale, as part of their Guilt Inventory. The state scale is composed by 10 items, such as *I have recently done something that I deeply regret*.

Dispositional Guilt Measures.- Far more effort has been devoted instead to the development of dispositional measures of guilt. The notion underlying dispositional measures is that there are individual differences in the degree to which people are prone to experience guilt across a range of situations involving failures or transgressions. As Table 1 shows, these instruments have different formats. From ratings of descriptive statements, to forced choice alternatives or selection of a single adjective.

As O'Connor and colleagues (O'Connor *et al.*, 1997) point out, despite the importance of guilt in clinical and theoretical literature, only few of the abovementioned scales are useful for basic research in emotion, personality and psychopathology. Many of them were developed for particular studies and never tested for psychometric properties and validity; other measurements were both conceptually, theoretically, and psychometrically inadequate for research on guilt (Kugler & Jones, 1992). For example, the Mosher guilt inventories are narrow in content and highly inferential. Based largely on traditional Freudian concepts, in which guilt is a response to sexual and/or aggressive impulses, the Mosher inventories assess guilt indirectly through beliefs and attitudes towards moral issues (Mosher, 1966, 1968). Likewise, Buss, & Durkee (1957) also base their measurement on the traditional psychoanalytic view of guilt as a means of controlling hostility and aggres-

Adult measurement

- *Forced-Choice Guilt Inventory* (FCGI; Mosher, 1966). This instrument is composed of 79 incomplete sentence stems, each followed by two completions. People are forced to make a choice between two alternatives. The FCGI yields three subscales: Hostility-Guilt (29 *items*), Sex-Guilt (28 *items*) and Morality-Conscience (22 *items*).
- *Guilt Inventory* (Kugler & Jones, 1992). This instrument includes a Trait Guilt Scale composed of 20 *items* (e.g.: "Guilt and remorse have been part for as long as I can recall"). People rate how much each item describes themselves on a 5-point scale.
- *Hostility-Guilt Inventory* (Buss & Durkee, 1957). This measurement includes a 9-item Guilt Scale. People indicate whether they agree or disagree with 9 descriptive statements (e.g., "I'm concerned about being forgiven for my sins").
- *Interpersonal Guilt Questionnaire-45* (IGQ-45; O'Connor *et al.*, 1997). It's a 45-item measure yielding four subscales: Survivor Guilt, Separation/Disloyalty Guilt, Omnipotent Responsibility Guilt, and Self-Hate Guilt.
- *Perceived Guilt Index* (PGI; Otterbacher & Munz, 1973). Their G-trait Scale of the PGI is essentially a single-item measure. People are asked to select one adjective from a list of 11 adjectives (varying in level of guilt) that best describes how they "normally feel".
- *Situational Guilt Scale* (Klass, 1987). On this measure, people rate their likely emotional reactions to 22 specific situations presumed to induce guilt.
- *Trauma-Related Guilt Inventory* (TRGI; Kubany *et al.*, 1996). It's a 32-item measure that yields scales assessing Global Guilt (4 *items*), Distress (6 *items*) and Guilt Cognitions (22 *items*). The Guilt Cognitions Scale can be broken down into three subscales assessing Hindsight-Bias/Responsibility, Wrongdoing, and Lack of Justification.

Table 11.1 Measurements assessing Guilt-Proneness (Source: Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

sion. Other guilt measurements directly assess the affective state of guilt, but are concerned with a broad and generalized sense of the emotion and do not focus specifically on interpersonal guilt or concerns about harming others (Kugler & Jones, 1992). Other scales developed by Tangney and colleagues operationalize guilt in more concrete terms; however, these measures appear to assess an adaptive form of guilt, which empirically relates to empathy and good social adjustment, rather than to psychopathology (Tangney, 1990; Tangney, Wagner, & Gramzow, 1992).

Moreover, Tangney, & Dearing (2002) point out another fundamental problem present in a large part of these instruments, especially those assessing guilt-proneness: They have not taken into account the difference between guilt and shame. For this reason they measure both the emotions, confusing them. These instruments do not allow one to completely examine the differential role of guilt and shame in various aspects of psychological functioning. For example, The Buss-Durkee Guilt Scale (Buss & Durkee, 1957) includes such items as "I sometimes have bad thoughts which make me feel ashamed of myself". Of course, researchers

who use measurements that confuse guilt and shame run the risk of obtaining quite misleading results. It is thus necessary, before elaborating new instruments assessing them separately, to make a clear conceptual distinction between these two emotions, starting from the cognitive determinants characterizing each of them.

