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"To be no longer ashamed of Oneself": Shame, Embarrassment and Shamelessness in Nietzsche's Philosophy and Life (A Hermeneutical Study)

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The topic of shame may not seem, at first sight, a major issue in Nietzsche's philosophy, not any more a key to understanding it. The notion, however, does appear in some important contexts, if not highlights of his thinking, as we shall closely see, most remarkably in Gay Science and Zarathustra. Nietzsche also experienced in his life episodes of profoundly embarrassing character, and the feeling of being ashamed must have occurred, and played role, in some of the turning points of his biography. Also, if we think of shame's closest companion, guilt, it turns out even more relevant, as the philosopher has in fact engaged, and extensively, into analysis of „bad conscience", and „guilt feeling" in his most systemic and treatise-like work On the Genealogy of Morals, and in other books, too. This analysis is psycho-anthropological in its essence, and possibly impersonal, as it refers to "mankind", yet the reader might get an impression of some "deeper" motivation hiding behind this apparently objective and impartial, still very passionate, as much as exaggerated, critique of "bad conscience" in particular, and "Christianity" in general. If we follow this impression, it might lead into a deeper investigation of the theme of shame in Nietzsche, and how it casts light on his entire philosophical endeavour.

Introduction

In the following study - which assumes at its basis the principles of hermeneutical approach in that it combines an attempt at understanding the texts with an endeavour to understand the person behind (the author)[1] - I will venture to defend a hypothesis

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[1]In other words, our aim here is not to determine what exactly Nietzsche wanted to say about the world, and whether he was right in it or not (or: what did he believe was true); our aim is to understand what made him say what he said and what does it say about himself – who was he to say it? As H.G. Gadamer, the patron of all contemporary hermeneutical philosophy, stated in the initial part of his fundamental work *Wahrheit und Methode*, „Humanities have no method on their own. One can ask, then, after Helmholtz, what does „method" here mean, and if other conditions of human sciences are not much more important than inductive logic. Helmholtz rightly remarked this, when trying to properly define the essence of humanities he mentioned memory and authority, and discussed, too, psychological insight, which would replace conscious implying (...)" (part One, I. A.) He also added, in reference to the romantic theory of understanding by Schleiermacher, that he „assumes, that every individuality is an expression of all life, hence 'everybody holds in himself some minimum of everybody, and intuition is excited by comparison to oneself' (…) In this way focusing the understanding on the problem of individuality, Schleiermacher presents the task of hermeneutics as universal (…) The 'method' of understanding will be having before its eyes both what is common (through comparison), as well as what is specific (through insight), that is, it will be both comparative

that the feeling of shame, also in the broader meaning of being embarrassed, ashamed of oneself, and ridiculous, was an important element of Nietzsche's self-identity, one with which he waged an inner war, a war that triggered many of his major relationship breakups, mental crises and, perhaps less directly, the developments in his thinking. In this undertaking, my approach will also somehow echo the Nietzschean one, as Nietzsche indeed was one of the greatest masters of hermeneutics and his tools of understanding the psychology of the "deepest motifs"[2] – his "psychoanalysis" avant la lettre[3] – remain, if with some limitations, an inspiring method of interpretation [cf. BGE 23] one that can also be used to understanding Nietzsche himself.

Let us start with a remark that Nietzsche's biography might be divided into chapters which, each one, could take as their departure point a breakaway, a "divorce" or, in more Nietzschean wording, an "overcoming".[4] However we name the process, it seems that by principle it is mostly, if not exclusively, an essentially subjective, introvert and inner exercise; an event of which the substantial occurrences remain hidden from the external eyes, and perhaps from the internal, too, to some extent, and develop in an "inwards" rather than extraverted way, affecting the individual from within their profoundest emotional cradle – indeed, a breakaway is in the first place one which the Self has to do to itself and that proceeds by inner implosions; no one is more affected with it than the breaking up agent. And the challenge is so involving the entire Self that it requires – being otherwise ineffable on it own – a whole "philosophy", understood as an all-encompassing worldview, that would both express and indirectly give legitimacy to the rupturing event of life. Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole, without much controversy, could be defined as a philosophy of rupture.

