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A sense of shame among the virtues

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to pose and preliminarily answer the question, 'Can the sense of shame be a virtue?' It offers a brief, empirically informed, affirmative answer to this question. After developing the context of this question, the article describes the emotion of shame and the shame system by situating them in their evolutionary and cultural contexts. This positions us to address Aristotelian reasons for a negative answer to our question having to do with whether shame is merely an emotion (no) and whether the sense of shame functions as a disposition to decide (yes). We summarize the evolutionary purpose of shame as a social-rank based emotion and identify benefits accruing to a population in which the sense of shame is working well.

AQ1

KEYWORDS: shame, virtue, evolutionary psychology, Aristotle, Confucius, emotion

1. Mapping the place of a sense of shame among the virtues

Can the sense of shame be a virtue? While this is answered affirmatively in the Confucian tradition, it is not so in the Greek tradition. This article offers a brief, empirically informed answer to this question that aims to raise the probability of an affirmative answer. After developing the Western context of this question, the article proceeds by describing the emotion of shame and the shame system and situating them in their evolutionary and cultural contexts. This positions us to address Aristotelian reasons for a negative answer to our question having to do with whether shame is merely an emotion and whether the sense of shame functions as a disposition to decide. By clearing away spurious necessary conditions, we conclude that the argument of the article raises the probability that a sense of shame is a virtue.

2. Why believe a sense of shame cannot be a virtue?

While Confucianism has praiseworthy things to say about the value of a honed sense of shame (*chi* 恥or *xiu* 羞) and its essential possession by the nobleman (*junzi* 君子) (Nichols, 2015), Western philosophy has been less kind to the sense of shame. Historical reflection on this question in Western philosophy begins with Aristotle, who believes that a sense of

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shame cannot be a virtue. Aristotle's influence on shame's relationship to virtue is unparalleled due to his influence in fabricating and disseminating necessary conditions upon virtues. Let us look at what Aristotle says about shame in order to orient our answer to the article's guiding research question.

Aristotle defines shame in *Rhetoric* 'as a kind of pain or uneasiness in respect of misdeeds, past, present, or future, which seem to tend to bring dishonor; and shamelessness as contempt and indifference in regard to these same things' (Rh. 1383b2, Aristotle & Freese, 2006, trans.). To this prescient definition, he adds a comment about the social dimensions of shame experience: 'If this definition of shame is correct, it follows that we are ashamed of all such misdeeds as seem to be disgraceful, either for ourselves or for those whom we care for' (Rh. 1383b2, Aristotle & Freese, 2006, trans.). The implication that individuals can feel ashamed *of* the actions of others marks recognition of the social scope of shame and the fact that one's sense of shame sometimes generates 'first-person' feelings of shame due to another's behavior. Aristotle observes that individuals tend to feel shame 'before those whom they esteem' (Rh. 1384a14, Aristotle & Freese, 2006, trans.). Aristotle enumerates a number of circumstances in which one feels the emotion of shame through incidents and actions indicative of stinginess, littleness, abasement, licentiousness, cowardice and more. This subtle treatment of shame continues to inspire philosophers and psychologists, and it is no wonder that Aristotle's discussion has become the cross-disciplinary *lingua franca* for ongoing conversation about shame among academics.

In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle offers refined reflection about the operation of shame. In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle discusses shame's place in a moral philosophy. Aristotle believed that activation of some virtues, such as a certain species of courage, was dependent on a sense of shame (EE 1228b). Aristotle illustrates this observation. According to Homer, 'shame seized Hector' and prompted him to fight, when he faced the danger presented by Achilles (EE 1230a, Aristotle & Rackham, 2004, trans.). A sense of shame can lead to activation of other virtues. In this case, it is courage. Despite this marginally positive role, Aristotle offers explicit arguments that shame is not, or cannot be, a virtue.

