

# MAKE BOLD TO BE ASHAMED

## - 1953

On Freedom, Growth and Self-Knowledge

(Transcribed from an LP recording)

Feringer notes

Last edited: 12-98

1. Shame protects the integrity of groups, marriages, clubs, friendships, etc. If these groupings are to contribute to our lives, they must be protected by differentiating their "inside" (uniqueness) from the "outside" (how others see them). Their uniqueness is their most intimate secret.
2. Shame is only obliquely related to anything to do with sex. [For instance Shakespeare's deep emotional feeling toward England.] ERH cites a number of examples of shamelessness, whereby the "inner" was revealed to the outside world unnecessarily or inappropriately, and points out that this destroys one's inner world.
3. Shame opposes science, in that science tends to be dedicated to turning "inner" to "outer" in this sense. Thus, "social science" tends to destroy what is intimately "social" in society.
4. The power to "unify" to create a new union, of friends or business associates, or to join a church, etc. is identified by our speech. When we speak, we characterize ourselves as either for or against, or as inside or separate from a group or cause.

He who says, "We are within, and this has to stay without," begins to live meaningfully. (p.7)

This language comes from the heart and describes a new inner creation as a visible being. We impart life, or we can kill spiritual life when we mistake "inside" for "outside.". To speak in second person to another (i.e. you and me) is to unify: to speak in third person, i.e. him or her, is to kill.

5. What is accomplished by such unions is the time and protection to grow. We are protected (accepted) by the group, because the beginning of growth must always be in secret.

What we gain by shame, then, is space, too, an inner space which we can use to discuss, to converse freely... It remains in the bosom of the family. So we gain time, and we gain space for irresponsible, playful, preliminary talk...But we now know that the essential problem for man is: when is he willing to be recognized by others for what he wants to stand? (p.13,14)

Then we must judge when to make a commitment. This commitment effects our character, and when taken in sum represent what we have become, spiritually, at some point in time. To live

fully one must remain capable of being transformed throughout life, defying prediction. We can never know ahead of time when transformation will happen. This not knowing is important self-knowledge.

6. The old Greek admonition, Know yourself, was not meant to mean, "Be predictable." Rather it meant, be humble. Self-knowledge in this sense is creative, because it assumes that we must remain strong enough to end a relationship, if and when that becomes necessary for our continued growth.

7. To change the world around us we must create new unions, new corporations, new associations that can support a new way of doing things.

8. Shame is about having secrets. It is about our "inner sanctum" which powers freedom to change, assuming others, do not know certain things about us ( those things that must change). When others know too much about us we become imprisoned by that power they have over us. Knowledge of others is paradoxical in this sense. To learn about the meaning of our experience we need to reveal our thoughts on significant issues to others. But we always do this at a risk, so we had better to select our friends with care for this reason. Knowledge other have about us is both a path and a barrier to understanding reality. To some extent, we become what other allow us to become. Our friends forgive our ignorance, judging us subjectively, and our enemies judge us objectively.

9. Shame and timing go together. The least important type of knowledge about us can be known can be known at any time; the most important type of knowledge, one can only know at the right time. ERH's example is Jesus, who declined to be called Messiah in public until his last hour. He forbade his disciples to say it.

10. **AT ONE TIME, SOMETHING MIGHT BE RIGHT, AND AT ANOTHER TIME, WRONG. WE CONSTANTLY WALK A TIGHTROPE BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE TOO LATE OR TOO EARLY.** (p.27)

11. The great problem, then, is to know when to speak or act at the right time. This is the meaning of the message of Jesus. It is the unique message of Christianity, AND THIS KNOWLEDGE, WHEN TO SPEAK AND ACT, CANNOT BE KNOWN BEFORE THE MOMENT IS AT HAND! (p.29)

12. REVELATIONS AND VEILS: To know at the last moment means to remove the "last veil." Shamelessness is to tear away all veils, to recognize no veils, to not understand that certain things cannot and must not be known until the right time. (pp.29,30) Shamelessness is to know something out of the context of time But this does not necessarily mean consciousness of its significance.

THUS, WHILE THE FACTS OF LIFE TEND TO RULE OUR LIVES, WE DO HAVE POWER AND THE BASIS OF THAT POWER IS PRECISELY TO DECIDE THE RIGHT MOMENT TO DO THINGS. p. 1-31 We must eat, sleep, love, go to work, breathe, etc. But we can decide when, which makes all the difference in our lives.

And now comes something most people never consider: Great truth also must be forgotten again, because it is so true that timing allows us to know great truth, that obviously later on, it isn't wise to remember it, when we are back again in the slime and in the -- mud of everyday living. (p.31) ...importance decreases when availability increases. (p.34)

13. To rise above certain personal problems, such as jealousy, to put them in their place is important knowledge of course, but this sense of how to hold such generalizations in our memory and apply them at the right time is only known through art, specifically poetry, such as in Shakespeare's Othello.

"Poetry therefore is protecting you against the shamelessness of your own soul, because although the whole issue is there, right before you, it is in the disguise of another man's or another women's life....We will have to walk in frankness, thanks to poetry, but not in nakedness." (p.36)

#### Review

ERH describes shame as a crucial link to personal growth. While we may acquire knowledge in the abstract, we can know its meaning, as related to our lives, only at the right time. Shame is the veil by which we protect our inner life until its meaning can be revealed to ourselves and others. And while there are many forces that must control our everyday behavior, our freedom is in determining the right moment to reveal those inner thoughts. This essay is a succinct and complete statement of one of his brilliant insights on human nature.

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