HERIBERTUS DWI KRISTANTO

THE PRAISEWORTHY PASSION OF SHAME

An Historical and Philosophical Elucidation of Aquinas's Thought on the Nature and Role of Shame in the Moral Life

Shame's moral status has puzzled philosophers since antiquity: is (a sense of) shame merely a passion or is it a moral virtue? Aquinas, influenced by Aristotle, claims that shame is, properly speaking, a passion, though it can be called, broadly speaking, a virtue, insofar as it is a praiseworthy passion. Through careful exegesis on key passages containing the shame-related words *verecundia*, *erubescentia*, *confusio*, *pudor*, and *turpitudo* in Thomas Aquinas's oeuvre, this study shows that, despite its potential to demoralize, to lead to shallow conformism, or to send the ashamed person into violent rage, shame can be praiseworthy on account of its very nature as a moral passion and its constructive role in the moral life.

As fear of disgrace spoiling one in the opinion of others, shame is morally praiseworthy when it arises instantaneously in response to disgrace according to truth, i.e., to disgrace caused by voluntary defects for which one can be held responsible. Through a kind of overflow, the passion of shame constitutes a sign and an effect of a good will, since one would be liable to shame only if one has loved what is morally good and beautiful and has thus concomitantly detested what is morally evil and ugly. This passion is praiseworthy not only because its concurrence—in its prospective form—is necessary for the virtue of temperance to be habitually operative, but also because shame—in its retrospective form—can galvanize one to repent and to reform the self, thanks to shame's intimate connection with the desire of love for union with relevant others.

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INTRODUCTION

«Verecundia, proprie loquendo, non est virtus, deficit enim a perfectione virtutis. Communiter autem… verecundia quandoque dicitur virtus, cum sit quaedam laudabilis passio»
(*ST* 2–2.144.1 co.)

The recent revival of virtue ethics, a moral theory considered as a viable alternative to deontology and utilitarianism, has brought about a renewed interest in the study of emotions and their role in the moral life. This is because moral virtues concern not only actions, but also emotions[1]. Emotions are no longer seen as mere blind and disturbing forces without intelligence, so that they can be simply sidelined in any moral deliberation, but are now regarded as involving some perception or judgment of values and hence as containing some evaluative or intentional contents, so that they must form part of any system of ethical reasoning[2]. Among the emotions which now receive increasing attention and reappraisal is shame[3].

Previously, due to the modern spirit of individualism and under the influence of Kantian ethics, which emphasizes personal autonomy, shame was often considered primitive and devoid of moral value. Shame was viewed as characteristic of a traditional and collectivistic society wherein its members easily experience loss of face when they fail to exercise their public role properly or are unable to meet social expectations[4]. Shame was

[1] The category of *emotion* was invented by secular psychology in the early nineteenth century to capture and replace the pre-existing expressions often imbued with religious connotation such as *passion* and *affection*. TH. DIXON, *From Passion to Emotion*, 3-5.

[2] M.C. NUSSBAUM, *Upheavals of Thought. The Intelligence of Emotions*, 11-13; Cf. K. KRISTJÁNSSON, *Virtuous Emotions*, 8-9.

[3] These are some book-length philosophical publications on shame in the last three years: J. LOCKE, *Democracy and the Death of Shame* (2016); L. HINTON – W. HESSEL, ed., *Temporality and Shame. Perspectives from Psychoanalysis and Philosophy* (2017); K.K. THOMASON, *Naked. The Dark Side of Shame and Moral Life* (2018).

[4] Cf. G. TURNATURI, *Vergogna. Metamorfosi di un'emozione*, 26.

believed to be essentially heteronomous, inasmuch as it arises only out of concern or fear for one's negative image in the eyes of others[5]. As such, shame was seen as a regressive or childish emotion, for, rather than putting weight on what *morality* actually requires, it concerns more what *others* require one to do or to be like[6]. Labelled as an «ugly feeling»[7], shame was deemed as merely promoting a shallow conformism and thus as not meriting any place in moral education, for it is not only unconducive to the modern ideal of individual self-realization but is also detrimental to one's psychological well-being[8]. Moreover, in comparison to guilt or remorse, where one typically acknowledges openly one's responsibility for one's wrongdoings, shame does not seem to manifest a coherent sense of responsibility, given that while experiencing shame one typically tends to hide oneself rather than to face one's wrongdoing and its consequences[9].