The first argument: virtues are states or dispositions of character that give rise to decisions (*hexis;* see NE 1105b25–6). Aristotle argues that virtues are not emotions and infers that, 'if … the virtues are neither emotions nor capacities, it remains that they are dispositions' (NE 1106a1; Aristotle & Rackham, 2003, trans.). Virtues are *not* emotions but dispositions, even if virtues are *dispositions to experience emotions*. For example, courage is a disposition to fear and yet appropriately face decisions and actions. As it happens, Aristotle says that shame is a feeling. He defines shame as 'pain or uneasiness in respect of misdeeds'. His discussion of shame describes the contexts in which the feeling of shame arises. For example, 'no one feels shame before children or animals' (Rh. 1384b; Aristotle & Freese, 2006, trans.). From this premise, he reasons that if shame is an emotion and not a disposition, then it is not a virtue. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, he writes that shame 'cannot properly be described as a virtue, for it seems to be a feeling rather than a disposition' (NE 1128b; Aristotle & Rackham, 2003, trans.). This argument plays on the necessary conditions that, first, emotions cannot be virtues, and, second, only dispositions can.

The second argument: virtues are dispositions that are means between two extremes, one of excess and the other of deficiency (see NE 1106a26-b28). He writes, 'Virtue, therefore is a mean state in the sense that it is able to hit the mean' (NE 1106b13; Aristotle & Rackham, 2003, trans.). As dispositions, Aristotle says that virtues are formed 'from the

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repeated performance of just and temperate actions' (NE 1105b1; Aristotle & Rackham, 2003, trans.). In other words, virtuous dispositions are not innate (hunger) but the products of active cultivation (courage). This argument plays on a further pair of necessary conditions: third, a disposition is a virtue only if it can produce decisions that aim at the mean between extremes; and fourth, a disposition is a virtue only if it can be cultivated through effort.

Both of the foregoing necessary conditions are prima facie plausible, but that cannot be said of a third. Aristotle writes that a disposition can be a virtue only if its activation does not depend upon the agent having done something immoral (NE 1128b; Aristotle & Rackham, 2003, trans.). In NE 4.9, Aristotle seems to go so far as to imply that, if one has a virtue, one will never perform immoral actions. Since he thinks shame is a response to wrongdoing, shame is, therefore, not possibly a virtue. Aristotle presumes a form of 'perfectionism' in ethics according to which a virtuous person never commits any immoral actions. This is implausible due to its fanciful psychology. As explained by Greenspan, 'Aristotle's dismissal of shame in virtuous adults underlines the uncompromising quality of his conception of virtue. The list of virtues derived from Aristotle is not really well-designed, one might say, to advise an agent *in media res*…' (1995, p. 114). We disregard this third condition in what follows.

To summarize, in order for shame to be a virtue on Aristotle's terms, it appears that (i) shame is an emotion, but emotions cannot be virtues; (ii) only dispositions can be virtues; (iii) further, only dispositions that produce decisions that can aim at the mean between extremes are virtues; and (iv) only dispositions that can be cultivated with effort are virtues. Assessing the merits of Aristotle's arguments, employing these conditions (or arguing that these are not exactly Aristotle's arguments) is not to the point if our goal is to raise the probability that a sense of shame is a virtue. Two argumentative strategies present themselves on behalf of that goal in the face of these necessary conditions. First, one might argue that one or more of these necessary conditions are not in fact necessary conditions on a virtue. Second, one might argue that a sense of shame meets one or more of these necessary conditions. The first strategy risks sinking us deeper into the quicksand of philosophical argument, as we trade a priori conditions and a priori counterexamples. Opting for the second strategy will result in more concrete knowledge of shame and the shame system.

In order to understand the place of a sense of shame among the virtues, if there is such a place, we must first understand the emotion of shame. Even influential philosophical treatments of shame proceed from idiosyncratic, a priori accounts of shame (from Aristotle to Williams, 2008). Most of these accounts are developed by, or taken seriously by, W.E.I.R.D. thinkers, that is, Western, educated, individualist, rich people who live in democracies (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). To address our research question, we need to steer clear as best we can of social and cognitive biases infecting most previous treatments of shame by W.E.I.R.D. philosophers. For this reason, we will use relevant psychological and interdisciplinary research to understand, first, what the *emotion* of shame is and, second, what the *sense* of shame is or, in other words, what the shame *system* is.

