

The Shyness Guide

Alternative Ideas and Strategies for
Introverts, Aspies, the Social Phobic, HSPs
and other Shy people.

(PDF Excerpts)

Alan Conrad

I don't think that people should get over being shy. It is a blessing in disguise.

– Isaac Bashevis Singer

Excerpt from - The Shyness Guide

2nd edition – 2017 - copyright Alan Conrad

ISBN: softcover book: 978-0-9881597-5-4

ISBN: Kindle: 978-0-9881597-6-1

1st edition - 2013, Copyright Alan Conrad

ISBN: softcover book: 13: 978 - 1479381838

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Preface to the 2nd Edition

When I published the first edition of *The Shyness Guide* in 2013, I already knew that it didn't say all that I wanted it to say.

For example, because the media was so focused on introversion and autism, ignoring shyness, I had been debating whether to include those conditions in the Guide or write my own books about introversion and autism.

But shyness as a concept has been with us for thousands of years. It didn't just start up in the 20th century as introversion and autism did. And the words *shy* and *shyness* don't belong to psychologists. They were developed by our ancestors for everyday use, and they remain in use today.

Besides that, forty percent of the population claim to be shy, so shyness merits more attention than it receives.

That's why I decided to stay with *The Shyness Guide*, and do my best to improve and expand it.

But this edition has new sections specifically for introversion and autism, describing my different view of both, and how I think they are often related to shyness.

Shyness is still unexplored country. It's a psychological wilderness that most psychologists and psychiatrists prefer to stay away from. They dismiss it as just fear and anxiety.

Well, it's much more than that, as you'll see if you read this new edition of *The Shyness Guide*.

About This Book

This book is the result of a lifetime of being shy and thinking about shyness. It provides an alternative view and alternative advice for shy adult people trying to cope with the social world.

It is not intended to be a substitute for psychological counselling, or psychiatric therapy.

If you suffer from depression, anxiety or some other psychological impairment that has resulted in a prolonged inability to work or function in your daily life, or is causing serious conflict between you and a partner, or members of your family, or with society as a whole, then you need all the professional help you can get.

But the psychological sciences are not exact sciences. Just because you have been diagnosed with one psychological condition or another doesn't mean that you shouldn't keep your mind open to other possibilities.

During forty years investigating accidents and injury claims, I noticed early on that doctors routinely disagree with each other. I once managed the file of a middle-aged woman who had been work disabled for several years because of psychological impairments. In it were reports from several psychologists and psychiatrists that had examined her. Each doctor had given a different diagnosis.

Did those doctors just not know what was wrong with her? I don't know, but she herself insisted that nothing was wrong with her, that she would be alright if everyone would leave her

alone. She had refused to undergo any therapy, though she clearly was disabled and in need of some kind of help (not an uncommon situation, by the way). She was no fraud.

Was at least one of the doctors right? Well, the way I see it, the possibility exists that more than one of them was right. I think more than one diagnosis can be true.

So, although my perception of shyness differs from that of most psychologists or psychiatrists that doesn't mean I think they're wrong. I only insist that there's more than one way to see the issues, and sometimes more than one solution.

Psychological therapists are not like surgeons, or auto mechanics. They don't fix the problem themselves. They can only assist you to find your way.

My hope in writing this book is to assist you too, to show you that there are alternative routes through the maze of the social world.

Instead of hiding from that world, as some shy people do, or facing up to it only by denying and suppressing your shy nature as many others do, I maintain that you can learn to function within the social world while remaining your own true, shy self.

Part I - Origin of Shyness

Who Are You?

In this so talkative modern world, why are there people who don't want to talk?

The easy answer, the one used by social people and shy people who believe social propaganda, is to assume that there is something wrong with anyone who has difficulty talking. Their communication genes must be defective, or they were psychologically messed up by their parents, or they're simply too weak for human interaction.

Yes, most social men and women interpret shyness, sensitivity and social avoidance as weakness, and many shy people do too. Don't fall into the trap of believing it yourself.

Do you know about the shy/bold sunfish experiments? It turns out that there are bold sunfish and shy sunfish. Experiments have found shy sunfish to be more difficult to catch than bold ones. Shyness in sunfish is a survival trait.

This may explain why, in humans as well as sunfish, shyness persists. Bold sunfish and bold people may have more success in securing food and sexual partners, but they're less successful at avoiding life's dangers. Shy fish and shy people live longer.

Shyness and sensitivity seem to go hand in hand. Increased sensitivity arises from having more acute senses. It's no coincidence that most shy, sensitive people are troubled by loud noises, loud talking, a world where it's immersed in sexual competition and other social pressures, but it probably suited us then.

Maybe that was the time of the "loner" too, when mature sons of coyotes, a less social animal, which has resulted in a new subspecies, the "coywolf". Apparently because of its inclination to hunt alone, giving it a lower profile, the coywolf has successfully colonized large cities – Chicago, Toronto, and even New York City. In the meantime, the more social wolf has struggled with extinction.

But back to people.

Around 50,000 to 40,000 years ago, for some reason, part of humanity grew more social. Some populations increased, tribes developed, and the fight for territory began. Meanwhile, the original less social people, shy and vulnerable because they lived in smaller numbers, probably took refuge in deserts, mountains, swamps and rain forests, the places where the last remnants of hunter-gathering people remain today.

Today the human race is a 7 billion strong herd. Anyone who isn't social, or isn't at least trying to be, has nowhere left to go. Now we all mix, social and non-social, shy and non-shy, whether we like it or not. If someone shy and solitary tries to resist and live according to their shy instincts, they're told that they're making a mistake, or that they must have a disorder, some kind of genetic mistake.

Which I think is a big mistake. For, yes, I think the shy human is a perfectly natural being from the long lost past. Some of us became herd animals, some of us didn't. I think it's time that those of us who are shy and solitary to stop apologizing for it, and start living lives that suit us.

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The Early History of Humanity

Why the Resistance?

Can Shyness be Learned?

A Time Machine

About the word 'Shy'

The use of the word *shy* goes back thousands of years.

Medical/psychological terms come and go, but *shy* and *shyness*, in their different language forms, are ancient words, created by all of humanity, not by a few doctors. While psychiatrists and psychologists can decide on their own to make up new terms, or remove old ones (for example, 'Asperger syndrome' has been removed from psychiatric/psychological terminology, at least in North America) no one has the authority to remove a word from a language.

But over the centuries shy and shyness have had complex, changing meanings. Today, most people see them as synonymous with ‘timid’ and ‘timidity’. In Spanish, for example, ‘timidez’ is the dictionary translation of shyness.

You only have to go back to the 18th and 19th centuries, even the early 20th century, to see that shyness used to be a more complex idea. Look at the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). For the adjective *shy*, the definition that best fits current use is:

5.a – *Shrinking from self-assertion; sensitively timid; retiring or reserved from diffidence; bashful.*

But look at another meaning provided by the OED:

4. - *Cautiously reserved; wary in speech or action.*

We don't often talk about it, but caution and wariness are an important part of being shy. Shy instincts make us wary. Caution is a pragmatic aspect of shyness, one that has served shy people well for a long time.

There is a reverse side to that. Social people have always been wary of the shy, and not very understanding. For example, the OED quotes Hotten's 1860 slang dictionary:

Shy has also the sense of flighty, unsteady, untrustworthy.

So the perception of the shy by the non-shy is quite different from the self-perception of shy people.

But the origin of *shy* is best seen in the OED's first definitions for it:

1.a – *“Easily frightened or startled.”*

1.b - "*Of a horse. Skittish, unmanageable; high-mettled. Hence (?) of persons.*"

Yes, the literature of the 18th and 19th centuries is full of references to the shyness of horses, and analogies with the shyness of humans. Other animals are referred to as well, such as cattle, goats, and especially wild birds. The OED makes it clear that, historically, the shyness of wild, natural things has always been intrinsic to the understanding of shyness in people. Never mind the psychologists who tell us that the shyness of animals and the shyness of humans aren't the same thing. The OED doesn't agree.

More OED examples - one writer in 1786 said the shy are:

head-strong; as wild colts.

An 1840 reference describes shy people as:

wild in conduct....a shy boy or a shy girl is wanton, unsteady, amorous.

How's that for a different view of shyness? I think it's important too, for what's missing in the modern understanding of shyness is that sense of wildness.

Wildness is missing in psychological terminology – introvert, highly sensitive person, social phobia, social anxiety disorder, autism spectrum disorder, avoidant personality disorder – none of those terms give you any sense of a wild origin.