HOW PEOPLE CONTROL AND COPE WITH GUILT FEELINGS

Humans have some control over their own emotions. To some extent, they are able to induce, repress, reorient, manipulate them, and to inhibit or simulate their expression (see, for example, Lewis & Michalson, 1983). In particular, people can react to their own emotions defending themselves from the disturbing or blaming ones. They try to repress, deny, and manipulate them. Social cognition plays a crucial role in this. Society can prescribe not to express a specific emotion in a given circumstance, and even not to feel such an emotion at all. Manipulation of emotions can also be prompted by personal motives, which conflict with social expectations or prescriptions: Society allows or expects that I feel guilty, but I cannot stand such a feeling, I refuse it. However, in this case social cognition also plays a significant role. In fact, when we examine how they work independent of the social or non-social nature of the defensive attitude, we can find that the defensive devices applied consist of manipulations of social beliefs.

In what follows, we will review how people succeed in controlling, regulating, avoiding or mitigating their feelings of guilt. According to Miceli & Castelfranchi (1998) and Poggi (1994), this is possible through cognitive manipulation. In fact, although reactive and nondeliberative, emotions are activated and constituted by specific structures of beliefs. And those beliefs that can activate, deactivate, or modify our feeling of guilt are social ones. They refer to our social responsibility, to others' goals, needs, suffering; to their deserving or not deserving such suffering or injury, to their being superior, equal or inferior to us, to social norms and expectations we violated, and so on.

We do not pretend to have provided an exhaustive treatment of all the possible ways to cognitively cope with the feeling of guilt, but just to have pointed to some typical strategies.

Generally, three components of guilty feelings are considered as necessary constituents of them: the negative evaluation of one's behavior as injurious or bad, the assumption of responsibility for it, and the lowering of one's moral self-esteem (see Miceli & Castelfranchi, 1998; Poggi, 1994).

The negative evaluation of one's behavior as injurious or bad by the person feeling guilty with respect to the action performed (or to the mere goal of perform-

ing it) is a central component of feeling guilt. These negative evaluations can be at least of two general types (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 1992): an event or entity can be appraised as inadequate when it is regarded as possessing little power with respect to a given goal, or it can be seen as injurious or bad when it is regarded as possessing negative power with respect to a goal, that is, the power to thwart that goal. The feelings of guilt entail a negative evaluation of harmfulness or “badness”. However, the negative evaluation of one’s behavior as injurious or bad is a necessary, but not sufficient, component of the feelings. A wrongdoing may be unintentional, or it may be viewed as a means for a good end, which can exempt the doer from feeling guilty.

The second component of a feeling of guilt is the assumption of responsibility. For people to regard themselves as responsible for something, they must assume not only (a) that they caused it directly or indirectly (causal responsibility), but also (b) that they had the goal of causing it (goal responsibility), or at least (c) that they had the power to avoid it (avoidance responsibility), that is, they should have foreseen or prevented it (Miceli, 1992). If the assumption of responsibility regards a goal rather than an actual action, condition (a) no longer applies, but the other two remain valid. It should be noted that in order to experience guilt feelings there is no need to assume the existence of a causal link between one’s action/omission and the harm caused to the victim and it is not even necessary to assume one has not fulfilled a duty (e.g. survivor’s guilt and feeling guilty for unintentional faults). With guilt feelings caused by an intentional fault, unlike feeling guilty due to behaving irresponsibly, it is assumed that one’s action/omission was intentional. Those who suffer from intentional guilt feelings knew they were doing wrong, wanted to do wrong and were free to do good (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 1998; Mancini & Gangemi, 2006).