To be more specific, let us recall the dramatic turns of Nietzsche's biography that clearly were such ruptures: firstly, the adolescent breakaway from religion and his naturally inherited professional career-path of a Lutheran minister; secondly, the breakaway from Wagner, which included an overnight flight from participating in Wagner's great festival in August 1876, and, consequently, a breakup with the "world"; thirdly, the forced breakup with Lou Salomé, his spiritual soulmate; four, the breakaway, temporal, from the mother and sister (following the Salomé affair); five, the intellectual breakaway from Schopenhauer, his "educator"; six, an ongoing

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and intuitive. In either aspect, however, it remains an 'art', as it cannot be reduced to a mechanical application of rules. Intuition is indispensable." (part Two, I.1.A.b. My translation). The reader might be also referred to J. Grondin, *Introduction to philosophical hermeneutics*, trans. J. Weinsheimer, Yale U.P., 2018, and also P. Ricoeur, *Existence and hermeneutics*.

[2]The most extensive discussion of Nietzsche's psychology is to be found in G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche et Philosophie.* See also: P. Katsafanas, *Nietzsche's philosophical psychology*, in: OHN [abbreviations refer to detailed bibliography]

[3]Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Existence and hermeneutics*.

[4]Such a biography, to the best of my knowledge, does not exist, but the events I am referring to here are very well known and covered by many recounts. This study is based on those given in: R. Safranski, *Nietzsche: Biographie seines Denkens*, Hanser: 2019; S. Prideaux: *I am dynamite. A life of Friedrich Nietzsche,* London, Faber&Faber, 2019; J. Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche. A Philosophical biography*, Cambridge U.P. 2010; J. Young, *Nietzsche and Women*, in: OHN; Charlie Huenemann, *Nietzsche's Illness*, in: OHN. The most important source on Nietzsche's life of course are his letters, I used the eKGWB archive [nietzschesource.org]; later in the text I will quote from them referring to date and addressee of the letter.

process of breaking away from Germany, the mother-country; seven, the growing solitude of the years before the final collapse; and lastly, a forced, final breakup with "all", himself included, marked by his neurologically caused mental collapse of the January 1889, which to so many, although a medical condition, seemed so much in line with his entire profile.[5]

One does not break up with their deepest engagements for a banal or superficial reason. There must be a wound, or a thorn burning inside, caused by an external-internal factor. The name external-internal is paradoxical and contradictory, but the factor indeed is both alien and proper, one's own, as much as Other's, and the Other is using it against the self – from within the self. In many cases this wound is one of shame, and it might be argued that in some, if not all, of Nietzsche's breakaways the shame-wound could have been a major driving force. Shame is an outside influence of the otherness, erasing the limits of one's self (the out-in imaginary edge of the subject), rooted, as well, in the most profound inner life. Apart from the shame-wound, however, there is also the shame of being wounded, of letting oneself be ashamed, or else, letting the outside life undermine the inside life – this is the inner thorn, the shame one feels for being ashamed. Not letting oneself to be ashamed, that is, detaching the inside from the outside enemy influence, becoming shameless, and also, in the last instance, extremely, as much as ridiculously, unashamedly proud, seems a state of mind which Nietzsche romanticized, and even obsessed about, under the term "innocence" [GS:Preface, 4, where one can find an expression "dangerous innocence"; GS:Songs, *In the South*], and connected to his metaphor of a "child". But how can one free oneself truly from it, if not by way of an over-all change of human nature?

For it seems that shame is an universal human experience, and, in the standard moral psychology, as well as common understanding, not an experience to be ashamed of, as indeed it is a "higher feeling", the Platonic thymos,[6] linked to and made possible by the human, and uniquely human, cognitive skills, enabling morality (as the recognition of one's wrong doings), reciprocity (as being primarily an interpersonal, or social feeling), and moral recovery (shame being indispensable mark of one's feeling guilty and a step towards repentance) – shame is not bad, and rather good, in the first place, while it is rather shamelessness that seems to be evil. And yet, the feeling of being ashamed of one's shame, even if this last one is justified, shows an inevitable ambiguity of the sentiment, which, although supposedly sublime and morally recommendable, leaves the individual inflicted with some distaste and a consciousness of weakness. This is likely because it is a negative, and self-related negative sentiment, verging with self-hate, and obviously not expressing one's joy with oneself, the condition which Spinoza believed to be a

[5]For Klossowski, *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1963, Nietzsche's madness is *the truth of his though,* the point where his philosophy of the eternal return and the dissolution of the stable self becomes real in his own life. "In Nietzsche, the thinking subject dissolves into the multiplicity of impulses that constitute him; madness marks the point at which this dissolution can no longer be symbolized.", p. 23; M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Preface: "The moment when Nietzsche goes mad is that in which his thought reaches its own limit, where it encounters that which it cannot think."