Actually, there is an exception. Psychologist Elaine Aron, author of *The Highly Sensitive Person* and creator of the HSP concept, does believe in a wild, natural element in shyness,

and frequently says so. She points out that “highly sensitive” is one of the chief characteristics of wild animals.

In the long run, it won't surprise me if many current psychological/medical terms disappear to be replaced by new ones. But *shy* and *shyness* will continue on, firmly embedded in our languages, regardless of the modern prejudice against them.

Part II - Shyness and The Social World

Shyness Re-emerging

In today's world, those of us who are shy suffer mainly because we're outnumbered by the non-shy. We're forced to live in a social world that we weren't designed for.

But was it always that way?

As I said earlier, and contrary to what most people seem to assume, human beings have not always been tribal. For 99.9% of our hominid existence we probably lived in family groups no larger than wolf packs, which are usually just a mated pair and their grown children.

Tribalism only seems to have developed about 40,000 years ago. Since then humanity has grown more social, but there are still lots of shy people. Why?

Social people probably produce more children than shy people. They're more likely to marry, more likely to have large families. Shy people often get pushed aside in the competition for money, social status and sex, so you'd expect our numbers to be dropping. After 5,000 years in a civilization that has grown increasingly intolerant of shyness, you'd think shy people would have been eliminated long ago.

Yet we're still here. In fact, our numbers may be growing.

In *Going Solo*, Eric Klinenberg reports that 22% of American adults were single in 1950, and people who lived alone were 9% of the population. By 2012, the singles had risen to 50%, and one of every seven adults was living alone (15%). (p.14, *Going Solo*, the Center Point, 2012 edition)

He says this has been happening all over the world, but mostly in large cities.

The world's great cities are growing, while towns and villages in rural areas are shrinking. As this happens, maybe the social pressures of the old tribal society, the society of villages and towns, are losing their strength. As our biggest cities grow, maybe we're becoming less social, not more.

If prehistoric, pre-tribal people were shyer, quieter and restricted to the family group, then the highly social human is a new development. The social mind that so many psychologists think is the bedrock of human behavior may only be a thin veneer on the surface of a less-social human animal.

Think about this - it's commonly known among breeders that if you relinquish control of a domestic animal's breeding, its genes will, generation by generation, revert back to the original wild form.

For example, if you leave goldfish to breed in the wild they will gradually return to their original olive green color, while exotic fins and body shapes will be weeded out as the fish return to something close to their earlier more stream-lined shape. Even in aquariums where they're able to breed in an uncontrolled fashion you can see this happen.

In a similar way, feral dogs develop more vigor and more wolf-like physical characteristics and behavior, one reason why they can be serious competition for wolves. Feral pigs do it too.

The wild genes are still there. They're inactivated by directed breeding, but they can be re-activated.

That happens because Nature wants it to happen, and I believe something like this is going on within humanity.

Look at us. Like domestic animals, we have a smaller jaw, smaller teeth, and a smaller brain size than we used to have. We have sex in all seasons, we eat too much, suffer from obesity, etc. Those are traits of domestic animals.

Many biologists and anthropologists now consider us to be a domesticated animal. They suggest that we domesticated ourselves during the 10,000 years or so since we developed agriculture and began to live more sedentary lives.

But was everyone domesticated in the same degree?

Here is what I think is happening.

Tribal society created the village, then evolved into the town. But when cities developed, the tribal system began to break down. Today, when shy genes – wilder genes – enter cities where shyness is a better fit, they're re-activating. New York City is a relief to shy people who grew up in small towns where their lives were scrutinized by other people. In cities all over the world, shy people are living in a new freedom. According to surveys, they like their new lifestyle.

In other words, inside every social person there may be a shy person in hiding, waiting for a chance to come out.

To those who think this is wrong and/or just a passing fad, here's sociologist Klinenberg's take on that:

“..... those who caution against the shift toward living alone need to grapple with the fact that the social changes driving it – the emergence of the individual, the rising status of women, the growth of cities, the development of communication technologies, and the expansion of the life course – are unlikely to be reversed. At this point in history it's clear that living alone will be an enduring feature of the contemporary developed world.”

[*Going Solo* – 311]

Shyness is making a comeback. As this century progresses, I think the human race is going to become more shy, not less.

Most psychologists see the increasing social avoidance in urban people as something pathological, and the media promote that notion too, but I think it's harmless.

It might be positive. Shy people are less interested in imposing their views on their neighbours, less inclined to insist on an ever-expanding economy and the importance of getting rich, more inclined to live in natural environments and protect them. And we obviously have less of an appetite for war.

Maybe the world will be a better place when there's less talking and we've become a quieter people.

Maybe the return of shyness will be a return to sanity.

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Schizoid World

What is it They Don't Like?

People who like being Shy

Introvert – Extrovert

The terms *introvert* and *extrovert* were coined by the psychologist C.G. Jung early in the 20th century. I've always been sorry that he chose those words.

When we talk of introverts and extroverts, we refer to the part of human psychology that comes into play during social interaction. Does my neighbor like me or not like me? Will

she/he have sex with me? Should I try to dominate him/her? Should I let her/him dominate me? Will this person hire me/fire me? Promote me/demote me? Do I fit in? Am I an accepted part of the team?

Introverts shy away from all that, extroverts eat it for breakfast, lunch and supper.

To social humans – to the extroverts and the introverts who are trying to be extroverts – human interaction is what matters. To them the forests and fields, the lakes and rivers, the sky, the mountains, the stars at night and the open sea, are just scenery, props on the stage, backgrounds for the human show.

Charles Darwin, the principal architect of the theory of evolution, was a classic introvert, shy and reclusive all his life. Yet he didn't shy away from the universe around him. He had an unbounded interest in the non-human world. He spent five years sailing around the world on the *Beagle*, investigating every part of it, land and sea, fascinated by it all.

He called himself a naturalist, not a biologist or zoologist. He was as knowledgeable about rocks and weather, theories of geology or climate, as he was about plants and animals.

He wasn't timid. That journey included extensive travel on horseback and on foot, into wilderness regions of Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and Peru, through hot deserts and the severe cold of mountain passes and glaciers. An accomplished writer, his portraits of those countries and the people he met are vivid and artful.

He never tired of any of it. He spent his whole adult life investigating and writing about the non-human world. Just

before he died he was still carrying on experiments with plants and earthworms in his garden.

The sciences are full of men and women like that. The arts have a lot of them too.

To shy, solitary men and women, the trees, fields, sky and sea, are the real world. From their perspective, the human world is not the universe, but something smaller contained within it.

Do you see what I mean? Most extroverts are too busy communicating with each other to pay much attention to rocks, stars, vegetables or earthworms. They are the ones who are “turned inward”, who are focused on the complexities of life inside the herd, confined to that smaller, more limited world. It's the introvert who is most open to the universe.

If Jung had to use the words “introvert” and “extrovert”, I think he should have reversed them.

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Jung's Answer

Social Phobia | Social Anxiety

Don't Get Tied Down

Whether you've received a diagnosis from a psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker or your family doctor, or you've just decided on your own that you're introverted, highly sensitive, social phobic, have Asperger syndrome, etc, don't get too carried away with your new identity.

Too often people receive their diagnosis, or choose one themselves, then go off to congregate with other people with the same label. There are many internet discussion forums for introverts, "aspies" (those with Asperger syndrome), social phobics (SAs), highly sensitive persons (HSPs), etc.

They're all interesting sites, but what troubles me is that these groups don't communicate with each other. They rarely refer to each other, though they share a common problem – difficulty functioning in the social world without innate social skills. They all talk about anxiety.

In the introduction to this book, I mentioned a psychologically disabled insurance claimant who'd been unable to work for several years. She had been assessed by five psychologists and/or psychiatrists, each of whom presented a different diagnosis of her condition.

Does it surprise you that not even two of five trained assessors could agree on a diagnosis for one person?

You may think that her condition was so unusual and so complex that it was beyond them to get it right. Well, she wasn't that unusual. Talk to any personal injury adjuster, rehab worker, plaintiff or defence lawyer, and they'll tell you that

these enigmatic claimants are not uncommon. Those who work in the personal injury world encounter them often.

But psychology itself is enigmatic, and surprisingly transitory. The terms it uses come and go.