The lowering of moral self-esteem is the third component of the feelings of guilt. For one to make the transition from a mere assumption of responsibility to the feeling of guilt, one must *share* the values and rules in terms of which guilt is established. Those who violate the rules of an extraneous group may recognize that they “deserve” the negative judgment of others, but do not share in this judgment because they evaluate their behavior, and hence themselves, in terms of different values and norms. Indeed, people can recognize that others’ negative evaluations are justified, yet they continue to evaluate themselves positively. Thus, the third component involved in the sense of guilt is the lowering of moral self-esteem. A person who feels guilty should have negative self-evaluations similar to those received from others and hence experience a lowering of self-esteem. This equals to saying that the negative evaluation of one’s behavior should imply a negative evaluation of oneself as a perpetrator. The relation between the violation of one’s own moral standards and the sense of guilt has already been pointed out by models

of self-awareness (Wicklund, 1975) and by piagetian social-cognitive models of development (Cowan, 1978), where guilt is viewed as a self-judgment based on internal standards. Other authors (Tennen & Herzberger, 1987; Vangelisti, Daly, & Rudnick, 1991) have also found that low self-esteem is associated with proneness to guilt. The negative self-evaluation involved in the lowering of moral self-esteem does not consist solely of "cold" judgments on one's moral worth, but also has strong emotional implications: a sense of defeat at not having lived up to one's own standards, contempt for oneself and for one's moral baseness, regret, or rather remorse, at having done what one should not have and therefore the wish that it had never been done (Landman, 1987; Taylor, 1985). These ingredients constitute the emotional components of the sense of guilt together (but not always) with suffering with and for the victim.

DEFENSES AGAINST GUILT FEELINGS

Defenses against the feelings of guilt act in various ways on the factors outlined above. Miceli and Castelfranchi (1998) identify three general categories of defense on the basis of the aspect focused upon: responsibility for one's behavior, its injuriousness or badness, and reparation.

Defenses against Responsibility.- Defenses against responsibility can be distinguished on the basis of the components involved in responsibility: causal responsibility, goal responsibility, and avoidance responsibility (cf. Miceli & Castelfranchi, 1998).

It Wasn't Me: In its literal version, "It wasn't me" is not very likely. If people feel a sense of guilt, they must regard themselves as having played a role in bringing about the event in question. If they are then to defend themselves against the feeling, they should find outright denial of this role contradictory and hence difficult to maintain. In the case of events which can be brought about by multiple causes, however, they may conclude after careful reappraisal that they played no role. Another recurrent ploy is to minimize one's role in bringing the guilty event about. Here "It wasn't me" assumes the characteristics of "It wasn't *only* me" or, better still, "I wasn't the main cause", with the classic effect of spreading and hence reducing responsibility. This is all the more evident when other people, rather than mere events, are brought into play as causal factors. Comparison with the other parties responsible allows us to conclude that other people behaved worse than we did, and thus are guiltier than we are. As known, downward comparison (Hakmiller, 1966; Wills, 1981) is an excellent way of lifting one's self up, and thus, in our case, also of alleviating one's sense of guilt. Another way of minimizing one's causal role is by finding arguments to support the belief that one was not

the *real* or *primary* cause, that is, that one acted merely as a material agent. However, this idea of “primary cause” conceals within it the notion of a goal. Though a borderline case, this defense should therefore be included within the following category (see below “I didn’t want it to happen”).

I Didn’t Want It To Happen: The denial of intentionality appears as one of the most common strategies to defend oneself against responsibility and guilt (Baumeister & Wotman, 1992). However, intentionality can be denied in various ways, according to the different aspects involved in intentional behavior. The simplest reading of “I didn’t want it to happen” is: “The effect of my action was unknown to me and was therefore not a goal of mine. It was an accident”. Having been the involuntary cause of an injury drastically reduces one’s responsibility and hence one’s sense of guilt. The second reading of “I didn’t want it to happen” is the one implying the notion of a “primary cause” as against that of acting solely as a material agent: “The effect of my action was not one of my goals, even if I was aware of it” In the social context, the person who wanted the event to happen is commonly regarded as the true causal agent. Even when aware of the effects of one’s action, the executor may *not* have the goal that such effects should come about. Material agents may be totally indifferent to the results. Their goal is to perform the action, for the further goal, say, of obeying the person who told them to do so. These considerations are, of course, relevant to such events as the Holocaust, or, in the psycho-social experimental field, Milgram’s (1974) famous experiments on destructive obedience. Material agents seek to maintain that it was not their business to bother about the consequences in that they were mere “tools” used to attain another’s goal. The responsibility of the material agent is just “to perform a certain behavior”, whereas the responsibility of the true causal agent is to worry about its effects. A third reading of “I didn’t want it to happen” is: “The effect of my action (which I was aware of) was not my ultimate goal. I had a *good* end goal”. That is, “the end justifies the means”, which furnishes an excellent defense against the sense of guilt. If the transgression or injury, voluntary as it may be, is represented not as the ultimate goal of the action but rather as a means to another end that is morally approved (e.g., break a rule for the good purpose of helping someone), evaluation of the action must take this end into account.