Recently, however, there have been considerable attempts to rediscover the positive potential and moral value of shame, based on the conviction that, after all, morality is not something private, exercised in an individual's isolated world, but rather is something practiced with others in a social world[10]. One can never be a self on one's own, but only in virtue of one's relation with social others; one's selfhood is always interpersonal, since *who one is* is partly constituted by the way others see one and one's actions[11]. Only psychopaths or profoundly autistic individuals, being self-absorbed and insensitive to others' feelings and opinions, are incapable of taking a third-person perspective and seeing themselves as others would, so much so that they lack empathy, a sense of responsibility, and shame. In shame, one's capacity to see oneself from a third-person perspective is exercised; shame reveals to one that who one is to others *is* who one is (more or less), though perhaps not *all* one is[12]. Sensitivity to others' opinion about oneself and one's actions is not tantamount to heteronomy *tout court*; instead, it can be a good sign of one's commitment to values and

[5] B. WILLIAMS, *Shame and Necessity*, 78.

[6] C. CALHOUN, «An Apology for Moral Shame», 128.

[7] J.P. TANGNEY – R.L. DEARING, *Shame and Guilt*, 3.

[8] K. KRISTJÁNSSON, «Is Shame an Ugly Emotion», 502-503.

[9] R. OGIEN, *La honte est-elle immorale?*, 14, 160: «… dans la honte, l'élément le plus caractéristique est une attitude incohérente à l'égard de la responsabilité».

[10] For example: D. ZAHAVI, *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame* (2014); E. VANDERHEIDEN – C.-H. MAYER, ed., *The Value of Shame. Exploring a Health Resource in Cultural Context* (2017).

[11] H.L., MAIBOM, «Shame and Necessity *Redux*», 197; Cf. C. TAYLOR, *The Source of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity*, 36-37.

[12] H.L., MAIBOM, «Shame and Necessity *Redux*», 208.

ideals shared in one's community so that, whenever one fails to live up to them, one may feel shame. John Rawls argues that in the experience of shame «we sense the diminishment of self from our anxiety about the lesser respect that others may have for us and from our disappointment with ourselves for failing to live up to our ideals»[13]. As such, shame is positive because its occurrence not only indicates that one has already internalized common values and ideals, but also reflects one's concern with other's evaluation and one's self-respect in all moral conduct. Understood in this way, shame is not necessarily incompatible with moral autonomy, nor is it morally valueless; instead, at times it can be invaluable in helping moral learners to grasp what is socially good before eventually arriving at a mature awareness of what is morally good[14].

Throughout history the nature and role of shame in the moral life has always been puzzling. Homer remarks that «Shame (αἰδώς) does great harm or drives men on to good»[15]. Plato likewise observes that shame (αἰδώς) is ambivalent. On the one hand, he admits that shame is one of the important safeguards of morality[16]. Under the guidance of a sense of shame at acting disgracefully and a sense of pride in acting well, one can lead a good life and accomplish noble or great work[17]. On the other hand, however, he also notices that due to shame one sometimes does not dare to say what one actually thinks and so fails be truthful about oneself[18]. Thus, capable of being either good or bad, shame is for Plato different from the virtue of temperance, which is always good[19]. Next, Aristotle, despite recognizing shame as the mean between shamelessness and bashfulness and praising the person with a proper sense of shame (αἰδήμων), regards shame as a mere passion and refuses to concede the status of virtue to shame[20]. In the Christian tradition, by contrast, it is not uncommon to call shame a virtue. Ambrose asserts that «A sense of shame (*verecundia*) is a beautiful virtue; it is delightful and full of grace»[21]. Richard of St. Victor also speaks about an ordered shame (*ordinata verecundia*) or true

[13] J. RAWLS, *A Theory Justice*, 391.

[14] J. KEKES, «Shame and Moral Progress», 288-290.

[15] HOMER, *Iliad* 24.44-5, tr. English by R. Fagles (New York, 1990). The phrase in Greek reads: «οὐδέ οἱ αἰδὼς γίγνεται, ἥ τ' ἄνδρας μέγα σίνεται ἠδ' ὀνίνησι» (literally: «nor has he [Achilles] shame, which harms men greatly and profits them»).

[16] PLATO, *Republic* 465a-b; *Laws* 671c-d.

[17] PLATO, *Symposium* 178c-d.

[18] PLATO, *Gorgias* 482e-83a.

[19] PLATO, *Charmides* 161a-b.

[20] ARISTOTLE, *EN* 2.7.1108a31-2; 4.9.1128b10-11.

