Chapter 1
The Original Data of Morality

I

However great its inner persuasiveness or its external authoritativeness, any moral doctrine will remain powerless and sterile if it is not firmly rooted in human moral nature. Despite the great variety of levels we see in human spiritual development, both in the past as well as today, and despite all the individual variations and the broad influences of race, climate and historical conditions, general human morality, nevertheless, rests on an irreducible foundation, and upon it every significant construction in the field of ethics must be built. The recognition of this truth does not depend on any particular metaphysical or scientific view of the origin of the human being. Whether it be the product of a long series of variations in animal organisms or the immediate product of a higher creative act, human nature with all its distinctive traits, in any case, happens to exist. Among these traits, the moral ones occupy the most important place.

The renowned representative of scientific transformism does not deny the distinctive character of human psychic nature in general. Charles Darwin writes, “No doubt the difference in this respect is enormous, even if we compare [50]the mind of one of the lowest savages, who has no words to express any number higher than four, and who uses no abstract terms for the commonest objects or affections, with that of the most highly organised ape. The difference would, no doubt, still remain immense, even if one of the higher apes had been improved or civilised as much as a dog has been in comparison with its parent-form, the wolf or jackal. The Fuegians rank amongst the lowest barbarians; but I was continually struck with surprise how
closely the three natives on board H.M.S. “Beagle,” who had lived some years in England and could talk a little English, resembled us in disposition and in most of our mental faculties.”

Further on, Darwin announces that he completely agrees with those writers who maintain that of all the differences between humans and other animals the most significant is our moral feeling, which he (in his view) considers not to be acquired but innate in humans.

Carried away, however, by his (in certain respects legitimate) aspiration to fill in, as he puts it, the “enormous” distance with intermediate links, Darwin makes one basic mistake. He ascribes an exclusively social character to the entirety of our original morality, thereby connecting it with the social instincts of animals. According to Darwin, personal or individual morality has only a derivative significance and is a later result of human historical development. He claims that savages recognize only those virtues demanded by the interests of their own social group. Nevertheless, one simple and well-known fact is sufficient to refute such a view.

There is one feeling, which is of no social use and is completely absent in higher animals but which, however, is clearly manifested even in the lowest of the human races. By virtue of this feeling, the most savage and undeveloped person is ashamed of, i.e., recognizes as wrong and hides, a physiological act that not only satisfies his own inclination and need, but, moreover, is useful and necessary for the preservation of the species. With this is directly connected an unwillingness to remain naturally nude, prompting the invention of clothes even among such savages, who, by climate and simple life-style, have no need of them.

This moral fact presents the sharpest distinction of all between humans and all other animals, among which we find not the slightest hint of anything similar. Darwin himself, in discussing the religiosity of dogs and other animals, does not attempt to find in any of them even the rudiments of modesty. Actually, even highly

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2 F] The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex, beginning of Chap. 2 (in the translation of Victor Carus). E] Darwin 1871: 34. The German translation to which Solov’ev refers is Darwin 1875. Solov’ev’s reference to this translation is odd in that, on the one hand, he had some knowledge of English and, on the other hand, there was no shortage of Russian translations. As Vucinich remarks, “in 1871–1872 not less than three translations of this work were published in Russia, two under the editorship of the famous neurophysiologist I. M. Sechenov.” Vucinich 1974: 235. See, for example, Darvin 1871–1872.

3 F] Ibid., beginning Chap. 3. E] Actually Darwin had placed his observation at the beginning of Chap. IV, i.e., Darwin 1871: 101. The German translation had correctly placed this observation, leading us to conclude that when originally writing these lines Solov’ev either paid no attention to the accuracy of his citation or he gave the reference as he remembered it, without the translation before him. In either case, we must conclude that the conveyance of his ideas was paramount in his mind over accuracy and scholarship. That he did not correct his reference either for the 1st or 2nd edition of the work is additional confirmation of his concern for the ideas expressed and his negligence of contemporary scholarly precision and accuracy.


endowed and quite well-bred domestic animals are no exception, not to mention still lower creatures. The, in other respects, noble steed gave the biblical prophet a suitable image for characterizing the shameless youths of the licentious Jerusalem nobility, the loyal dog has at all times been correctly considered a typical representative of the complete absence of shame. Among wild animals, the monkey, a creature even more developed in certain respects, presents an example of unlimited cynicism with particular clarity, precisely owing to its external similarity to us and to its extremely lively mind and passionate character.

