

1 “To be no longer ashamed of oneself”: 2 Shame, embarrassment and shamelessness in 3 Nietzsche's philosophy and life (a hermeneutical study) 4

5 The topic of shame may not seem, at first sight, a major issue in Nietzsche's
6 philosophy, not any more a key to understanding it. The notion, however, does
7 appear in some important contexts, if not highlights of his thinking, as we shall
8 closely see, most remarkably in *Gay Science* and *Zarathustra*. Nietzsche also
9 experienced in his life episodes of profoundly embarrassing character, and the
10 feeling of being ashamed must have occurred, and played role, in some of the
11 turning points of his biography. Also, if we think of shame's closest companion,
12 guilt, it turns out even more relevant, as the philosopher has in fact engaged,
13 and extensively, into analysis of „bad conscience”, and „guilt feeling” in his
14 most systemic and treatise-like work *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and in other
15 books, too. This analysis is psycho-anthropological in its essence, and
16 possibly impersonal, as it refers to "mankind", yet the reader might get an
17 impression of some "deeper" motivation hiding behind this apparently
18 objective and impartial, still very passionate, as much as exaggerated, critique
19 of "bad conscience" in particular, and "Christianity" in general. If we follow
20 this impression, it might lead into a deeper investigation of the theme of shame
21 in Nietzsche, and how it casts light on his entire philosophical endeavor.
22

23 24 Introduction

25
26 In the following study - which assumes at its basis the principles of
27 hermeneutical approach in that it combines an attempt at understanding the texts
28 with an endeavor to understand the person behind (the author)¹ - I will venture
29 to defend a hypothesis that the feeling of shame, also in the broader meaning of

¹In 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 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*.

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(nother) 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 its 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 Salome, his spiritual soulmate; four, the breakaway, temporal, from mother and sister (following the Salome affair); five, the intellectual breakaway from Schopenhauer, his "educator"; six, an ongoing process of breaking away from Germany, the mother-country; seven, the growing solitude of the years before

²The 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]

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

⁴Such 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.

1 the final collapse; and lastly, a forced, final breakup with "all", himself included,
 2 marked by his neurologically caused mental collapse of the January 1889, which
 3 to so many, although a medical condition, seemed so much in line with his entire
 4 profile.⁵

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

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

⁵For Klossowski, *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1963, Nietzsche's madness is *the truth of his thought*, 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."

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

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; 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 return*; 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

⁷The 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.

1 death all commence to emerge there; it is also very often accounted for as
 2 indicating philosopher's shift from a "culturalist" perspective to one "naturalist",
 3 with the intent of "renaturalization of human nature".⁸

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

31 The fragment cited seems indeed Nietzsche's major middle-stage
 32 programmatic self-expression, which set the agenda of his later studies and
 33 critiques. A clear connection between "becoming oneself" and "being no longer
 34 ashamed of oneself" is noticeable – these are not separate tasks, it might be

⁸Michael Ure, *Nietzsche's The Gay Science: An Introduction*, Cambridge U.P. 2019, pp. 112–153.

⁹Sander 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>

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 wants, 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 has to be seen as bad. 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 realize 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

1 of “pity”) should not be about emphasizing how sorry we feel for the other; it
 2 must be sensitive and discreet, not to offend the other's self-esteem. And that
 3 very often pitiers fail to act in such discreet manner, to the detriment, and even
 4 greater shame, and pain, of the pitied. This is why a noble man is abashed in the
 5 presence of the sufferers – they are more embarrassing than pity-worth to him,
 6 while the ignoble pitiers are not embarrassed to manifestly pity and, by the same
 7 token, humiliate. To shame is to make weaker, and the noble one will not do that.
 8 In other words, shame here turns into shame of shaming – nothing is more
 9 shameful than shaming. Pity, on the other hand, turns out to be a form of
 10 shamelessness, but not innocent, in the merciful, marked by his “bliss in pity”.¹⁰

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

28
 29 *Yesterday towards evening there spake unto me MY STILLEST HOUR: that is the*
 30 *name of my terrible mistress.(...)*
 31 *Do ye know the terror of him who falleth asleep?—*
 32 *To the very toes he is terrified, because the ground giveth way under him, and the*
 33 *dream beginneth.(...)*
 34 *Then was there spoken unto me without voice: “THOU KNOWEST IT,*
 35 *ZARATHUSTRA?”—(...)*
 36 *And at last I answered, like one defiant: “Yea, I know it, but I will not speak it!”*
 37 *Then was there again spoken unto me without voice: “Thou WILT not, Zarathustra?*
 38 *Is this true? Conceal thyself not behind thy defiance!”—*
 39 *And I wept and trembled like a child, and said: “Ah, I would indeed, but how can*
 40 *I do it! Exempt me only from this! It is beyond my power!”(...)*
 41 *O Zarathustra, thou shalt go as a shadow of that which is to come: thus wilt thou*

¹⁰D. Burnham, M. Jesinghausen, *Nietzsche's Thus spoke Zarathustra*, Edinburgh U.P., 2010, p. 81: „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 (...)”