[6]B. Williams, *Shame and necessity*, U.C. Berkeley, 1993.

mark of personal power and virtue. Shame in fact is synonymous with feeling helpless and under pressure, it is a stressful wound, as already said, not a mere passing mood but something that always needs a cure. The likening of shame with weakness and illness is imminent in Nietzsche's understanding of it.

There is something beyond commonsensical, though, in his approach, also to be noticed immediately: his insistence and emphasis on the shame, and, more precisely, guilt feeling as widespread among human beings, to the extent of it being the ultimate condition to overcome for the "superman" (this last figure being defined many times by reference to "innocence", which was a term appearing in Nietzsche from very early on) [Z III: *The ugliest man*, IV: *The Awakening]* The ill of the ill-conscience turns to be even an "infinite guilt", never repayable debt [GM II: 20-23] Yet, it is arguable, indeed, from the everyday life perspective, how much really an average human being is eager to be affected by shame (or else, how much "christian" are Christians), and how often, in fact, it is rather lack thereof that seems a person's most remarkable feature, yet hardly their virtue, even from the controversial standpoint of specifically Nietzschean virtue ethics. Shamelessness does not seem, at first sight, neither rare, nor especially noble in most of its so many cases; very often it appears a psychopathic quality, or at least a mark of limited sensibility and responsibility. Any uncritical praise of shamelessness seems to point out to the fact that it is motivated by an exaggerated or excessive sense of shame, great vulnerability to it, overrating its psychological impact and force in the individual psyche, one very subjective and hardly rooted in common human experience, or else, a conviction of specifically idiosyncratic, and thus otherwise unverifiable, nature.

Nietzsche's Questionnaire

As a more specific evidence for the above somehow speculative interpretation of Nietzsche's deeper motifs, we might turn, to begin with, to one less commented fragment of the *Gay Science*, namely, what one could name "Nietzsche's questionnaire". This is a passage from the end of Book III, contained in paragraphs 268-275, a series of eight questions and answers of which the last three refer explicitly to the theme of shame. Here is the entire thing:

> *268. What makes Heroic?—To face simultaneously one's greatest suffering and one's highest hope.*
> *269. What dost thou Believe in?—In this: That the weights of all things must be determined anew.*
> *270. What Saith thy Conscience?—"Thou shalt become what thou art."*
> *271. Where are thy Greatest Dangers?—In pity.*
> *272. What dost thou Love in others?—My hopes.*
> *273. Whom dost thou call Bad?—Him who always wants to put others to shame.*
> *274. What dost thou think most humane?—To spare a person shame.*
> *275. What is the Seal of Attained Liberty?—To be no longer ashamed of oneself.*
>
> (transl. by Th. Common)

This is a questionnaire in the sense of a series of questions that should reveal the subject's inner nature, his ideals; a very well known example is that of Proust's questionnaire. This form, especially if primarily addressed to the author, self-oriented, which seems to be usually the case, and is evidenced in point 269, is particularly personal and even intimate in tone, style, and its truth-value. Number 270 overshadowed the others with its famous, and repeated by Nietzsche in other works, formula of existential truthfulness to oneself, originating in Pindar's odes; however the ending of this otherwise important fragment had rarely attained any closer attention, even though it seems programmatic for the remaining part of Nietzsche's intellectual development, and the questions seem to follow in the order of importance. There is clearly an early formulation, in the fragment 269, of the "reevaluation of the values" project, to be fully and extensively treated in the three essays of GM, but there is also the "self-therapeutic" project of facing the greatest suffering as the greatest hope, in all likelihood related to Nietzsche's coping with ill health (268), and there is the early announcement of yet another Nietzsche's themes, that of "pity" being the greatest danger to himself, which will also return in GM, but in a more generalized way of a threat to all humanity as such [Z III: *The retur*n; GM III:14].

Thus, the fragment is not marginal to the entire Nietzsche's philosophy, but contains in a pill some of his major topics. It is remarkable, then, too, that it ends with three interconnected ideas about shame. The reason why this arguably important passage, and especially its reference to shame, had not been subject to many analyses, and have relatively modest presence in commentary literature, might be that it sounds not so intensely Nietzschean as usually quotes from the philosopher would. In this passage Nietzsche seems milder, more "vulnerable" and confessing than he typically appears, and more exposed to the reader. For he usually does not disclose himself directly, but rather covers behind masks and even assumes poses, almost always avoiding to show his vulnerability (in other words, the author implied by his official works is very different from his actual person, cf. BGE 40) – a "masked philosopher", as Klossowski, and Foucault,[7] deemed him. This, however, is a rare fragment of his lowered grandiosity, where his use of the term "humane" and "most humane" is not misanthropic but humanist; and he generally sounds almost unlike himself – assuming an intimate tenor. It seems, then, that it might have been indeed the issue, primarily personal, of shame that led Nietzsche to the extended study of psychology of morality and a critical genealogy of moral values.