Since it is impossible to discover shame in animals, naturalists of a certain school have had to deny it in humans. Not finding any modest animals, Darwin speaks of the absence of shame in savage peoples. From the author who journeyed around the world aboard the ship “Beagle” we would expect the [52] positive and specific evidence of an eyewitness. Instead, however, he limits himself to short, unsubstantiated and unconvincing remarks. Not just savages but also the cultured peoples of biblical and Homeric times may seem shameless to us, but only in the sense that the feeling of shame, which they earlier undoubtedly had, was not always expressed in the same way nor did it extend to all the details of everyday life with which it is associated in us. In this respect, however, there is no need to look to far off places and times, because people from other social classes who live along side us in many cases consider as permissible things of which we are ashamed. Nevertheless, no one would claim that they have never felt shame. Even less can we draw general conclusions from cases of complete moral ignorance found in judicial annals. Sometimes, headless monsters are born among us, but the human head, nevertheless, remains an essential component of our organism.

To support his thesis that humans are originally shameless, Darwin devotes a few words to the religious customs of the ancients, viz., to the phallic cult. This important fact, however, sooner speaks against it. Deliberate and intense shamelessness, elevated to a religious principle, obviously presupposes the existence of shame. In a similar way, parents’ sacrifice of their children to the gods does not prove the absence of pity or parental love. On the contrary, it presupposes this feeling. Surely, the principal meaning of such sacrifices is precisely that the loved children were killed. If what was sacrificed was not dear to the one making the sacrifice, the sacrifice itself would be of no value. That is, it would not be a sacrifice. (Only later with a weakening of religious feeling is this fundamental condition of any offering

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7 F] Darwin 1871. When the issue concerns savages, serious scholars sometimes reveal incomprehensible flippancy. Recently, I came across a funny example in the anthropologist Brocke, who claims that the aborigines of the Andaman Islands do not wear clothes, because, he explains, it is impossible to consider a thin belt with a piece of leather attached to it to be clothing. I think that one could deny the essential function of clothing to the European dress coat with greater reason.
8 C] the absence of shame in savage peoples.] shameless savages. AB.
9 C] is associated in us.] In AB there is a footnote referenced to these words simply saying “Ibid.”
10 C] are born among us] are born AB.
avoided by means of various symbolic *substitutes*.\textsuperscript{11} It is impossible to base any religion, even the most savage, on the mere absence of shame just as much as on the absence of pity. If the true religion presupposes human moral nature, then false religion, for its part, also presupposes such a moral nature precisely by demanding its perversion. The demonic powers, which were worshipped in the bloody and licentious cults of ancient paganism, lived and were nurtured on this real perversion, by this positive immorality.\textsuperscript{[53]}Did these religions demand only the simple, natural accomplishment of a certain physiological act? No! The concern here is with the intensification of depravity, in the transgression of all bounds laid down by nature, society and conscience. The religious character of these orgies proves the extreme importance of this point. If all are limited to a natural shamelessness, where do they get this tension, this perversion and this mysticism?\textsuperscript{12}

Obviously, if he could refer to some reliable facts showing the presence of rudimentary modesty in animals, there would be no need for Darwin to resort to such unsuccessful indirect arguments for his view of the connection between human and animal morality. However, there are no such facts, and shame, undoubtedly, remains a distinguishing feature of the human being even from an external, empirical point of view.

\section{II}

As a matter of fact, the presence of a feeling of shame (in its fundamental sense) in humans unconditionally distinguishes us from everything of a lower nature, since\textsuperscript{13} no other animal has this feeling to any degree. It has been manifested in humans from time immemorial and can still be further developed.

By what it tells us, however, this fact has another, an even far deeper significance. The feeling of shame is a distinctive characteristic that does more than separate humans (for the purposes of external observation) from the rest of the animal world. Because of it, humanity actually separates itself from all of material nature, not just its own but all external nature as well. In being ashamed of our natural inclinations and human functions, we, humans, show that we have not only this natural, material being but also something else, something higher. We who are ashamed separate ourselves in the mental act of shame from the object of our shame. Material nature, however, cannot be foreign or external to itself. Consequently, if I am ashamed of my material nature, I thereby prove, in fact, that I have more than just a material nature. It is at that moment when a human being is subject to the material processes of nature and is lumped together with\textsuperscript{[54]}them that his or her distinctive features and

\textsuperscript{11} C] *substitutes.\* fictions. \textit{AB}.

\textsuperscript{12} C] Did these religions … and this mysticism?\* \textit{Absent in \textit{AB}}.