3. What is the emotion of shame?

The English term 'shame' can connote a *sense* of shame, *feelings* of shame, shame *behavior* or the *state* of being ashamed. So, what is shame? Indeed, one might wonder whether shame

is any univocal thing. The most familiar feature of shame, emphasized by Aristotle, is its emotional feature, but that is not its only feature.

Today, psychologists describe shame as an affect and, for some, a basic emotion (Gilbert, 1997). Though not universally classified as a basic emotion, studies document correlations between shame and the basic emotion of fear, especially as found in collectivist societies. Shame's capacity to change behavior proceeds through fear, or the cognizance of fear, coupled with social intelligence. If one imagines committing an immoral action in full public view, one might shudder at the resulting social devaluation.

Whether or not the emotion of shame is a basic emotion, expert researchers on emotion concur that the emotion of shame requires very limited cognitive resources for its experience, in contrast to guilt. The emotion of shame, or 'proto-shame', is experienced in non-human social primate species. Physical manifestations of shame experience—hormone changes, stereotypical behaviors and so on—are mirrored across social primate species. These physical features of shame are found across our species, in contrast to stereotypically virtuous dispositions like forgiveness, for example. Psychologist Paul Gilbert writes, 'The evolutionary root of shame is in a self-focused, social threat system related to competitive behavior and the need to prove oneself acceptable/desirable to others', which contrasts with guilt's origins as a care-giving and 'an "avoiding doing harm to others" system' (Gilbert, 2003, p. 1205). Anthropologist Dan Fessler describes shame as having 'evolved from a rank-related emotion', which explains why it can be found 'motivating prestige competition, cooperation, and conformity' (Fessler, 2004, p. 207).

Why were (genes underlying) features of the emotion of shame selected by evolutionary processes? The capacity for shame evolved in hominins and non-hominins because it enabled those who have it to negotiate dangerous social hierarchies (Gilbert & McGuire, 1998). Those who did not develop this capacity were less likely to place copies of their genes into subsequent generations due to reduced social rank. One experiences the emotion of being ashamed by perceiving one's social devaluation by another (Frijda, 1993; Gilbert, 1997). In primates, the feeling of proto-shame and associated displays occur in contexts in which their absence could be lethal. For example, in a troop of chimps, a young beta-male moves to copulate with a female in obvious estrus by taking her away from the troop. The alpha-male smells her movement, follows, and finds them in coitus. Chimps, notoriously violent in such situations, have shown significant restraint (by comparison) when the offender feels proto-shame and quickly offers a corollary, unmistakable display of his awareness of his devalued social rank. Without this emotion, the beta-male might not live to mate another day.

Shame experience represents a 'recalibrational emotional program', in this respect like guilt, grief, depression and gratitude. The primary function of recalibrational emotions is not short-term changes to behavior. This confuses some researchers. Since shame appears to have adverse consequences in the short term—anger, anxiety, ostracism—some infer that its experience is maladaptive. But this is short-sighted. First, in ancestral and present-day populations, those short- term reactions are often adaptive. Second, long-term effects of the display of shame, such as recomputing one's social rank, can be adaptive in making future behavior more fitness enhancing. In these cases, the shame system is activated by social inputs. Here, Aristotle correctly surmised that one's sense of shame is most sensitive when one is in the presence of social superiors.

4. Is shame a mere emotion, or is there a *sense* of shame?

A *sense* of shame is not to be conflated with the *emotion* of shame. A sense of shame is an emotional, behavioral and cognitive *system*. This means that a sense of shame is a character trait, or what Aristotle might call a disposition, *hexis* or *diathesis*. This system's components and stages are clearly unified by evolutionary pressures having to do with the fitness value of social rank. Treating the emotion of shame as part of a dedicated shame system is the only sound response to a common set of features found across social members of our biological order.