The Gay Science is a work marking the turn from early to mature Nietzsche, as the ideas of Overman, Eternal Recurrence, Will-to-power, Amor Fati, God's death all commence to emerge there; it is also very often accounted for as indicating philosopher's shift from a "culturalist" perspective to one "naturalist", with the intent of "renaturalization of human nature".[8]

By the time of its publication just several years passed from Nietzsche's breakaway from Wagner. This event, beyond the officially expressed reasons, had

[7]The topic of Nietzsche as a masked philosopher can be traced from P. Klossowski, *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1963; through G. Deleuze, op. cit.; to M. Foucault, „The Masked Philosopher", in: *Foucault Live: Interviews, 1961–1984,* ed. Sylvère Lotringer, 1989.
[8]Michael Ure, *Nietzsche's The Gay Science: An Introduction*, Cambridge U.P. 2019, pp. 112–153.

as backstage the most embarrassing and shaming opinion Wagner shared about Nietzsche with his doctor, suggesting the actual cause of his bad health to be compulsive masturbation. Of course, this embarrassing aspect of the end of Nietzsche's connection to Wagner, and thus his belonging to the cultural elites, should not disavow Nietzsche's critique of Wagnerism, yet it might explain its ferocity. Also, Nietzsche started to depart from his "Master" much earlier than the news about allegation came to him in 1877, upon his visit to doctor Eiser, who has reportedly revealed to him Wagner's letter.[9] In 1878, in *Human, All too Human* [HAH I: "From the artists' and writers' soul", 145-223] Nietzsche somehow sealed the breakup with Wagner textually with an assault on what he himself had been the foremost representative of – the cult of the artist-genius, and the great artist as such. Clearly, in accord with the mechanism of wound-induced breakup, the volume of this criticism, which Nietzsche later on returned to multiple times, proves how much the philosopher needed to cut off a piece of his "heart". It was a self-surgery, which costed him lots of self-inflicted pain. The fact that he has been for all years of relationship with Wagner "in love" with Wagner's wife, and that the Wagners realized it, made the whole story even more embarrassing. Wagner is never explicitly mentioned in the passages of HAH, but he did understand that it was all about him, and from that time on Nietzsche was considered persona non grata in the Wagnerian circle. Of, course, later there would come more Wagner-related texts, also with him being explicitly named, that will try to offend and diminish the composer in even more furious manner, with the *Case of Wagner* as the one of the last Nietzsche's texts, and one already verging on madness – proving that their breakup remained a major issue for Nietzsche until his last days of lucid life.

The fragment cited seems indeed Nietzsche's major middle-stage programmatic self-expression, which set the agenda of his later studies and critiques. A clear connection between "becoming oneself" and "being no longer ashamed of oneself" is noticeable – these are not separate tasks, it might be argued. This seems, however, only relatively true – in circumstances in which being ashamed of oneself is not accidental, not limited to justified cases of having done something wrong (and Nietzsche, we should be reminded, in all likelihood has never done anything morally appalling or mean, nothing to be reasonably ashamed of, as his general conduct of life was rather kind and generous) – but an overwhelming feeling consuming the entire individual, permeating his personality and identity. He wanted, nevertheless, to see it as an external influence upon him, hence the figure of "him who always wants to put others in shame". Let us call him "shamer". He must be seen as bad.

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[9]Sander L. Gilman, „Otto Eiser and Nietzsche's Illness: A Hitherto Unpublished Text", in: *Nietzsche Studien* (2009), 38: pp. 396-409. "At my instigation, Dr. Eiser's widow took special care of one of Richard Wagner's letters to her deceased husband. As she told me, 'The contents of this letter are known only to me' (…) Richard Wagner wrote this letter when he learned that Dr. Eiser had met his young friend [Nietzsche] and gave him medical advise. In a fiathful, truly fatherly way, he shares his hypothesis about the cause [i.e. masturbation] of Nietzsche's illness with his mutual medical friend. 'Why did Nietzsche break away from Wagner?' Eiser once said: 'I alone know, because this break took place in my house, in my examining room, when I informed Nietzsche about the letter with the best of intentions. The result was an outbreak of rage, Nietzsche was beside himself, the words that he found for Wagner cannot be repeated. At the moment the break was sealed." - E. Kretzer, "Erinnerungen an Dr. Otto Eiser", 1912. This excerpt cited from: http://www.thenietzschechannel.com/correspondence/eng/nlett-1877.htm

The opposite is to spare shame, the most human, noble thing. We could remark that while there are reasons to dislike shamers, and they are controversial persons, to place them on the top of the bad seems, again, very relative to individual circumstances – who do you have to be to deem shamers the worst? And, also, referring to 271, who do you have to be to believe that pity is your greatest danger? (It will later, after being repeated in Zarathustra as his ultimate temptation, turn out to be "humanity's greatest danger" in BGE and GM).