I Couldn’t Avoid It: Here we enter the domain of the third component of responsibility: the power of avoiding the wrongdoing. Even if the individual did not have the goal of breaking a norm or inflicting injury, there is still room for the attribution of responsibility with respect to a further goal, that of *foreseeing* and *preventing* the undesired effects of one’s actions. Agents are to be regarded as responsible and guilty of carelessness, laxity and negligence.

The only way to avoid this responsibility and guilt is by claiming a lack of power to prevent and foresee. Indeed, not all the effects of one’s actions are foreseeable.

Defenses against Evaluation of the Action as Bad or Injurious.- The target of the second category of defenses against the sense of guilt is the negative evaluation of the action performed or of the goal of bringing it about. There are at least three possible sub-targets: the fact that the action is injurious or transgressive, the extent of the injury or transgression, and the “merits” of the victim.

I Didn't Do Anything Wrong: In this case, the individual totally rejects the negative evaluation of the action performed. This brings into play the key values upon which the evaluation is based. To give some current examples of controversial evaluations, someone “guilty” of divorce, abortion or euthanasia can maintain that it is not wrong to divorce or abort. While it is wrong for others (e.g., for Catholics), it is not wrong for the individual in question (an atheist), whose moral self-esteem is not affected by actions or goals regarded as wrong by others.

A similar way of arriving at the same conclusion involves delegating evaluation to a “significant other” regarded as the depository of one’s values. If this significant other would not blame me for my behavior, then “I haven’t done anything wrong”. Here, too, the choice of the significant other may be opportunistic.

If I know that my mother would be upset by my behavior whereas my father would not, then the father becomes the sole depository of the values taken as a point of reference.

It Wasn't All That Serious: While sharing the negative evaluation, people may seek to scale down the extent of the injury or transgression, and hence their senses of guilt. Minimization of the consequences of one’s behavior is, in fact, a common strategy (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990). People may “calculate” the extent of the wrongdoing by taking into consideration the number and importance of the goals compromised, including the suffering of the victim. They will thus seek to reduce the importance of the goals in question (e.g. “It didn’t really upset him or her”). People can also seek to identify positive consequences of the wrongdoing that can be deducted from the original injury to reduce its size: “It turned out to be a good thing in the end” because, say, “the insurance paid him or her more than what I stole was really worth”. Another way to reduce the extent of the injury or transgression is by comparing it with the greater injuries or transgressions of third parties with the typical effects of downward comparison.

Finally, a somewhat different way of scaling down the wrongdoing is to consider another type of injury, inflicted upon one’s self-esteem as a result of the culpable action, and, again, seeking positive elements to offset it.

It Served Him or Her Right : No matter how great it may be, an injury will entail less negative evaluation and thus become less serious if the injured party “deserved” it. The victim may deserve the injury inflicted for contingent reasons (e.g., “He or she did something wrong”) or because of more stable characteristics and customary behavior (e.g., “He or she is dishonest”). In both cases, and

especially in the second, we are dealing with operations aimed at derogating (see Lerner & Matthews, 1967) or even “dehumanizing” one’s victim (Bernard, Ottenberg, & Redl, 1965; Lazarus, 1985; 1991) and distinguished by the identification of reprehensible characteristics or actions of the victim regarded as inducing the injurious action.

The more successful such operations are, the more one’s sense of guilt is scaled down. On the one hand, the victim is attributed the role of (co-) agent responsible for the injury suffered (“It’s his or her own fault if it happened. It wouldn’t have happened to anyone else”). On the other, the fact that suffering is deserved inhibits the empathic participation of the guilty party.