1 *command, and in commanding go foremost.*”—

2 *And I answered: “I am ashamed.”*

3 *Then was there again spoken unto me without voice: “Thou must yet become a*
 4 *child, and be without shame.”*

5
 6 There is no room here to argue that the entire *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, with
 7 all of its symbolic figures, from animals to kings, and from the rope-walker to
 8 the ugliest man, plus many other in the book's menagerie, priests, eremites,
 9 disciples, children etc., is basically a stage set to represent Nietzsche's inner
 10 struggle with himself, and that they all represent each on its own some aspect of
 11 his complex identity, which apparently was far from whatever the psychology of
 12 today would call “integrity” - his was one of “dis-integrity”, it might be argued.
 13 Without, then, going so far, we may still assume that in reference to shame this
 14 actually is the case: Nietzsche might have been his own most vicious shamer,
 15 and the whole critique of shaming is basically directed inwards rather than
 16 outwards.

17 Of course, he did experience being put in shame by actual others, not just
 18 those ones within himself, but he did not cope with this external influences by
 19 communicating or negotiating with those others – he only broke up with them;
 20 with one more complicated case of being broken up with by Lou Salomé. That
 21 event took place while Nietzsche was writing the first part of *Zarathustra*, whose
 22 subsequent parts emerged during the next two years (1883-1885). In the Spring
 23 of 1882 he met the young, twenty-years old Russian woman, later to become
 24 famous writer. The traumatic event has been described by many authors, so we
 25 shall just be reminded here of the circumstances relevant for our theme. The
 26 situation indeed placed the philosopher in the crossfire of shame, embarrassment
 27 and, finally, guilt feeling. There was the embarrassment of being in love with
 28 someone who is not in love with him, and the shame of the official proposal
 29 twice rejected. There was an idea of a *ménage à trois*, including the other man
 30 in love with her, his friend – soon to be ex-friend – Paul Rée. An offer which
 31 Lou Salomé disclosed to Nietzsche's sister, who, in her turn, told their mother
 32 about it, and also described to her the whole context as scandalizing and
 33 extremely embarrassing – did she say anything about Nietzsche's and the two
 34 others' famous photograph with them bound to a cart driven by her holding a
 35 whip? It might have been the case, as Lou Salomé was very indiscreet about the
 36 image, showing it to just everybody during the Bayreuth Festival (another aspect
 37 of the whole embarrass). Then came the blow from mother: “You're a disgrace
 38 to your father's grave”, upon which he left home slamming the door. And lastly,
 39 after suffering all this, he was dumped by Lou and by Rée, who preferred her
 40 company to his: the two just fled overnight; thereby leaving him completely
 41 alone. This time he was not the agent of breakaway, but was broken by those he
 42 considered closest – it must have been a shame he was particularly ashamed of.
 43 And afterwards he put a lot of effort into breaking up with his own affection for
 44 Lou, and strived to not feel ashamed by the shame it apparently has been.
 45 Interestingly enough, this did not stop him from writing embarrassing letters to
 46 her, alternating anger with self-pitying, and even going as far as suggesting his
 47 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 lecture [GM II: 15].

Secondly, apart from 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 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 realizes, 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 important anti-Rousseauian sting: Nietzsche's “savage” - he calls him “beast” [GM I: 11] - is innocent while, or despite, being cruel and violent, rather than being capable of primordial compassion.

¹¹This 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

1 Not surprisingly, the “beast”, together with the “child”, represent for
 2 Nietzsche primary models of “being free from shame”. Both are very risky, and
 3 double-sided, metaphors of what he aspires to become – either suggesting a
 4 certain “return” to the natural, and “immaculate”, sinless, to use religious (or,
 5 more precisely, Christian language). Obviously, this sinlessness should be the
 6 opposite of the Christian idea of repentance, redemption, and forgiveness, as it
 7 is the longterm Christian influence that endowed humans with guilt, and, what
 8 is more, its specialty – an infinite, irrepayable guilt (in connection with
 9 “primordial sin”). And yet, there is a remarkable likeness between Nietzsche's
 10 “sparing the other shame” and Christ's saying “do not judge”, or the former's
 11 idea of forgiving the other, and not blaming them. Nietzsche, however, saw
 12 Christianity as the major reason why man's history was that of “shame, shame,
 13 shame”, and the Christian forgiveness as fake, dishonest and hypocritical – the
 14 Christians, typically, “forgive” because they have no better way of taking
 15 revenge on their wrongdoers, and the actual meaning of Christ's “do not blame”
 16 is: “blame yourself.” [GM III: 15] Their forgiveness is an expression of their
 17 weakness and relies, also, upon the belief that God will eventually punish those
 18 they “forgave”. And the visions of these infernal punishments for the sinners
 19 Nietzsche will be happy to extensively quote from Tertulian's and Aquinas works
 20 [GM I: 14, 15]