Zarathustra's Shame

The relation between shame and pity in Nietzsche reveals a certain dialectics, with either term undergoing within it a movement of reversal. This can be traced in the fragment from Zarathustra, p. I, "The pitiful":

> *Man himself is to the discerning one: the animal with red cheeks.*
> *How hath that happened unto him? Is it not because he hath had to be ashamed too oft?*
> *O my friends! Thus speaketh the discerning one: shame, shame, shame—that is the history of man!*
> *And on that account doth the noble one enjoin upon himself not to abash: bashfulness doth he enjoin on himself in presence of all sufferers.*
> *Verily, I like them not, the merciful ones, whose bliss is in their pity: too destitute are they of bashfulness.*
> *If I must be pitiful, I dislike to be called so; and if I be so, it is preferably at a distance.*

Importantly, in the original German version, shame and bashfulness are one word: "Scham", and "to abash" is "to shame" ("schämen" in both cases). The translator decided, however, and not without reason, to discern the two kinds of shame, as clearly there is a diametric change in the meaning of the term – from the shame of being pitied to that of pitying. So to "spare shame" is to realise that pitying puts to shame, and to turn ashamed of this shaming the other (or, "the sufferer") - that is, to pity them "at a distance" (without letting them feel our pity), and not to let oneself enjoy one's shaming/pitying the other.

However this might seem complicated, if not confusing, Nietzsche seems intuitively correct in that any act of true compassion (let us use this word instead of "pity") should not be about emphasising how sorry we feel for the other; it must be sensitive and discreet, not to offend the other's self-esteem. And that very often pitiers fail to act in such discreet manner, to the detriment, and even greater shame, and pain, of the pitied. This is why a noble man is abashed in the presence of the sufferers – they are more embarrassing than pity-worth to him, while the ignoble pitiers are not embarrassed to manifestly pity and, by the same token, humiliate. To shame is to make weaker, and the noble one will not do that. In other words, shame here turns into shame of shaming – nothing is more shameful than shaming. Pity, on the other hand, turns out to be a form of shamelessness, but not innocent, in the merciful, marked by his "bliss in pity".[10]

[10]D. Burnham, M. Jesinghausen, *Nietzsche's Thus spoke Zarathustra*, Edinburgh U.P., 2010, p. 81:

One can observe, yet, that Nietzsche himself was a sufferer, and a great one; in much likelihood he has suffered more than average human being, as his health has been miserable for most of his lifetime, and he needed a lot of support from his close ones while at the same time being affected by regular painful lows, physical and mental. That suffering was his foremost experience is also confirmed in GS 268: "heroic" is to confront one's suffering as one's hope, and there is no doubt this heroism was Nietzsche's own purpose, the virtue he willed. He was a sufferer to the extent that one might suppose that the entire dialectics occurs in his own consciousness, the pity being primarily self-pity, and the shamer, or pitier, too, being himself in the first place. This schizoid consciousness seems more evident in the fragment ending the second part of Zarathustra: "The stillest hour". Here an instant of late night falling asleep turns into a personified figure of the "terrible mistress", and the following discussion occurs in sleep – there is not much doubt that Zarathustra is speaking to himself. And since we intuitively tend to understand Zarathustra as Nietzsche's alter ego, there will be no much controversy in assuming that these are all voices speaking within Nietzsche's self – even if formulated in extremely metaphoric way.