REPARATION

Failure to pursue the goal of making amends sharpens the original sense of guilt or, if one prefers, adds another type of guilt to the original one. In order to defend themselves from both the original sense of guilt and the “derived” one, people will seek various ways to deny that there is anything to be done to make amends (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 1998).

When some gesture of reparation has already been made, the task of the guilty party should be practically finished. However, the reparations made can be regarded as insufficient. Guilty people will therefore try to magnify their extent by drawing attention not only to the actual benefits conferred upon the victim, but also to all the injuries they have inflicted upon themselves, such as the loss of resources, and the loss of “face” caused by the humiliating admission of guilt. The sense of guilt itself can be regarded as sufficient reparation. The intention to make amends can suffice at times by itself as a defense against charges of failure to do so. It is sufficient for the guilty people to declare to themselves that they have no intention of “getting off” so lightly and that they will make every effort to make up for it. The intention to make amends immediately reduces the sense of guilt. People have far more control over their intentions to change some state of the world than over their actual power to do so, which may depend on external factors. If they believe that they have satisfied this condition, they can also believe they are “halfway there”. At the same time, failure to act is linked to contingent factors which are independent of their will.

Other ways to regard the slate as clean are related to the behavior of the victims. Those who forgive communicate that they are asking for no compensation and have in fact “wiped out” the guilt. Moreover, guilty people can infer from this forgiveness that they are “forgivable”, that is have inflicted a slight injury or are not regarded as greatly responsible, which serves to reduce their sense of guilt still

further. However, operations of this type do present some risks. One's sense of guilt may increase when faced with a victim who is so magnanimous as to declare that the slate is clean. In fact, in these cases a sense of guilt is the only possible form of compensation left. It is no coincidence that forgiveness is one of the most underhanded and effective strategies for inducing a sense of guilt (Miceli, 1992).

A less risky strategy is perhaps that of justifying one's failure to make amends on the grounds that the victim refuses any reparation. Here the victim does not wipe out the injury, but simply opposes any attempt of the guilty party to make amends, often on altruistic grounds. Guilty people can therefore infer that they are, as it were, forgivable.

They can also seek exculpation on the grounds that they wished to make amends and could not have done so. Finally, they can hold the victim responsible for their failure to make amends, with some negative implications for the latter. In fact the refusal of reparation can be reappraised as a form of subtle retaliation, as if the victim were seeking to maintain a state of superiority by preventing the guilty party from getting back on equal terms.

Finally, the guilty party can regard the slate as wiped clean because the victim "has already made him or her pay". So the bill has been squared.

DEFENSES STRATEGIES CHOICE

But, who is more likely to use what kinds of strategy? Under what conditions a certain defense should be expected to occur? Do the various strategies differ in terms of their possible consequences? Miceli & Castelfranchi (1998) suggested some answers to each question.

The choice of a strategy may depend on personal preferences or biases as well as on the context. For instance, the "responsibility" problem might be more relevant when the negative evaluation of one's behavior is unquestionable rather than when one feels allowed to question the badness of one's action. Interest might be focused on a certain aspect just because it looks more manageable than others. So, an individual may address a certain aspect because it is the only thing he or she can deal with.

However, apart from the choices depending on the "availability" of the various strategies, some individual preferences can depend on the person's self-esteem. In particular, we view most of the defenses against the negative evaluation of one's behavior as more typical of high self-esteem people. Consider, for instance, the "I didn't do anything wrong" strategy: a person who feels up to rejecting some shared standards and values (upon which the negative evaluation is based), and boldly opposes his or her own personal standards to them, should be quite self-

confident and autonomous in his or her judgments. Conversely, low self-esteem people do not seem very likely to challenge others' values, standards and expectations. Their own self-evaluations mostly depend on the evaluations they receive from others. Indeed, they show a high need for approval (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) and an ingratiating (Baumeister & Scher, 1988) and compliant behavior (Brockner, 1983). So, when defending against guilt feelings, they will tend to resort to the strategies which do not question the negative evaluation of their actions (as far as that evaluation is grounded on some established social value), such as those aiming at reducing their own responsibility.