Shame is found in non-human primates to take forms such as averted gaze, reduced posture and submissive gait, which are stereotypic features of appeasement. Fessler remarks that such displays 'signal to dominant individuals that the actor accepts a subordinate position in the dominance hierarchy'. These gestures aim to 'dissuade the dominant from aggressing' (Fessler, 2004, p. 239; see also Fessler, 1999; Keltner & Harker, 1998). Fessler (2007, p. 174 in Tracy, Robins, & Tangney, 2007) adds that the 'panprimate substrate' on which human shame is built consisted of communication within a system of hierarchical social relationships. This, he argues, changed in human beings because the reliance on culture and cooperation favored the evolution of a new emotional and motivational system oriented toward prospective cooperative partners.

It is easy to transition from an understanding of evolutionary origins of shame to an understanding of the shame system in contemporary human populations because the emotion of shame is experienced in the context of human sociality and cooperation. Our sense of shame monitors social rank, especially our own, and detects social threats posed by others. First, we feel Aristotle's pain or unease in an actual or imagined social context. This discomfort gives rise to a cascade of subsequent, often subtle, behaviors, emotions and cognitions. We deploy our sense faculties to detect verbal and non-verbal communication between people relevant to considerations of social rank. Decoding the social communication as disapproval enables the shamed animal to recognize its devaluation and perform behaviors to submit and begin to regain its status. Sometimes this decoding is conscious and sometimes, even among humans, the shame system activates without one's knowledge or permission, through blood flow to the surface of the skin on the cheeks, spikes in cortisol or changes in posture. Becoming an expert at the detection and decoding of shame behaviors, especially behaviors encoded in cultural practices, requires learning, practice and cultural transmission.

Notice that, in the midst of our discussion of the shame system, we have revealed an important fact. An individual's shame system appears to have two modes of operation, a first person and a second/third person mode. They are distinguished by who is feeling shame. If I am feeling shame, then the first person mode has activated, I have become aware of my own social devaluation and I will probably engage in shame-related displays to inform others that I am aware of what they now think of me. Note that, so long as I feel shame, it is the first person mode that is active. That is, even if *my* feelings of shame are solely caused by *my brother's* shameful action, it is still the first person mode. If someone else is feeling shame, then my second/third person mode has activated. Someone else in my social environment has experienced social devaluation, and I am assisting the community in applying its norms to that person or group by lowering my social appraisal of that person, or group, and signaling that I have done that. Perhaps I shame someone like Justine Sacco,

who tweeted an unfortunate joke about AIDS and Africa, with my own tweet or post about it. Whether one buys something with Canadian dollars or sells something with Canadian dollars, one is participating in the Canadian monetary system. Likewise, one uses the same shame system to shame or be ashamed.

This distinction between two modes of the shame system helps address a problem in the linguistic representation of shame in English. Shame is recognized in English and many other languages as multifaceted. With respect to a single event in time, you can *shame* Chuck; Chuck can *be ashamed*; I can be ashamed *of Chuck*. True, temperance, diligence, patience and other virtues don't support this linguistic structure. We cannot *temperance* or *diligence* someone else. In contrast, shame is a social-rank based emotion. Since human beings gain or lose social rank *on the basis of* the behaviors, emotions and cognitions of other human beings, humans can shame other humans (second/third person mode), where that use of the verb *shame* takes a direct object. If someone *is ashamed* (first person mode), then some might argue that, necessarily, other individuals shamed that person.

An example will illustrate the activity of the sense of shame as it occurs from two perspectives. Suppose, while dining at a restaurant with your wife, you witness a co-worker's husband having dinner with another woman. As you watch, he appears to touch her affectionately and therefore inappropriately. What you see prompts the activation of the shame system, but this is more than mere visual information. These events call to mind your background knowledge about the man: his wife, their family, his role as a man of good standing in the community, the young woman he now is with, and so on. Once the visual information is taken in, it is routed to the cortical areas devoted to social evaluation. The shame disposition is catalyzed by a social input and produces as outputs a set of emotions, cognitions and behaviors.