[21] AMBROSE, *Off*. 1.67: «Pulchra igitur virtus est verecundia et suavis gratia».

shame (*pudor verus*) as a spiritual virtue, as long as it is felt in response to a sin (*culpa*) and not merely to infamy (*infamia*)[22]. Unlike shame at being caught, for Richard, «That shame is known to be true [or ordered] when hatred of vices precedes or accompanies it»[23]. Most recently, Pope Francis succinctly stated, «Shame is a true Christian virtue, and also a human virtue… being ashamed of oneself is a virtue of the humble, of the man or woman who is humble»[24].

Amidst the diverging appraisals of the moral value of shame, Thomas Aquinas puts forth a stimulating way of conceiving shame as a praiseworthy passion (*laudabilis passio*). As shown in the epigraph above, in *ST* 2–2.144.1 co. he writes, «Shame is properly speaking not a virtue, since it falls short of the perfection of a virtue. Broadly speaking, however… shame is sometimes called a virtue, since it is a praiseworthy passion». By opting for the category of praiseworthy passion, Aquinas seems to be trying to encapsulate the multifaceted and ambivalent phenomenon of shame. Besides good or healthy shame, in fact, in other writings the *Doctor Communis* also speaks of bad or unhealthy shame, and he often quotes Sir 4:21: «For there is shame that leads to sin, and there is shame that leads to glory and grace»[25]. The present study attempts to probe further into Aquinas's thought on shame as a praiseworthy passion: Why is shame, properly speaking, only a passion and not a virtue? When or under what conditions does shame deserve the morally laden predicate of praiseworthy? What positive roles does shame actually play in the moral life? When or under what conditions, by contrast, does shame become bad, and thus illaudable and destructive to moral agents? In doing so, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding, at least from historical and philosophical perspectives, of the nature of shame and its constructive role in the moral life.

Within Thomistic scholarship, with the notable exception of A. Guindon's article, «La "crainte honteuse" selon Thomas d'Aquin»[26], the very few existing articles on Aquinas's thought about shame[27] have been based

[22] RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR, *Benjamin Minor* XLV-XLVI.

[23] RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR, *Benjamin Minor* XLVI, tr. English by G.A. Zinn (1979).

[24] FRANCIS, *La verità è un incontro*, 106. English trans., *Encountering Truth*, 43-44.

[25] See, for example, *In Ps*. 24, n.3; *In Ps*. 34, n.17; *In Ps*. 39, n.7; *In Matt*., c.18, l.2; *Super I Cor*. c.4, l.3, n.220; *Sent*. 4.43.1.5.2 ad4.

[26] This article was published in 1969 in *Revue Thomiste* 69, 589-623.

[27] See J. MÜLLER, «Scham und menschlichen Natur bei Augustinus und Thomas von Aquin»; S. KNUUTTILA, «The Emotion of Shame in Medieval Philosophy»; T. RYAN, «Aquinas on Shame: A Contemporary Interchange»; S. VECCHIO, «La honte el la faute. La réflexion sur la *verecundia* dans la littérature théologique des XII^{e} et XIII^{e} siècles»; C. CASAGRANDE – S. VECCHIO, «La vergogna tra passione e virtù».

almost exclusively on *ST* 2–2.144, a four-article long *questio* on shame entitled *De verecundia* (hereafter, *De vere.*). Despite constituting Aquinas's most extended and systematic treatment of shame, *De vere*. does not actually exhaust his consideration of the nature and role of shame in human life. In *De vere*. Aquinas treats shame as an integral part of temperance and conceives of shame primarily as fear of disgrace (*timor turpitudinis*) which occurs in the presence of the real or imagined others. Though essential, this conception does not represent fully his thought on the matter, because in other works he explicitly mentions that one can also feel shame before one's own conscience and before God[28]. Moreover, in *De vere*. the notion of shame as a praiseworthy passion is still far from being clear, since there Aquinas does not account for why shame, which does not result from deliberate choice but from an instantaneous impulse of passion[29], can nonetheless be morally praiseworthy, if for him «praiseworthiness and blameworthiness essentially consist in voluntariness»[30].

A. Guindon's article does take into account Aquinas's complete works, but the author limits himself to lexicographic analysis of Aquinas's concept of shame as it is expressed in the words *verecundia*, *erubescentia*, *confusio*, and *pudor*, while leaving undiscussed Aquinas's presentation of shame as an integral part of the cardinal virtue of temperance in *De vere*[31]. The present study will uncover the *Doctor angelicus*'s account of shame by taking into account the whole Thomistic corpus and will show that investigating shame as an integral part of temperance, particularly by contrasting it with another integral part of temperance, namely, sense of honor (*honestas*), is of capital importance in order to understand the praiseworthiness or the moral value of shame. In addition, the study will also explore the positive role of shame in the process of moral development and will delve into some negative or pernicious sides of the passion of shame which necessitate some caveats with regard to its praiseworthiness.