Consider also the "It served him or her right" strategy, which belongs to the same class of defenses. As already observed, this strategy often implies derogating one's victims, and in so doing reducing the "badness" of one's behavior. Miceli & Castelfranchi (1998) argued that this strategy to be more typical of high self-esteem people, who, when exposed to evaluative threat, generally are more self-assertive (Baumeister, Tice, & Hutton, 1989), and use more active self-enhancing comparison strategies, including derogation of their comparison targets (Gibbons & McCoy, 1991). In particular, people whose self-esteem is both high and unstable might be prone to derogation. In fact, recent studies (e.g., Greenier, Kernis, & Waschull, 1995) point to the important role of the stability/instability dimension in self-esteem. While people whose self-esteem is both high and stable show a well anchored sense of self-worth, hardly challenged by negative evaluative events, those whose self-esteem is high but unstable are very likely to resort to self-defensive strategies in general. More importantly, they tend to become angry or hostile towards a negative evaluator, and to judge him or her as incompetent and unlikable. Conversely, low (both stable and unstable) self-esteem people, who generally avoid any form of direct self-enhancing and aggressive strategies, abstain from derogating a negative evaluator. Going back to the feelings of guilt, victims can be seen as the first and most entitled (potential) negative evaluators of the guilty party. So, by derogating one's victim, a culprit whose high moral self-esteem is unstable may try to reduce both the "value" of the victim as a person and the weight and credibility of the victim's (potential) negative evaluation, so as to reduce also its impact on one's self-evaluation.

In regards to contexts and eliciting conditions, some situations call for some strategies more than others. Consider, for instance, the "I didn't want it to happen" strategy, which belongs to the class of defenses against responsibility. As already observed, denying the intentionality of one's wrongdoing presents various possible aspects. One of them implies a crucial distinction, that between the "material agent" of the action and its "primary cause", i.e., the agent who wanted its expected result. One reading of "I didn't want it to happen" is in fact: "The result of my action was not a goal of mine (even if I was aware of it). My goal was

just to perform that action, according to someone else's will". A mere executor is likely to claim that he or she is responsible just for how effectively (accurately, efficiently) the action has been performed, and to deny responsibility for its effects. Therefore, it is plausible to expect that those situations where one can claim to play a role of the "material agent" will elicit or favor the application of this particular strategy. In other words, when an action is carried out within a hierarchy, implying superiors and subordinates, the latter can feel allowed to limit their own responsibility to the mere "doing" of the superiors' will (see, for example, Haidt & Baron, 1996). Such a strategy is likely to be applied in conjunction with a subtype of the "I couldn't avoid it" strategy, namely "I couldn't prevent it", which is typical of the same contexts. "I couldn't prevent it" in fact includes the forced choice to perform a certain action which is both a wrongdoing and a superior's order. It adds to the denial of "true" intentionality ("my goal was just to perform the action") the denial of the possibility or legitimacy of preventing the wrongdoing ("I couldn't oppose my superior's will").

By contrast, another kind of "I didn't want it to happen" looks typical of those situations when one holds a super-ordinate position. People who feel entitled to take charge of others' interests (e.g., parents, teachers, etc.) seem likely to try to cope with their guilt feelings for the injuries and suffering they can cause to their victims by claiming that the wrongdoing was just a means for a good end goal (that is, the interest of the injured party) (Mancini, 2008).

Finally, let us consider a few possible consequences of the various defenses. A main distinction is between the defenses against responsibility and those against the negative evaluation of one's behavior. As far as either kind of defenses can be reflected in actual social behavior, the latter look more aggressive than the former. The social attitude favored by a refusal to acknowledge that one's behavior is "bad" can be a provocative and conflict-arousing one, in that it can imply the refusal of shared norms, values and standards of conduct. By contrast, the defenses against responsibility presuppose the acknowledgment of the wrongdoing as such, and just attempt to relieve the person of (part of) the responsibility for it, by pleading lack of intentionality or power of avoiding the wrongdoing. So, such defense, in comparison with those implying social disagreement about what is right and what is wrong, might have a less provocative social impact.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to contribute to a deeper understanding of guilt emotion, its modifications, its consequences and cognitive determinants, it seems useful to give up a unitary conception of it and to hypothesize the existence of two different guilt

emotions: Altruistic guilt and Deontological guilt. The current chapter aimed, indeed, to argue that these two senses of guilt do exist, although they coexist in most daily guilt experiences, and to present the main differences between them. Obviously, our paper generally raises several questions.