Cognitively, you quickly infer that he is cheating on his wife, your friend from work. So you adopt a new belief about the man, and you reappraise his social status. Among the *emotional* products of this activation of your sense of shame, you flush in a fit of anger. You then begin to hate him. (The sadness you will feel later about the fate of your work friend's children, or regret about the very public words you had with her husband at the restaurant, are not proper parts of the shame system. These emotions fall among the probable outputs of an activation of your shame system in the present example.) This leads to new *behaviors* on your part. Sitting in the booth of the quiet restaurant, you tell your wife to turn around and look at what's happening across the room. As your wife's own anger renews yours, you find yourself marching toward the man's table. Notice that, other than immediate physiological changes in your body, most of the cognitive, emotional and behavioral outputs are under your conscious control.

The incident, as portrayed from your perspective, culminates in an event in which you shame the cheating husband, say, by having public words with him at the restaurant. Note that describing this case means using 'shame' as a verb that takes a direct object: you shamed him. This is a natural use of the shame system. But it is not only *your* shame system that activates in this context. Seeing you exit your booth in the back of the restaurant immediately alters his demeanor and produces a cascade of effects in his body, brain and mind. Emotionally, he wilts under pressure of intense feelings of mortification at this visual information. As it becomes apparent that you are not walking by his table and out of the venue, but rather are coming to speak to him, his endocrine system doubles its production of stress hormones. His blood pressure and heart rate spike. Then comes your speech, each

word seems to ring at 120 decibels and bounce around the entire restaurant. As you stand there, behaviorally, his body becomes smaller. He casts his head down then peeks up at his date's eyes only to make himself more nervous. He feels—he is—ashamed. His abrupt knowledge of his own dramatic social devaluation couples with fear and a will to death. A series of cognitions fly through his mind. By the time you finish the parting jibe about his wedding ring, he cycles through thoughts about his two girls, 6 and 9 years old, many, many times. He feels ashamed.

The bidirectionality and psycho-social modes of shame set it apart from other emotions and virtues. But, as to other virtues, shame is not as different as might appear. A heroic act—leaping onto live subway tracks to save someone who fell from the oncoming train—is courageous. The actor's social evaluation skyrockets when he and the person who fell onto the track emerge onto the platform safe and sound. He is greeted as a hero as the assembled commuters spontaneously erupt in cheers, applause, and request after request for selfies.

The abbreviated discussion above shows that the sense of shame is a dispositional system with a complex set of inputs and outputs, not merely an emotion. If correct, we have shown that Aristotle's inference that shame is not a disposition is false. To caricature for a moment, for Aristotle to argue that the *emotion* of shame is not a virtue is to shoot fish in a barrel. Instead, he ought to have argued that one's use of the shame system—i.e., one's sense of shame—is not a virtue. In short, the first two necessary conditions are wrong or inaccurate: while shame is an emotion, the important point is that the shame *system* is a disposition.

5. Is the sense of shame a dispositional system resting between two extremes?

Return to the example in the previous section in which you, while in a restaurant, witness shameful behavior in an acquaintance. The point of the example was to illustrate that a well-informed account of shame, one consistent with our knowledge of the origins of shame, is best understood as a dispositional system and not merely an emotion. But does shame considered as a system support the inference that it is a disposition *to decide*, on a course *of action*? This is an important question for Aristotelians since, according to our second necessary condition, something will qualify as a virtue only if it is a disposition to decide. This is because a virtuous disposition must aim at deciding between two extremes.

Prima facie it appears as though the shame system is subject to extreme forms of behavior due to improper cultivation. A poorly calibrated sense of shame might issue in a different set of outputs, at one or the other extreme. To speak of 'cultivating' or 'calibrating' one's sense of shame is to recognize that the shame system described above is subject to considerable cultural, biological and individual influence. While some causes for misattuned virtues can be attributed to cultural practice, other causes are biological. The virtue of chastity is likely to be, at best, poorly developed in someone if his or her genome contains a specific polymorphism of the human dopamine D4 receptor gene DRD4, associated with reckless sexual behavior (Garcia et al., 2010). Culture and genes, biology and religion, parenting and peer group all influence the calibration of human dispositions like magnanimity, diligence, temperance and a sense of shame. When these influences are too weak or too strong, dispositions become extreme.

