**Shame and its Origins in the Judeo-Christian Narrative**

The feeling of shame is the body’s physiological response when facing social pressure. However, culture plays a central role in the development of the shame response since it is through an individual’s interaction with his or her cultural environment that they select the appropriate emotional response (Edelman 1992). The ways in which we experience emotions differ between cultures because emotion is evoked by the significance attributed to an event, rather than the event itself (Ben-Zeev 1996).

Using the genealogical method, I shall examine the social role of shame and the phenomenon of shaming as they emerge from the Judeo-Christian roots of Western culture. Jung (1916) posits that worldviews are deeply entrenched in the religious experience; based on this, I suggest that they have the hidden power to influence and orient culture trends, and are preserved in the secular experience as similar structures that are given new forms of expression.

We first learn about shame in the Bible, in the story of the Garden of Eden. In Hebrew, the words “shame” (*boosha*) and “genitalia” (*mevooshim*) share a common linguistic root. In the story of the Garden of Eden, shame is inherently linked to the expression of one’s sexuality in the presence of the other. Shaming also has its place in the book of Genesis, epitomized by the infamous Mark of Cain.

We shall examine shame in Jewish sources in the context of confession, as a basis of comparison with Catholicism. In Catholicism, the concept of shame is an intrinsic part of confession, which is very different from the way it presents itself in Judaism. Catholic culture in the middle ages had in fact given rise to a kind of psychological pendulum, swinging back and forth between threat and encouragement, punishment and atonement, all in order to get the faithful to overcome the main, inescapable obstacle of confession – shame (Kleinberg 1995).

Institutional and social shaming can also be used as punishment and has an element of deterrence. However, instances of cruel and morally-questionable uses of shaming abound in Western history (Sellin 1980). In 1787, Benjamin Rush, one of the founding fathers of the United States of America, wrote an incisive article calling for a ban on the public beatings, pillories, and other punishments by humiliation that were carried out in the town square for public viewing (Runes 1947).

Our genealogical expedition along the trail of shame and shaming shall end in an examination of the present-day ‘town square’: social media.