'Introvert' as a psychological term is only a century old, autism little more than half a century. Asperger syndrome only became a recognized disorder in 1987 with the DSM-IV-R, and now it has been removed in the 2013 DSM-5. Anxiety has only been accepted as a distinct pathology since 1980 or so. As we saw earlier, social anxiety is replacing social phobia, and there has been talk of abandoning schizophrenia too, though it seems to have survived the DSM-5.

These diagnoses are creations of psychiatrists and psychologists who give them their legitimacy, and sometimes take it away.

Did you know that there is a school within psychiatry that would like to dispense with all diagnoses? For a long time, these doctors have seen the diagnostic labelling of patients as a negative channelling process, restricting the ability of doctors and patients to think more broadly and creatively about a patient's problems. If you're interested, this minority view is discussed in the 2013 book, *Making the DSM 5 – Concepts and Controversies*, a provocative analysis by 12 psychiatrists, psychologists, and sociologists of the whole DSM project from the 1950s on.

The DSM process has been more political and less scientific than most of us would have expected. For example, in chapter one of that book, "The History of the DSM", psychiatrist Edward Shorter, commenting on what he considers to have

been a very unscientific creation of the revolutionary DSM-III of 1980, says:

The consensus method involved horse-trading diagnoses to reach agreement: "We'll take away Don Klein's hysteroid dysphoria but piece him off with panic as a disease separate from anxiety." This is the kind of transaction that was customary among the DSM-III disease designers.

(p. 17, *Making the DSM-5*)

The first DSM was created in 1952 by the psychoanalysts who still dominated psychiatry then. The DSM-II (1968), is best remembered for a controversial fight over the removal of homosexuality as a disease.

But the DSM-III of 1980 was the big one. Led by psychiatrist Robert Spitzer, it was a political/psychiatric coup over its predecessors. The psychoanalysts were deposed and "biomedical psychiatry" was imposed. That's when drugs began to dominate psychiatric treatment.

Are you concerned about the major role of drugs in psychiatry? If so, psychiatrist John Sadler of the University of Texas, another author in *Making the DSM 5*, says you have good reason. First reminding us of President Eisenhower's famous warning to the American public to beware of the future influence of the military-industrial complex, Sadler says we also need to be wary of the 'mental-health-medical-industrial-complex', or MHMIC. [p.24]

He points out that this MHMIC needs a lot of mentally ill people for it to be viable.

The business appeal of tens of millions of people needing a product is transparent. However, having tens of millions of people who are in varying needs of extreme need or desperation for those products multiplies said business opportunities and offers an extraordinary market.

(p.25-26)

Sadler says the pharmaceutical industry and the DSMs have become “de facto ‘partners’”, as the increase of diagnostic categories in the DSMs has increased the opportunities for psychiatric drugs. Meanwhile, he says an increasing commitment to a ‘for-profit’ healthcare industry has also contributed to increased drug use, since drugs are a “cheap alternative to psychosocial therapies”. (p. 27)

Sadler isn't alone with this view. In another book, *The Intelligent Clinician's Guide to the DSM-5*, psychiatrist Joel Paris, another DSM-5 critic, says:

We are told, without solid evidence, that millions of people with mental symptoms are tragically undertreated. The thrust of these arguments.....is that drugs should be prescribed to an even larger percentage of the population than is already the case. The pharmaceutical industry can only rejoice at such conclusions. The rest of us are left to weep.

[p. 185]

The complex and acrimonious debate over the DSM-5, which was introduced in 2013, tells you a lot about psychiatry today. Think of this – the chairman of the previous DSM-IV committee, Allen Frances (who has a chapter in *Making the DSM 5*), campaigned for 3 years against many of the proposals for the new manual, finally going public with a critique in the

New York Times. According to Frances, he had to do that because the DSM-5 was developed in secret by an exclusive committee that wasn't allowing significant outside input.

Assisted by Robert Spitzer of the DSM-III and others, Frances managed to block some key changes in the DSM-5, to a degree that some advocates of the DSM-5 think it's already doomed.

Here is a last thought from Joel Paris, taken from the closing chapter of his book:

I am impressed with how much patients have bought into this story. They are the ultimate consumers of DSM-5 and have been convinced that the diagnoses offered to them are real. They do not know that some are, but most are not. Patients become attached to these labels, telling me with conviction, "I have been diagnosed with (depression, bipolar disorder, ADHD)." They use the word as if it were based on scientific procedures, much like a medical diagnosis. In this way, the DSM system has become part of patient culture. I cannot fault people for wanting to believe that psychiatric diagnosis is precise and scientific and that it leads to specific and evidence-based treatment. But they are wrong, even if the DSM-5 encourages them to think so.

[p. 185-186, *The Intelligent Clinician's Guide to the DSM-5*]

In the meantime, there is also the competing ICD or International Classification of Diseases, produced by the World Health Organization (WHO), which is used primarily in Europe. It generates its own debates, and is now in its tenth version (ICD-10), with work underway towards an eleventh.

And, of course, there is the community of psychologists, who pay some attention to the DSM and ICD, but also have their own terminologies.

Do you see why I say you're entitled to be a little sceptical about psychological/psychiatric terms as they apply to you, or to someone you care about?

Whatever label you've received, or you've chosen to apply to yourself, don't forget that you're first of all a human being with a lot in common with everyone else.

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What about Highly Sensitive Persons?

Four Kinds of Shyness

Shyness and Wolves

Part III - To Be or Not to Be an Introvert

Who are the Introverts?

To my surprise, that idea of mine that introverts might be called extroverts and vice versa was not welcomed by introverts.

For a couple of years, I had those earlier pages on my website as a sample of what was in the first edition of this book, and I discovered that the people who visited it from ads (probably 99% introverts) left immediately, almost never visiting another page on the site. They obviously didn't like the message.

Though I'd thought of myself as an introvert for the first forty years of my life, and though I'd been called an introvert many times, I started to wonder whether I really was an introvert.

Meanwhile, interest in introverts was growing. Beginning maybe with the March 2003 Atlantic magazine article *Caring for Your Introvert* by Jonathan Rauch, introversion became a hot topic in the media, reaching a peak I think with Susan

Cain's 2012 bestseller, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that can't Stop Talking*.

Given all this attention, I realized that I needed to say more about introverts, but this wasn't going to be easy, for I was no longer sure what an introvert was.

One problem for me is that Jung, the creator of the terms introversion and extroversion, described these conditions in a more complex and subtle way than they're perceived today. In *Psychological Types*, Jung devoted a whole chapter to definitions. For "introversion", he wrote:

Introversion means an inward turning of libido....Interest does not move towards the object but withdraws from it into the subject. Everyone whose attitude is introverted thinks, feels and acts in a way that clearly demonstrates that the subject is the prime motivating factor and the object is of secondary importanceWhen introversion is habitual, we speak of an introverted type.

[p.452 – 1974 Bollingen edition]

Does that clarify "introvert" for you? Not for me, but, before I say more, let's look at what Jung said about extroversion:

Extraversion is an outward turning of the libido. Everyone in the extraverted state thinks, feels and acts in relation to the object, and moreover in a direct and clearly observable fashion. In a sense, therefore, extraversion is a transfer of interest from subject to object. When extraversion is habitual, we speak of the 'extraverted type'.

[p.427]

For “libido” read “psychic energy”. That’s how Jung defined it.

But how do we understand subject and object? I have no trouble with the subject as the person doing the thinking and feeling, but I’m not clear what Jung meant by “object”. Can it be a thing (a stone, car, dog, flower, mountain valley, etc) or is it always another person?

With that in mind, let’s return to my favorite introvert, Charles Darwin.

In her 1995 book *Charles Darwin: Voyaging - A Biography*, historian Janet Browne says the boy Darwin was “a dreamy grey-eyed child, intent on his own thoughts ...so quiet that relatives found it difficult to say anything about him.” He didn’t play with other boys, but went directly home from school. Though his older brother adapted well to school, Charles found it unpleasant and “withdrew into an isolated protective shell.” Even as an adult, he was known as a “quiet methodical worker, hard to prise out of his house in the country.” [vol.1. p. 10]

That sounds like an introvert, doesn’t it?

But Darwin had other dimensions. He wasn’t confined to an interior world. As a boy he had a passion for collecting things - bird eggs, the wax seals on letters, pebbles and stones, pieces of tile. As he grew older, he added flowers, beetles, bird nests and eventually every living thing he could get his hands on.

Though withdrawn in social settings, he didn’t shrink from the physical world. A speedy runner as a boy, he was

accomplished at riding horses too, and an expert in the use of guns.