> *Yesterday towards evening there spake unto me MY STILLEST HOUR: that is the name of my terrible mistress.(...)*
> *Do ye know the terror of him who falleth asleep?—*
> *To the very toes he is terrified, because the ground giveth way under him, and the dream beginneth.(...)*
> *Then was there spoken unto me without voice: "THOU KNOWEST IT, ZARATHUSTRA?"—(...)*
> *And at last I answered, like one defiant: "Yea, I know it, but I will not speak it!"*
> *Then was there again spoken unto me without voice: "Thou WILT not, Zarathustra? Is this true? Conceal thyself not behind thy defiance!"—*
> *And I wept and trembled like a child, and said: "Ah, I would indeed, but how can I do it! Exempt me only from this! It is beyond my power!"(...)*
> *O Zarathustra, thou shalt go as a shadow of that which is to come: thus wilt thou command, and in commanding go foremost."—*
> *And I answered: "I am ashamed."*
> *Then was there again spoken unto me without voice: "Thou must yet become a child, and be without shame."*

There is no room here to argue that the entire *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, with all of its symbolic figures, from animals to kings, and from the rope-walker to the ugliest man, plus many other in the book's menagerie, priests, eremites, disciples, etc., is basically a stage set to represent Nietzsche's inner struggle with himself, and that they all represent, each on its own, some aspect of his complex identity, which apparently was far from whatever the psychology of today would call "integrity" - his was one of "dis-integrity", it might be argued. Without, then, going so far, we may still assume that in reference to shame this actually is the case: Nietzsche might

„Shame is something like the consciousness of inadequacy, of failing to live up to one's values or achieve one's goals. To incite or even notice such shame is itself shameful. If the sufferer receives pity, it is a public acknowledgement of failure or deficiency. Thus, pitying is only productive of more suffering, both directly and indirectly through revenge. From that follows the secondary shame of the one who pities (...)"

have been his own most vicious shamer, and the whole critique of shaming is basically directed inwards rather than outwards.

Of course, he did experience being put in shame by actual others, not just those ones within himself, but he did not cope with this external influences by communicating or negotiating with those others – he only broke up with them; with one more complicated case of being broken up with by Lou Salomé. That event took place while Nietzsche was writing the first part of *Zarathustra*, whose subsequent parts emerged during the next two years (1883-1885). In the Spring of 1882 he met the young, twenty-years old Russian woman, later to become famous writer. The traumatic event has been described by many authors, so we shall just be reminded here of the circumstances relevant for our theme. The situation indeed placed the philosopher in the crossfire of shame, embarrassment and, finally, guilt feeling. There was the embarrassment of being in love with someone who is not in love with him, and the shame of the official proposal twice rejected. There was an idea of a *ménage a trois,* including the other man in love with her, his friend – soon to be ex-friend – Paul Rée. An offer which Lou Salomé disclosed to Nietzsche's sister, who, in her turn, told their mother about it, and also described to her the whole context as scandalising and extremely embarrassing – did she say anything about Nietzsche's and the two others' famous photograph with them bound to a cart driven by her holding a whip? It might have been the case, as Lou Salomé was very indiscreet about the image, showing it to just everybody during the Bayreuth Festival (another aspect of the whole embarrass). Then came the blow from mother: "You're a disgrace to your father's grave", upon which he left home slamming the door. And lastly, after suffering all this, he was dumped by Lou and by Rée, who preferred her company to his: the two just fled overnight; thereby leaving him completely alone. This time he was not the agent of breakaway, but was broken up with by those he considered closest – it must have been a shame he was particularly ashamed of. And afterwards he put a lot of effort into breaking up with his own affection for Lou, and strived to not feel ashamed by the shame it apparently has been. Interestingly enough, this did not stop him from writing embarrassing letters to her, alternating anger with self-pitying, and even going as far as suggesting his suicide. He did not stop from blaming her of being egoistic, shameless, immoral and even too much willing power. He did not spare her shame [Letters to Lou Salomé, Dec. 1882 {eKGWB: BVN-1882-347, 348, 351, 352, 360, 362}]

Was it the case that even after breaking-away from his shamers he still did not feel liberated, and far from having "clear conscience"? Was it the case, moreover, that his shame was too powerful, that it was so strong to have him feel weak, and totally so, in his stillest, that is, perhaps, most honest hour? Was it "beyond his power"?

Shame and Guilt

If this was actually the case, then we might understand the next step of Nietzsche's critique, which is mostly about explaining the power of shame. This challenge will get him to contemplate the idea of guilt, and to develop his more anthropological, or else referring to humankind, rather than personal only, point of

view. It included, on the one hand, what we could name Nietzsche's "determinism"[11] - his explicit and repeated rejection of the idea of "free will" [HAH I: 106, GS 127, BGE 21, TI: "The four great errors", 8, "Reason in philosophy", 5; A 14] - and, on the other hand, a philosophical narrative of the origins of conscience, which will find its most systemic treatment in the *Genealogy of Morals*, with many remarks and ideas already exposed in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

As to the first, the "free will" issue, Nietzsche's stance seems clear: since there is no free will, moral responsibility, and guilt, are mere illusions. There is no need to present Nietzsche's arguments on the matter, what is important for us is that determinism provides an ontological "innocence" - since everything happens out of necessity, nothing could be different from what it is, and nothing, either, is to be blamed, or regretted, or to cause shame [HAH I: 39, 106, 107]. This is also a Spinozian message [GM II: 15].