Hypoactive senses of shame might treat shameful events (whether performed by oneself or by another) as merely embarrassing. If one's sense of shame is hypoactive, then one might witness a man beating a dog or stealing from a shop and respond without any emotional

reaction whatsoever. In the case of the shoplifter at Macy's, if his system is hypoactive, then he would not feel ashamed, would not think about his social devaluation, or would not experience significant physiological changes. He simply would not care that he has been socially devalued.

If a shoplifter's sense of shame is *hyperactive*, then the precipitous social devaluation prompted by his arrest could lead him to attempt serious self-harm. In a noteworthy case reported in the Taiwan media a few years ago, a group of friends were hanging out when one asked the other for the return of his belt, having lent it out some time ago. This shamed the borrower to such a degree that he murdered the person who publicly asked for it back. Hyperactive shame on the part of witnesses to shameful behavior might also involve violence.

In the example above, set in a restaurant, we imagined your shame system received inputs (visual awareness of a co-worker's husband appearing to cheat on her) and yielded physiological, emotional, cognitive and behavioral outputs. Let us suppose that a husband found cheating on his wife, with whom he has two young children, merits social devaluation and shame. Insofar as you have trained your shame system (in its second/third person mode) appropriately, you will socially devalue him at the level at which he merits social devaluation. If you continue to behave toward him as though you did not witness him cheating on his wife, you have not applied any shame to him and so your sense of shame is hypoactive. If you surreptitiously video his liaison at the restaurant and post it to all his social media accounts in order to permanently sabotage his standing in the community, you have applied too much shame to him and your sense of shame is hyperactive. Both of those 'behavioral outputs' are in fact the products of conscious decision making. Those decisions to act are products of (a) the visual inputs to your shame system coupled with (b) your prior calibration of your shame system. Likewise, the husband's (first person mode) shame system also produces decisions to act, which are subject to extremes. If his system is hypoactive, he might feel no shame whatsoever when you confront him in the restaurant, caring nothing for what you or the community thinks of him. If his system is hyperactive, he might choose to commit suicide later that night.

An apt sense of shame positions the individual to decide to act in ways that are appropriate given the inputs to the system. Those decisions to act will rest between hypoactive and hyperactive extremes. For this reason, a sense of shame is an apt mean between two extremes, and does yield decisions to act. Thus, a sense of shame meets another of Aristotle's necessary conditions on virtuous dispositions.

6. What is the evolved purpose of a sense of shame?

Evolutionary accounts of emotion characterize emotions in terms of functions enabling individuals to respond to environmental challenges and opportunities *within a social ecology*. Humans, in particular, face numbers of challenges to recruit and maintain cooperators. Emotion systems 'are efficient, coordinated responses that help organisms to reproduce, to protect offspring, to maintain cooperative alliances, and to avoid physical threats' (Keltner, Haidt, & Shiota, 2006, p. 117). Cooperation, a key component in human ultrasociality, enabled ancestral humans to reduce chance-based variance in finding food, increase productivity by enabling reciprocal divisions of labor, and create culture. Researchers often describe human beings as 'ultrasocial' because, unlike chimps and others, humans cooperate even if it works against our narrow, short-term self-interest. Why was it that our species became

ultrasocial and other primate species did not? The natural and cultural selection of systems of moral emotions and corollary moral virtues, like charity, kindness and humility, play a large role in the answer to that question. A sense of shame finds place within an array of character traits that improve individual fitness and simultaneously increase cooperation in an environment of human sociality.