One friend said he was “all eyes”, and “alert to the intricacies of living beings”. In his autobiography, Darwin said of himself that he was “born a naturalist” with “strong and diversified tastes, much zeal for whatever interested me, and a keen pleasure in understanding any complex subject or thing.”

He was not “turned inward” by any means.

So it was not a timid young man who set out on that 5 year round-the-world voyage in the Beagle, who would march and ride through jungles and over mountains and glaciers in South America.

Though his biological thinking would result in his famous theory and make his reputation, Darwin was a geologist too, reporting on the make-up of mountains, cliffs and bed-rock. He was interested in climate, and he took an anthropologist’s interest in the native peoples. He was interested in everything.

He was an accomplished writer, and his portraits of people, not to mention animals, plants, mountains and plains, were vivid, artful, and often keenly humorous.

How can we call someone like that an introvert? Well, you can still call him an introvert if, but only if, “withdrawal of libido from the object” means only withdrawal from people. So we need to know what Jung meant by “object”. Look at something else he said in *Psychological Types*:

The introvert is.....in continual retreat before the object. He holds aloof from external happenings, does not join in, has

a distinct dislike of society as soon as he finds himself among too many people. In a large gathering he feels lonely and lost.He is not in the least "with it", and has no love of enthusiastic get-togethers. His apprehensiveness of the object is not due to fear, but to the fact that it seems to him negative, demanding, overpowering or even menacing. He therefore suspects all kinds of bad motives....."

[p.550-551]

Though the use of the word 'object' to refer only to people seems odd to me, based on this object means only people. If so, then Darwin was an introvert and Jung would not have accepted my notion that some introverts might be called extroverts.

The modern conception of 'introvert/extrovert' is definitely focused on human relationships. The rest of the world, or the whole universe I suppose, doesn't count at all.

But Jung was never afraid to contradict himself. As I explained earlier, according to him someone who is introverted in one aspect of himself can be extroverted in another. Darwin was probably like that, so I still think it isn't wrong to see some introverts as extroverts.

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Introvert Weak, Extrovert Strong?

Not traits of character at all?

Introverts as Extroverts

Who says Introverts aren't Shy?

But let's get back to this new perception of introverts as people who are not shy.

Psychologist Marti Olsen Laney presents this idea in her book, *Introvert Advantage: How to Thrive in an Extrovert World*, where she attempts to distinguish shyness from introversion:

Shyness is social anxiety, an extreme self-consciousness when one is around people. It may have some genetic roots (in the form of a highly reactive fear centre), but it is usually learned from experiences at school, with friends, and in families. It is not an issue of energy; it is a lack of confidence in social situations. It is a fear of what others think of you.....Shyness is not who you are (like introversion), it is what other people think you are, and therefore it is responsive to behavior change.

[p. 43]

This starts with the usual explanation of shyness, then adds the additional proposal that shyness is not “who you are” but “what other people think you are”. Before you accept this, remember psychologist Johnathan Cheek's four kinds of shyness. I don't think Cheek would accept that shyness is in the eye of the beholder. There is a profound difference in the two approaches.

Shyness is not just an affect. I don't deny that it may be located in a “highly reactive fear centre”, but I think that centre is about more than fear. I think it's a foundation block of who you are.

You can learn social skills, but you can't change your shy nature, only your presentation of yourself. Putting on a social mask is a legitimate tactic, but it doesn't change who you are.

Of course, in the modern world where all of us are supposed to conceive ourselves as actors on the great stage of life, it's hard to convince most people that acting isn't what life is all about.

The idea that there is something else than our persona, a core unchanging self that is not affected by our efforts to be someone else, or by what anyone else says about us, doesn't seem to register in the modern world.

Susan Cain, in her book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*, takes a somewhat middle position:

Nor are introverts necessarily shy. Shyness is the fear of social disapproval or humiliation, while introversion is a preference for environments that are not overstimulating. Shyness is inherently painful, introversion is not. One reason that people confuse the two concepts is that they sometimes overlap (though psychologists debate to what degree).

[p. 12]

Well, yes, the problem is that there is no agreement among the experts, or among the rest of us, on the definition of shyness, or the definition of introversion.

But I don't buy the idea that shyness is “inherently painful”. I've been a socially avoidant person all my life, and because of that I still insist on calling myself shy, but for the past thirty

years there has been little pain or anxiety associated with it. My appetite for avoidance is not fueled by anxiety.

Trying to separate introversion and shyness, or even compare them, is a mistake in my opinion.

The word introversion was introduced by psychology, while shyness was created by all people. Shyness evolved naturally within the language. It's a word we've been using for a long time, one that everyone understands, whether psychologists like that understanding or not.

The authority on our use of words is not psychologists but dictionaries. Look at how some English dictionaries define an introvert:

- **Oxford English Dictionary** [www.oed.com]

A shy, reticent person.

- **Dictionary.com** [www.dictionary.com]

1. A shy person

2. (psychology) a person characterized by concern primarily with his or her own thoughts and feelings.

- **Merriam-Webster Dictionary** [www.merriam-webster.com]

a shy person: a quiet person who does not find it easy to talk to other people

- **Cambridge Dictionaries Online** - [www.dictionary.cambridge.org] or [www.cambridge.org]

someone who is shy, quiet, and unable to make friends easily

- **Collins Dictionary** - (www.collinsdictionary.com)

(psychology) a person prone to introversion

The definition for 'introversion':

(psychology) the direction of interest inwards towards one's own thoughts and feelings rather than towards the external world or making social contacts

- **MacMillan Dictionary** (www.macmillandictionary.com)

someone who tends to concentrate on their own thoughts and feelings rather than communicating with other people.

- **Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English** [www.ldoceonline.com]

someone who is quiet and shy, and does not enjoy being with other people

These definitions may vary, but most say an introvert is a shy person. The two that don't say anything about shyness both suggest that introverts have a reduced social appetite.

So if you've been operating under the supposedly misguided assumption that introverts are shy people, the English language and its dictionaries support you.

So do I.

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An Extrovert's View

Let's Not Betray the Shy

In Defence of Extroverts

In books written by introverts, extroverts usually take a beating. Unable to confront them properly in the social world, introverted authors get as much revenge as they can.

Well, I have to say this. In my experience, hard core introverts are not very good company. If there was a club of confident introverts in my city, I would not join it. They're too reticent and cool. Conversations with them don't go very far.

Extroverts, on the other hand, can be easy to talk to. Some, it's true, are aggressively insensitive and narrow-minded, barging through life, taking what they want and discarding the rest. But that kind is usually easy to spot and avoid.

On the other hand, there are some extroverts, and more than you may expect, who are intelligent, sensitive and very good company.

Elaine Aron says there are extroverted HSPs. In my experience, these people, at least the confident ones, often have a keen, delightful humor. I've known a few like that, and I can tell you that they make it worthwhile to come out of your shell and experience their world.

If you want examples, I can best show them with authors.

Miguel Cervantes, (*Don Quixote*), Shakespeare I'm sure, though little is known about his personality, Henry Fielding (*Tom Jones*), Voltaire, Balzac, Mark Twain and Jane Austen (*Pride and Prejudice*) were all extroverts. I would include Dickens, in fact I'm sure he belongs there, but he also fits introvert very well.

If I had access to a time machine and I was allowed to visit only one person from the past, it would be Voltaire. He was an 18th century extrovert who was a champion for all people, with a sense of humor that was exquisite and unpredictable.

I once met him in a dream, when the two of us walked together across the rubble and ruins at the end of the world, discussing what had happened and why. That dream remains one of the most memorable events of my life.

I wish I could give you some modern examples, but no one comes to mind. Is modern fiction dominated by introverts? Maybe. They seem to be everywhere you look on today's literary landscape. I know there are exceptions, but the extroverts are definitely outnumbered. Beginning with Kafka in the early 20th century, introverts seem to have taken over.

There is an exception though – in science fiction. During SF's golden age in the 1950s and 1960s Ray Bradbury, Robert Sheckley, Isaac Asimov, Frederick Pohl, Cordwainer Smith and many others provided a dazzling extroverted view of the future.

Why Sheckley and Smith are so forgotten today is beyond me. Read Sheckley's novel *Immortality Inc.*, the story of science discovering the after-life and big-business rushing in to take advantage of it, and you'll share my perplexity. Or read Smith's *Norstrilia*, my choice for the best SF novel of all time (you can buy either book online now). Smith's personality I'm unsure of, but his vision is very outgoing and his future world is so complex, beautiful, dangerous, funny and haunting all at once, with fascinating new characters around every corner, that it's hard to imagine it coming from an introvert.