Secondly, apart from the ontology of innocence, there is also "history", so he provides an extensive account of how, once, conscience, and, thereafter, bad conscience originated in the human being as such. In order to explain to himself why he was so overwhelmed with shame, he resorted to a concept we might name "culture of guilt". The whole second essay is about this and "related matters": those of "responsibility", "debt", "punishment", "crime", "torture", and the stake is generally to show how all of these developed through a cruel and painful human evolution – Nietzsche somehow realised, on this way, that they also were specific milestones of the animal becoming human animal. The narrative also echoes the old myth of "lost innocence" and the Rousseauian topic of the innocent savage – of course, with an imporant anti-Rousseauian sting: Nietzsche's "savage" - he called him "beast" [GM I: 11] - is innocent while, or despite, being cruel and violent, rather than being capable of primordial compassion.

Not surprisingly, the "beast", together with the "child", represented for Nietzsche primary models of "being free from shame". Both are very risky, and double-sided, metaphors of what he aspired to become – either suggesting a certain "return" to the natural, and "immaculate", sinless, to use religious (or, more precisely, Christian language). Obviously, this sinlessness should be the opposite of the Christian idea of repentance, redemption, and forgiveness, as it is the longterm Christian influence that endowed humans with guilt, and, what is more, its specialty – an infinite, irrepayable guilt (in connection with "primordial sin"). And yet, there is a remarkable likeness between Nietzsche's "sparing the other shame" and Christ's saying "do not judge", or the former's idea of forgiving the other, and not blaming them. Nietzsche, however, saw Christianity as the major reason why man's history was that of "shame, shame, shame", and the Christian forgiveness as fake, dishonest and hypocritical – the Christians, typically, "forgive" because they have no better way of taking revenge on their wrongdoers, and the actual meaning of Christ's "do not blame" is: "blame yourself." [GM III: 15] Their forgiveness is an expression of their weakness and relies, also, upon the belief that God will eventually punish those they "forgave". And the visions of these infernal punishments for the sinners Nietzsche will be happy to

[11]This is not a „standard" determinism, and scholars dispute whether it is not „fatalism", but for the sake of this study it is important only to note his disbelief in „free choice". See: R. Lanier Anderson, *Nietzsche on Autonomy*, in: OHN

extensively quote from Tertulian's and Aquinas works [GM I: 14, 15]

The ultimate revealing conclusion Nietzsche made in GM, is, we remember, that blaming/shaming is the weapon of the weak against the strong; and as much as altruism is a necessary virtue of the weak, the main subject of shaming is "egoism" [GM Preface: 5-6]. This, however, is the natural, primordial feature of the human animal, which, by the priest-imposed shift towards devaluating that original nature, becomes an ill animal, one self-weakening and self-diminishing.

The stake of this narrative is to demonstrate that, in the ultimate instance, guilt feeling, and a fortiori that of shame, too, are not objective things. They are an invention, a fictional, phantom idea made up to reverse the hierarchy of the strong and weak, and what is more, they are produce of ressentiment, which explains their venomous power. It is also to give reason why, from the individual point of view, the feeling is so overwhelming and deep inside oneself – it is not a personal matter, but an effect of history of human degeneration (or else, nihilism, will-to-nothingness), a cultural environment which makes one ill in the first place, and challenges one to overcome their illness by means of not less than reinventing the culture, or more precisely moral culture – that is changing it entirely into one facilitating innocent shamelessness rather than ill-conscience.