First, the shame system interacts with social features of human cooperation. Cooperation at the large group level requires a complicated distribution of labor and resources like food, territory and mating opportunities. The social hierarchy provides for this distribution (de Waal, 1986, 1988, ~~Keltner et al., 2003~~). Social hierarchies function efficiently when greased by submission and dominance. Experiences of pride, contempt and shame facilitate their workings. Shame experience functions to appease dominant individuals and signal submissiveness (Keltner & Buswell, 1997). Stereotypical voluntary or semi-voluntary signals include making oneself appear non-threatening, surrendering and physically lowering oneself. Without displaying appropriate deference and a sense of shame to authorities in the Islamic State, one's life can be taken. By submissive signaling, an individual recognizes one's social devaluation by others and warns oneself of one's social devaluation (Gilbert & McGuire, 1998). Social valuation in the hierarchy is a survival-enhancing and reproductive concern in social primates. In some species, status is managed primarily (and sometimes only) by aggression and physical enforcement. In many of the social primates, however, shame assists in the management of the hierarchy without the negative consequences for the group caused by physical aggression (Keltner & Harker, 1998).

AQ7 Ref to Keltner deleted

AQ8

AQ8 Confirmed

Next, the shame system interacts with cultural features of human cooperation. After the split from our ancestral species, the shame system remained a social-rank based emotion, but, as humans became cooperative, this system was placed into a new *cultural* context. At a recent point in our species' natural history, to varying degrees across cultures, shame displays were redirected in cultural forms from aggression avoidance to the maintenance of prestige. This vastly expanded the range of behavioral contexts in which shame became appropriate (Gilbert, 2003, p. 1209). Prestige is a proxy for possession of access to resources. Decreases in prestige are maladaptive, and shame displays limit or halt such decreases. The media harangues a presidential candidate about her tax returns, which she has still not released to the public. Excoriation by the press activates the candidate's sense of shame because, for every week those returns remain a mystery, thousands of voters devalue her and her candidacy. After hand wringing, this prompts her to release the returns and halt further shame on this point (even if the million dollar payment she received from Wall Street firms for a one-hour lecture will prompt different social devaluation). When it serves a system of social rank based on prestige maintenance, the selected shame system aids cooperation while lowering levels of interpersonal (and even between-group) violence.

Distinct currencies of social rank emerged in different cultures due to a variety of factors. Currencies might include hunting skills, social networks, wealth, mating opportunities or numbers of kin in the group. Depending on the primary currency in use, systems of rank based on prestige lead to variance in embodied shame between humans and non-humans, and across human cultures. When in the presence of others of much higher social rank, one experiences admiration. Prestigious people are models of social success and influence, which causes lower ranking individuals to concern themselves with and to imitate prestigious people (a lesson of Henrich & Gil-White, 2001). Fessler remarks on what was earlier referred to as culture's role in changing the bioprogram: 'Natural selection therefore modified

a fundamentally competitive emotion so that it could also motivate simple conformity—in addition to striving not to be bested by their rivals, individuals now also worked not to fall out of line with the majority' (Fessler, 2004, p. 250). Conformity to group standards not only signals group membership, which increases access to resources, but also enables individuals to 'more readily predict one another's actions. Increased predictability is valuable because it facilitates coordination across individuals' (p. 245).

Above we mentioned that a sense of shame contributed to increases in human cooperation. We can now be more precise. A sense of shame is hypothesized to be an adaptation in ancestral populations because a shame system, coupled with a finely attuned theory of mind, allows for precise judgments about the changing allocations of prestige. This information is fitness enhancing at the individual level because it enables accurate impression management, but it is also beneficial to the group (Leary, 1996). 'Impression management theory' refers to a set of confirmed hypotheses descriptive of conscious and non-conscious attempts by humans to influence the perceptions of others by regulating or controlling social information. Shame prompts people to signal submission to an authority, a group or a parent, which increases their fitness (Gilbert & McGuire, 1998). By using impression management along with the shame system, more accurate discriminations can be made about others' status and rank. Status and rank, now and in ancestral populations, are correlated with adaptive reproductive benefits (Fournier, Moskowitz, & Zuroff, 2002).