\textsuperscript{13} C] from everything of a lower nature, since\* from other animals, since \textit{AB}. 
inner independence suddenly manifest themselves in the feeling of shame. In feeling shame, a person regards material life as something other, as something foreign and that should not own oneself.14

Therefore, even if there were specific cases of sexual shame in animals, such a fact would only be a rudimentary premonition of human nature. For a creature that is ashamed of its animal nature thereby clearly shows that it is not just an animal. No one who believes the story of the talking ass of Balaam15 ever for that reason denied that the gift of rational speech is a human characteristic distinguishing us from other animals. In this sense, however, human sexual shame has an even more fundamental significance.16

This fundamental fact of anthropology and history, unnoticed or deliberately omitted in the work of the contemporary luminary of science,17 was noticed 3000 years before him in the inspired lines of a book of greater authority. “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?”18 At the moment of the Fall, within the depths of the human soul, a higher voice resounds, asking: Where are you? Where is your moral dignity? Man, lord of nature and the image of God, do you still exist? And the answer is given: I heard the divine voice, I was afraid of exciting and revealing my lower nature: I am ashamed, therefore I am, not only physically, but also morally.19 I am ashamed of my animal nature, consequently I still exist as a person.

Through our own actions and experiences, humans acquire a moral self-consciousness. The efforts of materialistic science would prove futile were it to attempt to provide from its point of view a satisfactory answer to the question asked so long ago: Who told you that you are naked?

The independent and original meaning of our sense of shame would be lost if this moral fact could be successfully connected to some material gain for the individual or for the species in its struggle for existence. Shame, in such a case, could be explained as one form of the instinct of animal self-preservation, whether it be individual or social. It is impossible, however, to find such a connection.

14 C] that should not own oneself.] improper. AB.
16 C] Therefore, even if … more fundamental significance.] Absent in A.
17 E] Darwin.
19 C] not only physically, but also morally] Absent in AB.
A shameful attitude towards sexual acts could be advantageous to the individual and to the species in order to guard against an abuse of this important function of our organism. In animals governed by instincts, there are no overindulgences that are injurious to self-preservation, but owing to the greater strength of our individual consciousness and will the possibility exists in humans of such abuse. However, against the most dangerous of these overindulgences—an abuse of the sexual instinct—a useful counterbalance has developed in humans on the general foundation of natural selection, viz. the feeling of shame. Such an argument seems to be valid, but it only seems to be so. In the first place, it has an internal contradiction. If the most fundamental and powerful instinct in humans, that of self-preservation, proves to be powerless against pernicious overindulgences, where does this new, derivative instinct of shame derive its strength? And if the instinctive suggestions of this feeling do not exert sufficient influence over humans (as in fact is the case), then shame turns out to have no specific utility and remains inexplicable from a utilitarian-materialistic point of view. Instead of serving as a counterbalance to human abuses or violations of natural norms, shame turns out to be merely the superfluous object of such a violation, i.e., a completely unnecessary complication. In addition to this, another consideration undermines the utilitarian view of the feeling of shame. The fact is that this feeling manifests itself most strongly before the beginning of sexual relations. Shame speaks most clearly and loudly virginibus puerisque, so that if its voice had a direct practical effect, it would render impossible the very abuses that it is supposed to prevent. Consequently, if shame had a practical significance, not only would it not be useful, but it would be pernicious to both the individual and to the species. In fact, however, if shame, even when it speaks loudest, is of no practical utility, what subsequent effect can we expect from it? When shame appears, there can be no question of abuses yet, but when abuse does appear, then already we cannot speak of shame. A normal person is adequately protected from pernicious excesses by the simple feeling of a satisfied desire, but an abnormal person or someone with perverted instincts is not noted at all for modesty. Thus, in general, from a utilitarian point of view, in those cases when shame could be useful, it is not to be found, and when it does manifest itself it is unnecessary.

In fact, a feeling of shame is elicited not by the abuse of a certain organic function, but by simply exercising this function. A fact of nature is sensed to be shameful. If this is a manifestation of the instinct of self-preservation, it has a quite peculiar sense. What is being protected here is not the material well-being of the subject, but one’s higher human dignity. Or, to put it more accurately, shame does not protect dignity, but, rather, testifies that dignity still lies deep within this subject. The most powerful manifestation of the material organic life evokes a reaction from the spiritual principle, which reminds the personal consciousness that a person is not merely a fact of nature and must not passively serve as an instrument of nature’s worldly goals. This is only a reminder, and it depends on one’s personal rational

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20 C] overindulgences] excesses A.