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

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

38 Nietzsche, for that matter, has been controversially successful in the pursuit
 39 of liberating himself from any shame. In fact, his case could perhaps show that
 40 such a pursuit, when taken to the extreme, can turn into madness, if it is not a
 41 mark of some mental disorder in the first place – at least to the extent that
 42 irrational shame is a “neurotic” quality. Nietzsche's last months in autumn/winter
 43 Turin of 1888/1889 could be recounted as history of how one become shameless,
 44 free from any concern for “what will people say”, as well as expressing the most
 45 flamboyant self-praise, megalomania, and a growing conviction that he was all
 46 humanity's healer, and a historic breakthrough, not lest that he had cured himself.

1 There develop too some identity distortions, or perhaps to use Deleuze's concept,
 2 "becomings" - Nietzsche signs his letters with various names, ranging from
 3 Dionysus, to Julius Ceasar, and to some murderers of the time, currently covered
 4 by the press he read, and, last but not least, to the king of Italy [Letters of
 5 December 1888/January 1889], and even the mere number of the letters, e.g. on
 6 Jan. 4th he wrote thirteen, indicates how alienated he was. Apart from his
 7 writings, his conduct, too, was increasingly weird, very likely to the
 8 embarrassment of many witnesses: he wore clothes off size and in bizarre colors,
 9 he was incessantly grinning for days; he introduced himself unconventionally
 10 ("Sono dio" - "I am god") or just accosted persons in the street.¹² He wept while
 11 listening to music, and he has been *twenty* times to opera to hear Bizet's *Carmen*
 12 [CW: I]. We will be reminded, too, of his unusual mustache that from some point
 13 appeared overgrown, or unkept, covering his mouth wholly (how did he manage
 14 it while eating, especially that he had a habit of eating two raw eggs for breakfast
 15 and for dinner?)¹³, as if he had nothing to say; we might invoke, too, how a year
 16 earlier he wandered happily around earthquake affected city of Nice, laughing at
 17 frightened crowds gathering for safety in public spaces [Letters to Franziska
 18 Nietzsche, H. Koselitz, R. v. Seydlitz of 24 Feb. 1887]

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

31
 32

33 Exit Remarks

34

35 Instead of any definite conclusion to these observations, let us remark,
 36 finally, that the greatest shamer and guilt-imposer, the priest – whom Nietzsche's
 37 father was, and whom Nietzsche himself, as said, was supposed to become – is
 38 for him the figure of both his personal, and, more generally, humankind's destiny;
 39 so through this symbolic character Nietzsche could connect his individual
 40 history to that of humanity, making his case a certain microcosmic representation
 41 of the historico-anthropological macrocosmos, and himself an ultimate
 42 representative of the manhood as such and, more specifically, a singular

¹²S. Prideaux, *I am dynamite...*, op. cit., p. 321-323.

¹³J. Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche...*, op. cit., p. 316.

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

1 illustration of manhood's necessary task of overcoming their actual condition –
 2 that of being ill due to their morality, sick of their accepted, but life depreciating
 3 values.

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

21 Nietzsche's treatment of the subject of shame/guilt feeling as a
 22 psychological problem, rather than exclusively moral condition, and one that can
 23 be a mark of ill mental health, not just of being a sinner, which with much
 24 likelihood had not had precedents, as well as his insights into the matter,
 25 including those that connected ill-being with “sexual purity” or chastity (and
 26 Nietzsche, let us not forget, defied chastity and sexual asceticism multiple times [Z:I,
 27 *Chastity*], despite being himself ascetic in this area), undoubtedly anticipated
 28 Freud's psychoanalysis. In a way, it might be observed here without further
 29 development, Freud rephrased and reinterpreted a lot of Nietzsche's insights
 30 concerning what he would examine under the notion of neurosis, and using the
 31 figure of the neurotic, with its, exposed very clearly by psychoanalysis, immense,
 32 but irrational guilt feeling – notwithstanding the idea, even if transformed, of
 33 “being no longer ashamed of oneself” conceived as a matter of mental health -
 34 this being Nietzsche's authentic, yet somehow overlooked in standard accounts,
 35 legacy in humanities.

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 41 or paragraphs in Arabic; In TI the numbers refer to chapters (unnumbered) and
 42 their sections.]

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