First, what is the contribution of this chapter to other guilt domain differentiations made by several authors? For example, O'Connor *et al.* (1997) have already suggested the existence of different and specific senses of guilt, such as survivor guilt, separation/disloyalty guilt, omnipotent responsibility guilt, and self-hate guilt. However, the two classifications seem to be incomparable, founded on different criteria. As mentioned above, according to appraisal theories of emotion (cf. Scherer, 2001), we assume that the two senses of guilt differ not by the activating event, but by virtue of its evaluation in the context of individuals' goals (for example, in the case of altruistic guilt, taking care of other people). By contrast, O'Connor *et al.* (1997) differentiate based on the activating event (for example, in the case of survivor guilt, one is harming another by surpassing them).

Second, is it possible that an individual is more sensitive to one of the two senses of guilt than to the other? For example, Gilligan (1982) suggests that women are more likely than men to base their moral judgments and actions on concerns about their obligations to care for, protect, and nurture those to whom they are connected, particularly those who are vulnerable (Gilligan & Wiggins, 1987). Moreover, Haidt, & Graham (2007) argue that there are five psychological systems (harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity) that provide the foundations for the world's many moralities, and suggest that political liberals and conservatives differ in that the former have moral intuitions primarily based upon the first two foundations (i.e. harm/care, fairness/reciprocity), while the latter generally rely upon all five foundations.

This different sensitivity to one of the two guilts might explain also the different positions on the issue of euthanasia, and, in particular, on whether or not euthanasia should be considered legal or right. The contrasting positions would reflect two divergent moral principles. According to the altruistic principle of minimizing suffering, euthanasia should be committed. By contrast, according to the "Do not play God" deontological principle euthanasia should not be committed at all: nobody has the right to interfere with the natural order, which would violate the "Do not play God" principle.

Of course, we need ways to measure deontological guilt and altruistic guilt separately, with different scales or subscales, also in order to verify the existence of different relationships to many aspects of psychological adjustment, social behaviors, and psychopathology. These measures could also increase the number of empirical studies on altruistic and deontological guilt. They could, for example, allow us to fill in the gap in our studies on the influence of the general sense of

guilt on reasoning processes such as decision-making. Further experiments should indeed verify whether the two senses of guilt affect differently, for example, our judgment and choices.

In the current paper, what we have also tried to show is the richness and complexity of the cognitive structure of the feelings of guilt, and how the manipulation and revision of such cognition allows the manipulation of the emotion. Our treatment of the feelings of guilt tries to take into account and organize the various cognitive ingredients of the feeling into a comprehensive model. In addition, we have stressed the role of moral self-esteem in the feelings of guilt. As for the defenses against guilt, we have tried to show the intervention of the various strategies on the different components of the feelings, and to offer a structured view of how the manipulation of those cognitive components allows the manipulation of the feelings. We have also pointed to some possible differences among the various types of defense, with regard to either individual biases and preferences for one or the other, or their likelihood of application in different contexts.

Another point to address is the possible function of the defenses against the feelings of guilt, and the related problem of how to reconcile such a function with that ascribed to the feelings themselves. Defenses generally serve to avoid or reduce suffering (including that implied by a negative emotion such as the feeling of guilt). Does all this have an adaptive value? The fact that a defense exists does not by itself prove that it is adaptive. We know that many characteristics which are fortuitous, irrelevant and even harmful or inefficient (but associated reproductively with functional features) can be established and transmitted (e.g., Gould, 1983). Moreover, even if we allow the claim that a defense benefits the individual and that it is conducive to psychological well-being, this does not prove that it is adaptive (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 1995). It cannot be claimed that everything which is subjectively good for the individual (and in any case not pathological) is “adaptive”. Nor can it be claimed that what is adaptive from the evolutionary viewpoint constitutes something subjectively good for the individual.

A final point to address is whether the adaptive consequences of guilt and the engendered sense of responsibility should be regarded as part of the guilt definition. Guilt can certainly generate feelings of remorse and motivate reparations for various misdeeds. A desire to avoid feelings of guilt can also motivate appropriate future behaviors (Tangney, 1996; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney *et al.*, 1992). The question is: should these features be regarded as part of the definition and measurement of guilt, or should they be treated as distinct constructs that often (but not always) flow from guilt?

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