22 C] that dignity still lies deep within this subject.] that there is still dignity. AB.
will whether to use it or not. As mentioned, this moral feeling has no real, direct effect. If its suggestions are not heeded, shame itself gradually disappears and finally is completely lost.

It is clear, therefore, that all indications of an absence of shame in particular individuals or in entire tribes—even if these indications are quite precise—do not have the significance ascribed to them. The indubitable absence of shame in individuals as well as the questionable absence of it in entire peoples can mean only that in those particular cases the spiritual principle within us, which makes us stand out from material nature is either still undiscovered or has already been lost, that this person or this group of people has not yet actually risen at present above the bestial state or has again returned to it. Can the hereditary or acquired bestiality of one or another people destroy or weaken the significance of human moral dignity, which in the vast majority is obviously manifested in the feeling [57] of shame, a feeling completely unknown to any animal? Does the fact that, like animals, suckling infants and mutes are unable to speak diminish the significance of language as a manifestation of a special, purely human rationality, not found in other animals?

III

Apart from any considerations about the empirical origin of the feeling of shame in human beings, the fundamental significance of this feeling is that it determines our ethical relation to our material nature. We are ashamed of the latter’s supremacy within us or of our subordination to it (particularly in its chief manifestation) and thereby recognize, with respect to it, our inner independence and higher dignity. For this reason, we must possess and not be possessed by it.

Along with this fundamental moral feeling, there is in human nature another feeling that forms the basis of an ethical relationship not to the lower, material principle of life in each person, but to other humans and, in general, to living beings similar to us, viz. the feeling of pity. In general, it amounts to the fact that a given subject senses, in a corresponding manner, the suffering or needs of others, i.e., responds to them more or less painfully, thereby more or less displaying his or her solidarity with others. Not a single serious thinker or scientist denies the original innate character of this moral feeling for the simple reason that the feeling of pity or compassion—as opposed to shame—is inherent (at a rudimentary level) in many animals and, consequently, cannot be seen, regardless of viewpoint, as a later

23 C] the latter’s supremacy] it AB.
24 C] or of our subordination] or, more precisely, of our subordination AB.
25 F] I use the simplest term; usually in the literature on this subject the terms “sympathy” and “compassion” are used.
26 F] Facts concerning this are found in abundance in various works of descriptive zoology (cf. particularly Brehm’s Life of Animals) and also in the literature on animal psychology that has recently been significantly developed. E] See Brehm 1882–1884.
product of human progress. Therefore, if a person [58] who lacks a feeling of shame reverts to the bestial state, someone who lacks pity falls lower than the animal level.

The very nature of the feeling of pity makes it impossible to doubt its close connection with the social instincts of animals and humans. Nevertheless, however, this feeling is an individual moral condition, which social relations cannot entirely conceal even in animals, let alone in a person. If a need of the social organism is the sole basis of sympathy, each creature would be able to experience this feeling only towards those belonging to the same social whole as it does. Although it usually happens that way, by no means is it always so, at least not in higher animals. Numerous facts testifying to the tenderest of love27 between animals (not only domestic, but also wild) belonging to different, sometimes quite remote zoological groups are well known. Therefore Darwin’s assertion that among savage peoples feelings of sympathy are limited to members of one and the same narrow social group is very strange. Certainly even among civilized peoples, the majority display genuine sympathy chiefly towards their family and their closest circle, but individual moral feeling in all peoples can transcend—and actually since olden days has transcended—not just these narrow limits, but all other empirical ones as well. To accept Darwin’s assertion unconditionally, even if only for savage tribes, would mean admitting that a human savage is incapable of attaining the moral level which dogs, monkeys and even lions sometimes reach.28, 29

[59] The feeling of sympathy is capable of indefinite growth and development, but its fundamental principle is one and the same in all types of living creatures. The first stage and the basic form of any solidarity both in the animal world and in the human world is parental (in particular maternal) love. The entire complex of inner and external social relations arises from this simple root. Here we see with complete clarity that the individual-psychological essence of the moral relation is nothing other than pity. For what other mental state31 can express the original solidarity of a mother with her weak, helpless, in a word, pitiable brood, which is entirely dependent on her?

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27 F] Love in the purely psychological sense (beyond the materially sexual and aesthetic relation) is constant, deeply rooted pity or compassion (sympathy). Long before Schopenhauer, the Russian people identified in their language these two concepts: “to pity” and “to love.” Both mean one and the same thing. We need not go so far, but no one can seriously dispute that this fundamental subjective manifestation of love, as a moral feeling, is pity. C] no one can seriously dispute. J it seems to us indubitable. A] as a moral feeling as a moral affect AB.

