A psychoanalytic theory of the moral emotions, shame (vs. pride) and guilt (vs. innocence) will be presented, together with the opposite and antagonistic moral value systems and behavior patterns that they motivate—shame-ethics vs. guilt-ethics, and homicide vs. suicide. Shame and guilt are as central among the motivations for behavior as love and hate are, because they are love and hate—except as directed toward the self, rather than toward others. Thus, pride is self-love, and shame is the absence of self-love; and guilt is self-hate, just as innocence is the absence of self-hate.

For a shame-ethic, the highest good is pride; and the worst evil is shame and humiliation. For a guilty-ethic, the worst evil is pride (the deadliest of the Seven Deadly Sins in the guilt-ethic of Christianity); and the highest good (which to the adherent of a shame ethic is self-hating) is the absence of self-hate.

We only need moral commandments to order us to treat someone well when we do not do so spontaneously because we love the person. But shame inhibits love of others, and guilt inhibits self-love. So morality, far from solving the problem, exacerbates it. As Freud said, neurosis is the inhibition of the capacity for love. Thus morality and the moral emotions, can be recognized as the psychological causes of neurosis (and psychopathy). When you hear “morality” think “neurosis.” Mental and emotional health consist of the capacity to love both self and others, which transcends morality (and neurosis) and makes both unnecessary.

1. To understand the opposite effects of shame versus guilt in both normal and pathological behavior.
2. To recognize and understand the fact that there are two moralities, not one, and that they are opposite and antagonistic to one another.
3. To understand how both moral emotions, and the moral value systems they motivate, are also the main psychological causes of psychopathology.
presents:

James Gilligan, M.D.

Shame vs. Guilt, and the Problem of Morality

Saturday March 28, 2020
9:00 am — Registration/Coffee
9:30 am — 12 pm — Presentation

location:
The Red Lion Inn

For directions: www.redlioninn.com

www.wmaapp.org