Extroverted writers still exist in science fiction. Read Ernest Cline's 2012 novel *Ready Player One*. It's a dazzling story, and an unforgettable view of a possible future when life is lived mostly in an online virtual world. The story is written in a very extroverted way.

But back to this glum view of introverts I've just presented. I should qualify it - outside North America I've found introverts much easier to take.

Among the West Indian people of Trinidad and Tobago (my wife's country), introverts often have a fine and balanced sense of humor. In Mexico I've met many similar shy people. Among people from the UK I've found the introverts, if not always friendly, at least talkative enough to be interesting (maybe one reason why Britain is known as an island of eccentrics).

But if you're looking for sparkling humor and an all-embracing love of life, you're more likely to find that among sensitive extroverts. Once you have the confidence to go out and meet them, you may find, as I did, that it's often among extroverts that you make your best friends.

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The Third Possibility

Part IV - Autism and Shyness

Shyness & Autism – Are They Related?

In my novel *The Birdcatcher*, and on my website, I've said that I think shyness and autism are both usually natural. I've also suggested that they may, in some people, be related to each other. It's time for an explanation of that.

This perception of them isn't supported by any research as far as I know. But when I was a boy and acutely shy, I was also autistic according to any criteria. To me the two always felt like one thing, and they still do. Because of that, I can't bring myself to abandon the conviction that they should sometimes be considered together.

When I was in the early grades of school, at a school of about 300 students, I was the only one who remained alone at all times. I was the only one who always walked to school alone,

the only one who had no playmates during recess, and the only one who had no friends outside of family.

During those years I suffered many bouts of 'selective mutism', a paralysis of speech that occurred when I was told to stand up beside my desk to answer a question. I didn't stutter, stumbling over the words like one boy I remember. I remained completely silent, unable to find any words. Some teachers recognized my difficulty and told me to sit down again. But two of them called me to the front of the room where, with everyone watching, they struck my hands with a giant ruler known as a "yardstick", punishing me for my supposed stubbornness.

According to psychologists who specialize in it, selective mutism isn't shyness, but to me it was just one more manifestation of my shyness.

Meanwhile, if I score myself today on any of the tests, I qualify easily as autistic. If I score myself as I remember myself at 5 years old, apparently the preferred age for assessing autism, I get more than double the score required.

The diagnosis of autism is rare – it used to be only a few children in a thousand, depending on the study, though the frequency of Asperger Syndrome (AS), the form of autism without language impairments, has always been more frequent.

However, in North America, based on the new criteria of the DSM-5, Asperger syndrome no longer exists. 'Aspies' are now incorporated into Autism Spectrum Disorder. This presumably means that, at least according to the DSM-5, high-functioning

autistic people now outnumber substantially impaired autistic people. The diagnosis of autism should be more frequent now.

But shyness is much more common. At least forty percent of the population consider themselves to be shy.

If shyness is common and autism is rare, doesn't that suggest that they aren't related? Well, keep in mind that shyness numbers are the result of self-reporting.

Ask yourself this - If there was no negative perception of autism, and if people were better acquainted with the broad range of symptoms or traits assigned to it, and if they were invited to decide themselves whether they are autistic, would the numbers for autism be so low?

I'm reminded of a study I read in a rehab magazine a few years ago, where 60 per cent of adult men said they were happiest when they were alone. The sense of aloneness is supposed to be the core trait of autism.

Yes, if people were asked to self-assess themselves for autism, and there was no reason to be adverse to an autistic label, I'm sure there would be a lot more autistic people.

If you doubt me, go to the website *Wrong Planet* (www.wrongplanet.net), a busy site devoted to the concerns of autistic people, especially those with Asperger Syndrome. Read the daily forums there and you'll find that many contributors to the site haven't been diagnosed with autism or Asperger's. They take part because they think they belong there.

Many of the discussions at *Wrong Planet* closely resemble the discussions you'll find in the forums at shyness sites like *Shy United* (www.shyunited.com), or *Social Phobia World* (www.socialphobiaworld.com). The *Wrong Planet* people talk a lot about shyness, and they understand it.

Or how about this? If you consider yourself autistic, an introvert, social phobic or just shy, go to psychologist Elain Aron's website - www.hsperson.com - and do her self test for HSP (highly sensitive person). There's a good chance you'll fit her criteria too. But Dr Aron considers HSP to be a distinct diagnosis. She says HSPs are often misdiagnosed as introverts because of their social avoidance.

Maybe the problem is that we perceive the psychological spectrum to be linear, when we should be thinking of it as multi-dimensional.

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What is Autism?

What is Shyness?

Shy but Tough

Brain Damage?

Genetics and Autism

Genetics and Shyness

Autism and Shyness Re-examined

Restricted Activities and Interests

The Joys of Autism

The War on Autism

Let's look again at this problem of defining autism.

Psychiatrist Leo Kanner in America and Dr Asperger in Europe, independently proposed the term autism in the 1940s. They didn't agree on the symptoms though.

For example, Kanner found his autistic subjects almost all suffered from language impairment. Asperger found no language impairment. Kanner found his subjects to have excellent physical dexterity. Dr Asperger found clumsiness in many individuals. The two were sceptical of each other for many years.

Starting with their disagreements, the criteria used for the diagnosis of autism has always been contentious. The psychological community's position on it seems more fragmented now than it was in Kanner and Asperger's day.

That makes me think of schizophrenia. For a long time schizophrenia was a catchall for a variety of enigmatic psychological impairments. In the 1950s, children who would

later be deemed autistic were routinely diagnosed with schizophrenia.

Today there is a debate going on within psychiatry whether to scrap the diagnosis of schizophrenia altogether. I can't help but wonder whether we won't eventually see that happen with autism. Maybe fifty years from now we won't be talking about it at all. Maybe there will be a new theory, and a new diagnosis for non-social people.

If you doubt that, read sociologist Gil Eyal's monumental examination of autism, *The Autism Matrix – The Social Origins of the Autism Epidemic*. He sees autism's emergence as a social event more than a scientific one. He says it emerged as the term 'mental retardation' was fading. But it wasn't just a replacement. It gradually acquired its own character, not only from psychiatrists and psychologists, but from the efforts of the parents of autistic children, and from outspoken autistic people themselves, like Temple Grandin, Donna Williams, and John Elder Robison.

With assistance from a number of colleagues who are listed as joint authors, Eyal documents the evolution of autism in fascinating detail. Anyone who wants to take part in the autism debate needs to read that book.

But the core trait of autism, the sense of aloneness, does seem to be important.

I've said it before and I'll say it again. I think the sense of aloneness - the lone behavior of those individuals who lack not only social skills but also an appetite for social experience – may sometimes be perfectly natural. Nature is full of solitary species – bears, badgers, skunks, owls, orangutans, etc. It

seems highly likely to me that in the distant past the mind of early hominids may have been autistic.

If so, if what we're calling autism is a natural leftover of our past, does the so-called "war on autism" make any sense?

The War on Shyness

There is no declared war on shyness. I suppose when close to half the population experiences shyness, we can't call it a disease.

Yet my position that shyness is natural generates a lot of resistance. Why? The only reason I can see is that the acceptance of shyness as natural might mean that society as a whole could be asked to change. Maybe in the way that society changed, to some extent, to accommodate physically disabled people - paraplegics, quadriplegics, the blind, etc. - it might be asked to accommodate shy people.

For example, I say acutely shy children shouldn't be in classrooms with thirty other kids. The old "sink or swim" idea doesn't work here (if it ever works at all). Throwing an acutely shy child into a large classroom makes them more shy, not less. Suffering from anxiety, many of them find it difficult to learn there. I know I did, year after year.

Why shouldn't shy children in school spend most of their time in cubicles working alone on computers? We can't afford it? What if doing that resulted in more learning? What if it generated more engineers, scholars, artists and scientists?

Shy children, especially the loners, can learn without human teachers. As I probably say too often, I learned more from the books I got at the library than I did from my teachers. With a computer and the internet I would have done even better.

Think of this - if you put all the students in cubicles, not just the shy ones, two things would happen:

1. Teachers wouldn't have to spend half their time policing a classroom. They would have more time for teaching.
2. All the students would get more done since they wouldn't be distracting each other.