AQ9

AQ9 Confirmed

An apt sense of shame, one that is neither hypoactive nor hyperactive, is one of the most efficient mechanisms through which individuals regulate cooperation in a group. Of special importance is the recognition that the shame system is a sine qua non in the development of culture. In 99.9% of our genus' existence, human and proto-human communities lacked third-party punishers like police or a system of courts to enforce law and order. When humans in conflict had to work out the resolution themselves, a sense of shame was needed to save lives, maintain fitness and keep the band together and harmonious. But when Aristotle implies that a man of high social status, perhaps a slave-owner like himself, ought not to experience shame for his actions in the presence of social inferiors, his hyper-individualism leads to cultural modifications to our evolved sense of shame.

The inputs and outputs of the shame system differ according to cultural contexts. Nowadays, if the sense of shame is too active, the group could be torn apart by in-fighting caused by extreme acts of humiliation. For example, the Ulster Defense Association in Belfast, Northern Ireland, tarred and feathered Jock Nelson in 2007 for allegedly selling drugs to children. This created more ripples of within-group conflict in an already destabilized group. If the sense of shame is too passive, the group will not be sufficiently bound together by community norms so as to achieve the benefits of cooperation described above. For example, a judicial experiment in a county in Florida orders shoplifters of Walmart merchandise who had been found guilty in a court of law to stand in front of the same Walmart wearing a sign reading, 'I shoplifted from this Walmart'. Intended to activate the shame systems of shoplifters and thereby reduce recidivism, the program encountered a large problem: the offenders in this program did not care enough about the social evaluations of customers entering and exiting the Walmart to change their behavior. In hyper-individualist cultures like ancient Greece or the present-day US (as assessed with well-known psychological and social scales), this outcome is more likely than in collectivist or interdependent cultures, like historical or contemporary China.

The adaptive purposes of shame to measure and respond to social valuations of selves and others are the product of cultural transmission, biology and individual learning and will. Training the shame system is effortful. In *Dream of the Red Chamber*, a classic Chinese novel set in the eighteenth century, chambermaids must work hard to cultivate cultural knowledge about others' social status (through knowledge of family lineage, clothing, social roles, etc.) in order to approach, avoid and survive. That said, in cultures in which third-party punishers are omnipresent and state-sponsored cameras loom from every corner, the sense of shame deteriorates rapidly. (Something parallel can be said about the virtue of courage in an environment where nearly all risks have been eliminated.) This couples with the fact that many of our interactions are one-off, so we have little incentive to care what most other people think of us. Instead, people merely fear punishment. Confucius dismisses the role of punishment and violence in social governance: 'The Master said, "If the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame [chi 恥]. If they be led by virtue [de 德], and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety [li 禮], they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good" (*Analects,* 2.11, from Confucius & Slingerland, 2003).

AQ10

AQ10 Confirmed

To cultivate one's sense of shame [chi 恥], for the Confucian, is a matter of making daily decisions about cognition, emotion and behavior. Most especially, it involves thinking about how others think of you. As a slave-owner, as the personal tutor of someone who conquered the known world and declared himself God (Alexander the Great), as someone from a hyper-individualist culture, we can understand how the disdain that Aristotle manifests for members of lower social classes led him to undervalue a sense of shame. It is no wonder that, by comparison with Confucius, Aristotle dramatically undervalues the role that such people might play in the ethical formation of someone such as himself. Confucius places more emphasis on the role of one's parents and peer groups, as well as one's religious and cultural practices, to make positive contributions to one's virtuous dispositions. Jock Nelson failed to use his sense of shame to model what others would think of him, were he to perform certain immoral actions. The Walmart shoplifter with the placard failed to use her sense of shame to care enough about the opinions of other (moral) people to reform her emotions and behaviors. W.E.I.R.D. virtue theories, on the other hand, oversell one's own causal role in the formation of one's own virtues. While the sense of shame meets Aristotle's fourth necessary condition—the cultivation condition—it is Confucius, rather than Aristotle, who best appreciates the social nature of this cultivation and its context in our human nature.

The foregoing case on behalf of shame is intended to prompt people to reconsider the relationship between a sense of shame and virtue. Though it goes without saying that there are more issues to discuss before the question in the title of this article is fully answered, the foregoing argument appears to raise somewhat the probability that a sense of shame is or can be a virtue.

AQ11

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