**The Individual and Society – The Social Role of Shame**

**Abstract**

In this article we shall examine the social and cultural role of shame in Western culture throughout history. Even though shame is a feeling that has a physiological basis, the way in which we experience emotions differs from culture to culture since it is the meaning that we attach to an event that evokes the emotion rather than the event itself. We shall analyze this cultural phenomenon, by looking at, among other things, the foundational religious texts of Western culture. In addition, we shall reflect on whether there has been a shift in the role of shame as a social guide in the age of social media, and try to understand the phenomenon of social shaming in the present by referring to its cultural origins. The methodology most fitting to examine this cultural construct is the genealogical method, by way of which we shall come to see that shaming is not an essentially new phenomenon in Western culture, but only a new mode of expressing old patterns.

**Keywords:** shame, shaming, individual, society, genealogy