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

The feeling of shame is the body’s physiological reaction to dealing with social pressure; however, culture has a central role in its development 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 from culture because it is the significance attributed to an event that evokes the emotion, rather than the event itself (Ben-Zeev 1996).

Using the genealogical method, I shall examine the social role of shame, as well as the phenomenon of shaming, as they emerge from the Judeo-Christian roots of Western culture. When worldviews are deeply entrenched in the religious experience, which we might assume, based on Jung, they have the hidden power to influence and orient culture while constantly changing, and are preserved in the secular experience as similar structures given new forms of expression (Jung 1916).

We first learn about shame in the Bible, in the story of the Garden of Eden. The words “shame” and “genitalia” in Hebrew share a common root, and in this story shame is inherently linked to the expression of one’s sexuality in the presence of the Other. Shaming too has its place in the book of Genesis, epitomized by the infamous Mark of Cain.

We shall then proceed to examine shame in Jewish sources in the context of confession, as a basis of comparison with Catholicism. The concept of shame as an intrinsic part of confession in Catholicism 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 that swung back and forth between threat and encouragement, between punishment and atonement, all in order to get the faithful to overcome the main and inescapable obstacle to confession – the shame of it (Kleinberg 1995).

Institutional and social shaming can also be used as punishment and has an element of deterrence, however, the instances when this use was cruel and lacking in moral judgment 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 demanding that public beatings, pillories and other punishments by humiliation that used to be carried out in the town square for public viewing be banned (Runes 1947).

We shall finish our genealogical expedition along the trail of shame and shaming in the new town square as it exists today on the Internet and on social media in particular.