28 F] It goes without saying, of course, that such cases concerning wild animals can thoroughly be observed only when they are in captivity. It is quite likely, however, that these instances of aroused sympathetic feelings occur chiefly in captivity. C] It goes] On reliable testimony we know, for example, one case in a zoological park of a lion that became so attached to a female dog that died of grief after having lost her. It goes A.

29 C] attaining the moral level which dogs, monkeys and even lions sometimes reach.] the moral level that dogs, monkeys, and even lions sometimes reach. In this case, there is hardly anyone who trusts the words of the famous scientist. A.

30 C] first] fundamental AB.

31 C] state] affect AB.
Our unique feelings of shame and pity fundamentally determine our moral attitude, firstly towards our own material nature and secondly towards all other living creatures. Since human beings are modest and compassionate, we act morally “towards ourselves and our fellow creatures” (to use the old terminology). Shamelessness and ruthlessness, on the contrary, undermine our moral character at its roots. In addition to these two fundamental feelings there is in us another, a third feeling, that is irreducible to them and yet just as original. It determines our moral attitude neither to the lower side of our own nature nor to the world of creatures similar to us, but to something separate that we recognize as higher. We are neither ashamed of this something nor can we pity it; rather, we must humble ourselves before it. This feeling of respect (piety, pietas) or reverence (reverentia) towards what is higher constitutes in the human being the moral foundation of religion and the religious order of life. This feeling, abstracted by philosophical thought from its historical manifestations, forms so-called “natural religion.” The original or innate character of this feeling cannot be denied for the same reason that the innate nature of pity and sympathy is not seriously denied. We find both pity and sympathy as well as the feeling of respect in animals to rudimentary degrees and in rudimentary forms. Although it is absurd to try to find religion, as we understand it, in animals, the general elementary feeling on which religion ultimately rests in each person’s soul, viz. the feeling of respectful reverence towards something higher, arises unconsciously in other creatures in addition to the human being. In this sense, we can recognize the veracity of the following remarks.

The feeling of religious devotion is a highly complex one, consisting of love, complete submission to an exalted and mysterious superior, a strong sense of dependence, fear, reverence, gratitude, hope for the future, and perhaps other elements. No being could experience so complex and emotion until advanced in his intellectual and moral faculties to at least a moderately high level. Nevertheless, we see some distant approach to this state of mind, in the deep love of a dog for his master, associated with complete submission, some fear, and perhaps other feelings. The behaviour of a dog when returning to his master after an absence, and, as I may add, of a monkey to his beloved keeper, is widely different from that towards their fellows. In the latter case the transports of joy appear to be somewhat less, and the sense of equality is shewn in every action.
Thus, the representative of scientific transformism recognizes that in the quasi-religious attitude of the dog or the monkey towards a higher creature (than them) there is also in addition to fear and self-interest a moral element, quite distinct from the sympathetic feelings that these animals display towards those similar to themselves. This specific feeling towards what is higher is precisely what I call respect. Recognizing it in dogs and monkeys, it would be strange for us to deny the presence of respect in humans and deduce human religion from fear and self-interest alone. Although we cannot help but see that these lower feelings play a role in the formation and development of religion, its deepest foundation, nevertheless, is still the distinctive religious-moral feeling of human respectful love towards that which is superior to ourselves.

V

The fundamental feelings of shame, pity and respect exhaust the sphere of possible human moral attitudes towards those lower, equal to and higher than us. Domination over material sensibility, solidarity with living creatures, and an inner voluntary submission to the superhuman principle are the eternal, unshakeable foundations of human moral life. The degree of this ascendancy, the depth and scope of this solidarity, and the completeness of this inner submission change in the course of history, passing from a state of lesser to greater perfection. However, the principle in each of these three spheres of relations remains one and the same.

All the other phenomena of moral life, all of the so-called virtues, can be shown to be modifications of these three foundations or to be the result of an interaction between them and our intellectual side. Courage and bravery, for example, are undoubtedly manifestations, though only in a more external, superficial form, of the very same principle rising and prevailing over the lower, material side of our nature. We find a deeper and more significant expression of this principle in shame. In its fundamental manifestation, shame raises the human being above the animal instinct of preservation of species; courage elevates us above another animal instinct, viz., personal self-preservation. In addition to this distinction in the object or sphere of application, these two types of a single moral principle differ in another, deeper respect. The feeling of shame, by its very essence, involves censuring what it opposes. By the very fact that I am ashamed, I declare that what I am ashamed of is bad or improper. On the other hand, courageous feeling or behavior may simply
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