You could probably cut half the teachers from the payroll by teaching everyone this way.

Alternatively, we could just make an exception for the shy, and let the rest continue in our dysfunctional educational systems. But once it became apparent that shy children studying alone were outperforming the others, there would be controversy wouldn't there? So we'll probably do nothing instead.

Something else.

Shy children would be more physically fit if they were allowed, and encouraged, to practice lone exercise in school - running, swimming, weight lifting - instead of being forced to take part in team sports, which they perform so poorly and avoid as much as possible. Make team sports an option.

We give autistic children special education (sometimes), why not the shy too?

Some say letting shy children study by themselves will prevent them from developing social skills. Well, right now, more often than not, surrounded by other kids, what they're developing is more anxiety and more desire for avoidance, not social skills. Give them a couple of hours a day with other children, not the whole day.

And why shouldn't non-shy children be taught to respect the shy as a specific group who are simply different? We do it with racial and religious differences, and with those who suffer physical disabilities.

No, there is no declared "war on shyness", yet there is a longstanding intractable reluctance to accept the reality of it, and that has done untold damage.

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And so

Finding Your Own Road

All I'm Trying to Do

Part V - Living With Shyness

Accepting Yourself / Accepting Others

Why do I think these two things are so important?

Because it was only when I acknowledged the deep divide between me and social people that I was able to accept who I was, and accept them for who they were.

You do have to accept them, even if you don't realize that you've been rejecting them. That's partly what those feelings of anxiety are about – you're holding back from other people. You're unable to live properly among them because you simply don't know what to do, which way to go, when to respond and when to run away.

Your anxiety is there for a real reason. You're different.

Social humans will never accept that we're fundamentally different from them. They've made that very clear to us. They've been trained to believe that the entire human race is social. They feel it in their bones, or in their genes. That blindness of theirs to the difference in us appears to be something immutable that we have to accept.

But what does it mean to accept yourself?

It means that you must recognize those parts of yourself that you don't like, but are unchangeable. Instead of trying to get rid of your shyness, you should embrace it and ask forgiveness of it for all the mistreatment it's received.

Living With Shyness

Throughout my life I've lived in a world where someone who was shy and solitary by nature lived a pretty solitary life. Oh, in my case I did go out into the social world, with some success too, but, even when I was surrounded by people there, I remained very much alone.

Recently, with the introduction of computers and the internet, shy people began to communicate with each other on websites around the world. Each time I look at one of the sites where this is happening, I'm impressed, for this is historic.

It came a bit too late for me. When I was young I might have joined in, but after a lifetime in the social arena I've had a bit too much of people. The best I can usually do now is be an interested spectator.

But on those websites I see young people struggling with problems that I resolved long ago – the main one being: How does a shy person without social skills enter the social world? Every time I read another version of this anguished question, whether the problem is about friendship, work, or romantic love, I remember how impossible that once looked to me. So, I have to say it again:

Shyness is found throughout nature. Almost all wild animals are shy, predators as well as prey. Your shyness isn't just a kink in your character, just some unfortunate dysfunction that makes you a poor fit with social humans. It's a living breathing creature, a psychic animal that, like a wild deer, takes flight whenever people approach.

Those of us who successfully enter society do it by tying that deer up, or putting it in a cage. We immobilize it so we can socialize. That's how I managed to work as an insurance adjuster and accident investigator for over forty years.

Yes, I lived that way for a long time. Except that, unlike those who lock it away and forget it, I kept that deer with me and tried to look after it. All through my life I remained conscious of it beside me, an unwilling and unhappy accomplice to the unnatural life I was living. But when I turned fifty, watching it one day huddled dejectedly in its corner, I realized how much it had suffered and I resolved that, in the years that were left, it was going to know freedom.

So I began to experiment – every now and then I untied it.

Of course it ran away every time. More and more often I declined invitations to go for a drink after work. I found ways not to be where other people were going to be. I began to eat in restaurants alone, drink moderately on my own (trust me, it's safer than drinking with any group), travel on my own again, etc.

My shyness was back.

When I needed my old detachment it wasn't always there now. If a beautiful woman spoke to me, my mind would fall into

confusion. I would have trouble perceiving her words and I would be unable to reply, just the way it was when I was a young man.

But out of this new state of things came a remarkable new energy – along with a long writing odyssey, my two novels and this book, with others still coming.

Today my deer and I have come to a compromise. Understanding the need to function among people, and knowing that it will only be restricted temporarily, it lets me put the leash back on when I have to deal with the social world. In return, I keep social contacts to a minimum.

Do you see what I'm getting at? When you're accommodating yourself to the social world, you should never abandon that deer – never forget who you really are. Though this will produce complications for you, in the long run you will be better off because you will remain in touch with your real self.

Now, I can hear the objections to this – “Learn to accept your shyness? What kind of advice is that?” – Well, let me tell you, you are not going to turn yourselves into extroverts. Extroverts are more unlike you than you think. They possess social skills that come from deep down in their genes, skills that are unconscious and invisible, that you can't fully learn or imitate.

In the social world you're like an unknown piece that has appeared on a chess board. Fine, find out what the rooks and bishops and knights are up to if you can - the poor pawns too – find out as much as you can about how they operate, but don't for a moment think you can be one of them.

You are something else. Believe me, you puzzle social people as much as they puzzle you. Find out how you can move on that board, in your own way, and stick to it.

You do have advantages. You know how to keep your thoughts to yourself. You can keep secrets. Did you know that that intimidates social people? In those situations where only you know what you're thinking you have a powerful advantage.

If you can learn to do that – keep your feet firmly on your own turf in the midst of the kaleidoscopic merry-go-round of the social world, trust me, you will be happier. You will be lonely sometimes, but you will receive more respect from the extroverts than those people who try to hide their shyness by pretending not to be shy.

And so, when you're in the social arena, playing its games according to its rules, you can still be yourself. When someone asks you why you're so quiet, you can reply - politely and with humor I hope, but without any apology – “Because that's who I am.”

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What You Really Want

Be Who You Are

Physical Coordination & the Weakling Syndrome

Words

Silence Can Speak

Reading for Language

Finding Yourself - Losing Yourself

Some years ago I was hiking out of the Algonquin forest in central Ontario after four hot summer days in it alone. I was tired, dehydrated and mildly hallucinating, possibly from soaking my body and clothes every day in insect repellent, when I met a young couple on their way in. To me they felt like another hallucination, but we stopped and talked, and when they learned about my solo journey, the young man said “One day I'm going to do that – hike in alone and find myself”.

There was that strange saying again, that odd idea that it is open to everyone to “find himself”, as if it were taken for granted that in modern western society all of us are lost.

Most shy solitary people don't think that way. We have a need for solitude, there's no doubt about that, but we usually have a pretty good sense of who we are. The problem for us isn't so much that we don't know who we are, but we know it too well. We're too keenly aware of how poorly we fit into society. We feel most lost and bewildered when we're forced to face up to that society.

One of my mentors, an older insurance adjuster and investigator who I worked for in the 1980s, once explained this problem of the self to me this way:

When young adjusters are taking a crucial statement from a witness, they get stuck because they think too much about themselves. They worry about whether they're going to succeed or not. I don't think about myself at all, only about the investigation. I only think about what I've learned so far, and what question I should ask next.

When he said that, I remembered the Indian sorcerer in one of Carlos Castaneda's books, Don Juan, explaining how he'd had to "get rid of himself" to be a better sorcerer.

That's what a shy man or woman confronting the social world needs to do – not find themselves, but forget about themselves. They need to focus on what's in front of them, whether it's an intellectual task, a problem customer, or a too handsome man or woman approaching them.

To "get rid of yourself" doesn't mean to neglect your body, or your spirit. To starve yourself, or let yourself fall into physical or mental decline is a denial of the world as well as yourself, for it's through your body that you experience the world.

To get rid of yourself means getting rid of those parts of you that are superficial or false. It means you should stop worrying about your status with other people, or how they perceive you, and it means forgetting about the rewards to be gained or lost jumping through society's hoops.

You should still jump through the hoops, but you should do the jumps as an exercise. Jump as well as you can without worrying about the consequences to yourself.

When you aren't worrying about the outcome, you will find yourself better able to focus on the task itself and you will have a better outcome.

Do you see what I mean? You're disabled by anxiety when you're trying to deal with the social world because you're too worried about yourself. If you can learn to leave yourself out of the equation, you won't feel anxiety and you will be able to perform.