Nietzsche, for that matter, has been controversially successful in the pursuit of liberating himself from any shame. In fact, his case could perhaps show that such a pursuit, when taken to the extreme, can turn into madness, if it is not a mark of some mental disorder in the first place – at least to the extent that irrational shame is a "neurotic" quality. Nietzsche's last months in autumn/winter Turin of 1888/1889 could be recounted as history of how one become shameless, free from any concern for "what will people say", as well as expressing the most flamboyant self-praise, megalomania, and a growing conviction that he was all humanity's healer, and a historic breakthrough, not lest that he had cured himself. There developed, too, in him some identity distortions, or perhaps to use Deleuze's concept, "becomings" - Nietzsche signed his letters with various names, ranging from Dionysus, to Julius Ceasar, and to some murderers of the time, currently covered by the press he read, and, last but not least, to the king of Italy [Letters of December 1888/January 1889]. Even the mere number of the letters, e.g. on Jan. 4th he wrote thirteen, indicates how alienated he was. Apart from his writings, his conduct, too, was increasingly weird, very likely to the embarrassment of many witnesses: he wore clothes off size and in bizarre colors, he was incessantly grinning for days; he introduced himself unconventionally ("Sono dio" - "I am god") or just accosted persons in the street.[12] He wept while listening to music, and he has been *twenty* times to opera to hear Bizet's *Carmen* [CW: I]. We will be reminded, too, of his unusual moustache that from some point appeared overgrown, or unkept, covering his mouth wholly (how did he manage it while eating, especially that he had a habit of eating two raw eggs for breakfast and for dinner?)[13], as if he had nothing to say; we might invoke, too, how a year earlier he wandered happily around earthquake affected city of Nice, laughing at frightened crowds gathering for safety in public spaces [Letters to

[12]S. Prideaux, *I am dynamite...*, op. cit., p. 321-323.
[13]J. Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche...*, op. cit., p. 316.

Franziska Nietzsche, H. Koselitz, R. v. Seydlitz of 24 Feb. 1887].

It seems an indispensable feature of not being ashamed of oneself: in the last instance it means that one can feel unashamed even while being extremely embarrassing – and more, one is even happy to shamelessly experiment in public with diverse embarrassing displays, and to amplify their intensity. If the "Turin horse"[14] event really has happened, then it could have been another such display (it was likely very weird and embarrassing in that epoch of ubiquitous horse use to protect an animal from the fiacre's whip). It could be argued, then, that Nietzsche, even if not very successful in other aspects of his philosophical project – as it could hardly be admitted that he indeed healed himself, whatever he claimed, or that he managed to invert the path of manhood, as he willed – did, in fact, realise this one end, that of becoming shameless and innocent like a child or beast.

Exit Remarks

Instead of any definite conclusion to these observations, let us remark, finally, that the greatest shamer and guilt-imposer, the priest – whom Nietzsche's father was, and whom Nietzsche himself, as said, was supposed to become – is for him the figure of both his personal, and, more generally, humankind's destiny; so through this symbolic character Nietzsche could connect his individual history to that of humanity, making his case a certain microcosmic representation of the historico-anthropological macrocosmos, and himself an ultimate representative of the manhood as such and, more specifically, a singular illustration of manhood's necessary task of overcoming their actual condition – that of being ill due to their morality, sick of their accepted, but life depreciating values.

Lastly, from the psychoanalysis perspective, by breaking up with priesthood, Nietzsche, in fact, broke up with his father; something, apparently, that he could not do "literally", as was the case with his mother (of course, eventually, the breakup with his mother did not actually happen or was erased by the reality of Nietzsche's special care requirements). It is remarkable how the philosopher, although so fiercely critical towards the priests, never said anything directly disrespectful about his father-minister, quite the contrary, his picture of father, even as a preacher, seems idealised, pious and very favourable – which contrasts strikingly with Nietzsche's contempt for this estate, and also with his contempt, explicitly uttered, for mother and sister, the two persons on whom he was most dependent and who, without much doubt, have been always caring for and sustaining him, at least in material terms (it might be only doubted if the two women were capable of supporting or even understanding his intellectual struggles). Which very likely made him ashamed in the first place, and not least because his home and raising were parochial, conservative, and petty-bourgeois. Such surroundings could have otherwise been fertile to breeding the feeling, especially in the so called Victorian era.

Nietzsche's treatment of the subject of shame/guilt feeling as a psychological problem, rather than exclusively moral condition, and one that can be a mark of ill

[14]G. de Pourtales, *Nietzsche in Italy*, trans. W. Stone, Pushkin Press, London 2022 [first publ. 1929].

mental health, not just of being a sinner, which with much likelihood had not had precedents, as well as his insights into the matter, including those that connected ill-being with "sexual purity" or chastity (and Nietzsche, let us not forget, defied chastity and sexual ascesis multiple times [Z:I, *Chastity*], despite being himself ascetic in this area), undoubtedly anticipated Freud's psychoanalysis. In a way, it might be observed here without further development, Freud rephrased and reinterpreted a lot of Nietzsche's insights concerning what he would examine under the notion of neurosis, and using the figure of the neurotic, with its, exposed very clearly by psychoanalysis, immense, but irrational guilt feeling – notwithstanding the idea, even if transformed, of "being no longer ashamed of oneself" conceived as a matter of mental health - this being Nietzsche's authentic, yet somehow overlooked in standard accounts, legacy in humanities.

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