

# Acknowledgments

As colleagues, we have, over the years, discussed the phenomenon of shame and tried to figure out what shame is and how it works in human life. Our discussions have always centered around the role that shame does play, should play, or should not play in human life. We have come to these discussions with different perspectives. Jan-Olav Henriksen has dealt with shame in his research in philosophy of religion and also criticism of religions. Henriksen's approach to shame has mainly been through theoretical studies, but he has also supervised doctoral students that engaged in relevant empirical studies of the topic. Terje Mesel has dealt with shame in empirical studies of adverse events in health care and also child sexual abuse. Thus, we have brought different perspectives to the table, although the fundamental theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of this study are familiar to both of us through our earlier research.

We started out with different viewpoints. Whereas Henriksen found shame to be a morally problematic and even harmful phenomenon that we should work to avoid for purposes of socialization and moral maturation, Mesel claimed that in an unjust world, shame is sometimes all we have to keep us from immoral behavior. However, during our long and inter-disciplinary discussions throughout this book, we have found common ground in a phenomenological description of shame. This book is the result of our discussions and the research they led us to do.

We have not written this in the style of a popular book. We aim to present perspectives on shame that allow it to appear as a complex phenomenon. Accordingly, we imagine an audience of professionals: in healthcare, psychology, education, philosophy, religious communities – people who want to move beyond introductory reading. We hope the book provides opportunities for engaging with the topic to better understand its dynamics and complexities, and why it creates so much trouble for many of us.

We do believe, though, that also laypeople may read with interest some of the chapters that follow.

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