This is detachment, the next subject here.

Detachment

Yes, if you're going to function well in the social world, you have to learn detachment.

The best explanation of detachment I've found is in the 1600 year old epic Sanskrit poem, *The Bhagavad Gita*. It begins where Prince Arjuna and his driver (secretly the god Krishna, something known only to Arjuna) are in their chariot at the front of their army, ready to enter a great battle against the armies of other members of Arjuna's extended family.

Faced with the prospect of killing cousins and uncles, Arjuna declares to Krishna that he cannot do it. Krishna then tells him why he must.

The argument is not like the one-sided arguments in Plato, where everyone falls neatly into Socrates' prepared traps. Arjuna argues forcefully against taking part in the bloodshed. At one point, with Krishna warning him that he will be judged

by his fellow men a coward for the rest of his life, Arjuna declares, “I will not fight.”

Krishna, to change Arjuna's mind, begins a long explanation of how one can fight to the death, or make love, or deal with the world any other way, while remaining detached.

Speaking first of an existence outside this one that is greater than life and death, he then enters into a long exploration of the value of emotional detachment coupled with action. This is deeper, more sophisticated, and more useful than anything I've found in contemporary writing.

Yes, not only ferocious battles can be faced with detachment, but everything in life – all anxiety and fear that block action can be overcome with detachment.

According to Krishna, detachment not only means putting fear and anxiety aside while performing action, but also desire.

The problem, he says, is that most people are only motivated to action by desire for the “fruits of action”, for the rewards of success.

The detached warrior is different. He or she fights without hatred, without fear, without desire for glory or other rewards of victory. They focus only on the fight, on the action. The warrior's reward is the successful performance of the action.

To focus on action is something few modern people understand. Most of us are too focused on the fruits of civilization – money, status, houses, cars, exotic technology, fine clothes, degrees and diplomas, trophy girlfriends, boyfriends, husbands and wives, fame and social success,

comfort and entertainment – as if those things are all that matters.

Krishna would have you put all of that aside and focus on your actions. He would have you perform every action, even the smallest, with complete attention, as if performing it well that is all that matters.

For example, walking down the street can be an important experience if you pay attention. Most people are half asleep as they travel to and from work or school, noticing little of what they pass. Their minds are preoccupied by the future they're pursuing, or trapped in a past they're obsessed with, so they see little in the present. They live without really living.

It's even true of dreams. People who tell me that they don't remember their dreams always make me suspect that they don't remember much from their day life either.

Contrary to what many people think, Krishna does not advocate that you deny the senses. That route is for those ascetic philosophers who want to abandon the world altogether. Krishna doesn't deny the value of that, but his warrior remains very much in the world, acutely in touch with his or her senses, but in command of them, not a slave to them.

Can one make love with detachment?

You may think that would be a contradiction, but it's not. When you leave yourself out of it - if you forget about your hope to perform well, or to impress your partner, and forget about your longing to escape your shyness prison - the experience of sexual love doesn't diminish. When your ego is forgotten, your real self, accompanied by all your senses,

comes to the fore. Your mind and body open in a spectacular way, and you experience your lover more fully because you're focused only on them.

Of course detachment has to be done with common sense. If you rob a bank, concentrating on the action, ignoring the consequences to yourself, you may hurt other people, you will offend society, and you will probably end up in prison. Not every action is valid, or worth doing.

But if you can learn detachment, the task of integrating yourself into the social world will no longer be an emotional war you have to win. It will just be a puzzle to solve.

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Leave Yourself Out Of It

Two Ways to Detachment

Another Route to Detachment

Keep Your Eyes on the Road

The False Self & The True Self

The Secret Self

Coming Out of The Closet

Part VI - Working Shy in a Non-Shy World

Alice: "But I don't want to go among mad people."

Cheshire Cat: "Oh, you can't help it, we're all mad here."

- Lewis Carroll

The Problem

Being shy when you're young and in school is bad enough. That's when you first meet social pressure not to be shy.

All through elementary school and high school I longed for them to end. Year after year I kept my distance from other students and teachers, only answering questions, never asking them, never approaching anyone. When I reached the last year of high school, I thought I was finally about to escape. For some reason, I thought that in the working world I would be free to be myself. But it wasn't like that.

There are shy careers. I was hoping to one day become a field geologist or biologist, so I could live my life in one wilderness or another. There are a lot of shy people in the sciences, and I

think they feel very much at home there. That's also true of the arts, and there are fields like accounting where you can keep a lower profile more suited to your nature. Carpenters, auto mechanics and computer programmers are well-fitted to a shy life too, since they deal mostly with inanimate things. I would urge anyone still in school to move in one of those directions.

But most of us now seem to end up in “services” – face to face with the public, side by side with our peers, working in “teams” - with someone always in our face or looking over our shoulder. I don't think it matters whether you work in a bank, in government administration, in the restaurant industry, health care services, the armed forces, or in the insurance industry where I spent most of my life. In any of those fields you're in the belly of the beast, in the last place your shy genes were designed for, so the only thing you can do is try to adapt.

The customary way is to follow the urging of the social world and try not to be shy. But if shyness is in your genes, which is the case with most shy people, all you can really do is pretend that you're not shy, which is not the same thing at all. Pretending is tiring and you feel bad because you know your behavior is false. In a workplace where you have to keep it up for hours, it can be exhausting.

With enough exposure, you can develop an emotional callous that will allow you to function better in the workplace, and you do need this, but it's only a partial solution.

The core problem is anxiety.

The anxiety you feel about entering the working world can be so strong that you may have trouble with that.

I've never forgotten the morning I started my first job in an insurance company. Twenty years old in September, 1966, I stood for half an hour in a doorway on the other side of Bay Street in Toronto's financial district, watching the door of the building I was supposed to enter. I almost walked away, but I finally got my courage up, crossed the street and passed through that door to begin the forty year odyssey that would teach me the things I'm offering you here.

Deleted:

The Job Interview

Entering the Workplace

Keeping Up the Pace

Wanting to Do Things Well

Working Alone

Team Lunches

These are inevitable, and too frequent. Driven by its social instinct, the group will make up any excuse for another collective lunch.

Though I don't have difficulty getting through group lunches now, I still don't enjoy them. There may be people there who I

enjoy talking to one-to-one, but I can't talk to them when we're surrounded by other people.

The scope of conversation for two people is as wide as the world. Add a third person and it gets cut to a tenth of that. Add half a dozen people and all that's left is pro sports, cars, houses (buying, selling, renovating), mutual funds, children (especially, 'what my kid did yesterday'), popular TV shows, vacation resorts (Cancun, Las Vegas, Disney World), and shop talk, all of it combined with frequent sexual puns and innuendo.

That might sound like a lot, but next to thousands of years of history, art, literature and music, millions of plant and animal species, the complex geology below the earth's surface and the dazzling rocks that emerge from there, the beauty of wild places, the mysteries in sub-atomic physics and paranormal phenomena, the possibly endless expanse of stars and galaxies, with scientists now talking about other universes beyond our own, and all of this now said to exist in 10, 11, or 26

Always remember this - social people understand and enjoy social life because it's in their DNA. They live it unconsciously. They swim in the social universe like fish in the sea.

You probably don't have fully developed social genes, so you don't fully understand social behavior. What they instinctively know, you have to learn. The only way to do that is slowly, step by step, and the understanding you acquire will always be different than theirs.

You may have to live in their sea, but that doesn't mean you always have to swim with them.

Deleted:

Lunch Rooms

Talking

Be Careful What You Say

The Workplace Theater

Shyness and Paranoia

The Shy Advantage & The Robotic Revolution

Love in the Workplace

Love In the Workplace – II

Working In a Dumbed-Down World

Part VII - Help for the Love-Shy

Virtually all of the things that bring on an everyday anxiety attack fuse to ignite a shyness time bomb when sex is concerned.

– Philip Zimbardo

Love-Shyness

When I first discovered Love-shy.com, the website inspired by the ideas of psychologist Dr Brian Gilmartin, I was taken aback. In a nutshell, the love-shy are men who:

- Long to date women, but never do.
- Never marry, though they wish they could.
- Usually spend their lives in low-income jobs, or unemployed.
- Hope to escape this while they're still young, but almost never do and grow increasingly bitter about it as they get older.

Yes, it hit me hard, for I had discovered that an existential hell I'd once known too well, and which I had finally escaped, was still here and still torturing others.

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Dr Gilmartin's 1987 book, *Shyness & Love: Causes, Consequences and Treatment*, was out of print for a time but it's available now in a 2011 edition published by University Press of America. There is also a kindle edition you can get through the Amazon sites. Like most books displayed in the Amazon store, you can read some of the first pages there.

Dr Gilmartin has two other books, *Shyness and Love*, and *The Shy Man Syndrome*, which are both available now too.

He believes there are few love-shy women. He says shy women don't suffer the same way because non-shy men still approach them, so they still experience love and marriage.

Well, I've met some very inaccessible shy women.

Maybe because shy men outnumber shy women, there seems to be a common assumption that men suffer more from shyness. I'm not so sure.

Society is easier on shy men. Confronted with a shy man, many people say to themselves – “Oh, he's one of those,” and leave it at that. But confronted with a shy woman they're more likely to be offended. They perceive her as perverse, unresponsive, shirking her feminine duty.

In the same way that society accepts promiscuity in men more than it does in women, it also accepts social avoidance more in men than in women. I think very shy women suffer a lot. I'm not alone in thinking this. Philip Zimbardo considered it too and concluded:

So the shy woman without the outlets available to shy men....may go more quietly mad....

[*Shyness*, p.100]

However, Dr Gilmartin's new edition of *Shyness & Love* includes an introduction in which he reviews some of the research that has taken place since 1987. Reading it, I got the impression that he may be changing his mind about shy women.

He also now thinks that close to 40% of love-shy men have Asperger's or high-functioning autism.

Love-shyness was never accepted as a diagnosis by mainstream psychology. Dr Gilmartin's opponents argue that it's just shyness in an acute form. I'm sympathetic with this view, for I suspect that most shy people experience some degree of love-shyness, the reason I'm giving it so much attention in this book.

But I should also tell you that, based on Dr Gilmartin's criteria, I don't qualify as love-shy.

During my life I've made love to more women than I had a right to. I even married one of the most beautiful, and had children with her. I was also employed most of my life at an above average income investigating accidents and handling personal injury claims for insurance companies. The love-shy aren't supposed to be capable of any of that.

Well, think of this.

When I turned eighteen, I had completed several years of solitary life. Throughout high school I had avoided everyone, male and female. I was, as Dickens said of one of his

characters, as solitary as an oyster. But in 1965, my last year in high school, there was a new mood in the air. I started to receive unaccustomed attention from outside my shell. The young people of the 1960s were interested in everything, even in a silent solitary boy who had been avoiding them for years.

A girl who wasn't in any of my classes, but was determined to get a date with me, managed to get introduced. She left me with her telephone number and an invitation to call her.

Love-shy men aren't lacking in sexual instinct. Dr Gilmartin says it wakens sooner in us, and may be felt more acutely. If so, I was no exception. That girl electrified me. The urge to call her was powerful, but how could I do it?

I couldn't call her from home because I couldn't bear anyone in my family listening, so I walked about a mile to a mall where there was a telephone booth in a secluded corner.

But when I stood in the booth with the phone number on a scrap of paper in front of me, I couldn't make the call. Every time I put my dime in and heard the dial tone, I froze. A couple of times I managed to dial some of the numbers, but I couldn't finish. Finally, too nervous to continue (my hands were shaking), I gave up, resolved to come back and try another day.

Eventually I managed to call her from that phone booth, which resulted in the only date I would ever have in high school. Though I would eventually hear through the school grapevine that the girl told her friends the date was a disaster, it didn't matter. I was proud of the phone call and the date. I've remained proud of them ever since, for those were two of the

biggest hurdles I've overcome in my life. I stumbled getting over them, but I got over.

Yet difficulty communicating with women would remain with me all my life. Even today when I can look into any woman's eyes without much anxiety, I find myself deeply resistant to communication with most of them.

So trust me, I am one of you.

Dr Gilmartin emphasizes that the love-shy are predominantly heterosexual men, which is why throughout this section you'll find me addressing heterosexual men. But I'm convinced that this kind of shyness is a problem for a significant number of women, and maybe gay men or women who are love-shy too.

So this is written from the point of view, and based on the experience, of a heterosexual love-shy man. Nevertheless, I am still trying to help all of you.

Deleted:

Being Different

Shy Love Long Ago

Take a Peek Outside

Does the idea of escape from your love-shy prison feel like too much of a challenge? Well, I'm not suggesting that you climb the wall and run for freedom. Go one step at a time.

To start, just take a peek out the window of your cell to see what's outside.

Look at it this way. What you want most is contact with another human being who is attractive to you. That seems like a gigantic task, and it is gigantic if your goal is a night of love with them. Don't make that your goal. Start with something small.

For example – are you unable to make eye contact with them? Then make it your goal to make brief eye contact. Try it on a cashier in the supermarket, a teller in the bank, the girl or guy sitting across from you in the subway or the bus. Just hold it for a second (a second is longer than you think – 2-3 heart beats when your heart speeds up).

Don't confine it to one person, try it again and again, especially when you fail.

Just look into their eyes until you're sure they're looking back, then look away. Don't stare. If they don't quickly notice you, look away momentarily. But if they do notice and it looks as if they like it (a slight smile is the usual sign of that), don't be afraid to try it with them again, whether it's a minute later or next week.

The language of the eyes is older than any words. You avoid eye contact not because it isn't in your nature, but because eye

contact holds more meaning for you. It's your language, but one you've forgotten how to use.

You have trouble making eye contact because it's so important to you. It generates anxiety in you because you feel its importance.

Also, we probably also avoid eye contact with people who are not family because in the wilderness world we originally inhabited that was the natural, safe thing to do.

Once you've had some success with eye contact, try saying something. Nothing big, just a comment you wouldn't normally have said (which is probably nothing at all). For example, you find yourself in an elevator with someone you find attractive. Your normal approach is to say nothing and avert your eyes. Instead, with or without eye contact, try saying something like:

“It's raining again.”

“I wonder if it's raining now.”

“What a day!” (whether it's rain, snow, cold, heat, etc)

“Monday again.”

“It's only Tuesday, but it feels like it should be Thursday.”

“Finally it's Friday.”

Do you get the idea? Nothing personal. You don't have to tell them that you admire their dress, or their coat, or their haircut. That's farther down the road. You aren't ready for that. But these innocuous remarks that seem so completely pointless to

you will almost always generate a response. Social people attach a lot of importance to them. It's a way they greet each other, a way they have of stroking each other.

“Well I can't do that,” you say. “Words don't come to me like that – I freeze up.”

Of course, and that's because of who you are. What do you think it means when one member of a species is not able to communicate with another? In nature, that's usually a sign that the two individuals are of different species.

Though I usually say that I think we're a separate race (i.e., sub-species) distinguished chiefly by psychological characteristics, it's not impossible that shy people, at least some of the acutely shy, could be another species altogether.

The differences between species are not only physical. There are song bird species that look identical, but are distinguished by their songs. They're unable to communicate with each other because they sing different songs, so they don't inter-breed. I think something like that is going on with us.

Some people say that's impossible. Species can't breed with each other. Well, lions and tigers breed with each other in captivity. Wolves and coyotes breed with each other in the wild. Coyotes and jackals do it too (which raises the possibility that, in some regions, wolves and jackals might exchange genes without mating with each other at all).

I could give you many other examples. “Species” is just a concept we've imposed on nature. Sometimes it's useful, sometimes it's not. Nature doesn't obey our rules.

So, yes, before you show up at that bank teller's window, or you meet that person in the elevator, think about what it is you're going to say – something short and simple. You might ask a question about your account, or the bank's hours, or make a comment on the weather.

If you're acutely shy, this will be a real adventure for you. Let it be one. Learn to value these little exercises. Experience the excitement of them and don't be ashamed of it. Feel proud of each achievement. You don't have to report to anyone what you're doing.

But it is a good idea to report to yourself. Keep a journal with detailed accounts of your experiences and you'll learn faster. Also, if you re-read that journal twenty years later, or even next month, you'll find it has become a welcome treasure chest of memories from the past.

Whatever you do, never feel ashamed of how different you are. Always remember this - your goal is not to become one of them. It's just to be able to function in their world.

Deleted:

Just say “Hi”

The Shield & The Sword

Feel the Fear

How Can I Approach Them?

What about Anxiety? How did you deal with That?

But I'm Not Physically Attractive

Facing Up to Sex

Body to Body

What if I start a long-term relationship with
someone? What do I do then?

Now My View

For Those Who Can't

A Last Word

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