To this end, the research adopts the methodology set forth by Umberto Eco in his work on Thomas Aquinas's concept of beauty: «to explain and clarify every term and every concept in the original texts in the light of the

[28] See *In Ps*. 6, n.7; Cf. *ST* 2–2.75.1 ad1.
[29] *ST* 2–2.144.1 ad1.
[30] *QDV* 26.6 ad1.
[31] André Guindon writes, «Notre étude a une allure beaucoup plus lexicographique avec ses avantages et ses limites. Un exposé compréhensif de *Sum. theol., II*^{a}*-II*^{ae}, q. I44. exigerait des explications sur la signification des "parties intégrantes" d'une vertu, sur le pendant de la *verecundia* qu'est, à ce niveau de la tempérance, l'*honestas*, sur le sens de la vertu de tempérance, etc. Ces perspectives dépassent notre propos», 590, note 2.

historical circumstances to which they belonged… to be genuinely faithful to Aquinas»[32]. The study will accordingly conduct careful exegesis on key passages containing the shame-related words *verecundia*, *erubescentia*, *confusio*, *pudor*, and *turpitudo*[33]. *De vere.* will obviously become a privileged point of departure, since there Aquinas treats of shame in the most systematic way: what is shame (whether it is a passion or a virtue), about what one feels shame, before whom one feels shame, and who is liable to experience shame. Beyond *De vere*. Aquinas usually speaks of shame only in passing, and yet there are many key passages which are crucial both to complement and to throw more light on some unclear points in *De vere*. Hence, the study will proceed by piecing together a variety of passages in disparate texts in order to arrive at a comprehensive picture of Aquinas's thought on shame.

Of course, being a complex phenomenon, shame can be approached from different perspectives (psychological, anthropological, sociological, historical, or philosophical)[34]. The main approach of this study is historical and philosophical, since its focus is to find and to explicate the common thread of Aquinas's ideas on shame scattered throughout his oeuvre and thus to make these ideas comprehensible inside Aquinas's broader moral framework as well as within the context of his historical and philosophical milieu. However, as Aquinas himself once warned his readers that «the study of philosophy has its purpose to know not what people have thought, but rather the truth about the way things are»[35], when it is necessary and while avoiding the trap of anachronism, the study will draw some insights from later philosophers and from contemporary psychological and sociological researches to elucidate Aquinas's thought on the positive potential of shame. It follows that throughout its reading of Aquinas's oeuvre this study will also engage with the following questions: how, precisely, shame contributes to a virtuous life; what role others play in shame and whether shame is compatible with the modern concept of autonomy; whether shame should be cultivated or whether there are other preferable sources of moral motivation; what shame's limitations and dangers might be; and,

[32] U. ECO, *Il problema estetico in Tommaso d'Aquino*, 6 ; English trans., *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, vii.
[33] See «Elenchus Synonymorum et Correlativorum», in *Indices autoritatum et rerum occurrentium in Summa theologiae et Summa contra gentiles* of Thomas Aquinas's *opera omnia* vol.16 (Leonine ed.), 607 (confusio = erubescentia, verecundia), 609 (erubescentia = verecundia), 617 (verecundia = erubescentia, pudor).
[34] A. HELLER, «Five Approaches to the Phenomenon of Shame».
[35] *De caelo*. 1, c.10, l.22, §8.

finally, whether shame still has a part to play in today's digital and seemingly more individualistic society.

In skeletal form, the central argument of this study runs as follows. Shame is for Aquinas praiseworthy due to both its very nature as a moral passion and its positive roles in the moral life, particularly in galvanizing moral development. As a passion, that is, as a motion of the sensitive appetite in response to the perception of some disgrace, shame is praiseworthy when it is felt in the right measure with regard to the disgraceful things according to truth, namely, disgrace resulting from culpable acts or voluntary defects for which one is truly reprehensible. Despite arising spontaneously without being directly preceded by deliberate choice, shame constitutes—by means of overflow (*per redundantiam*)—a sign and an effect of good will, since one would not be liable to the passion of shame unless one has at the same time loved what is morally good and beautiful (*honestum*) and detested what is morally evil and ugly (*turpe*). Because that which is at stake in moral shame is one's self-worth or one's dignity as a rational being in the eyes of others, as well as in the eyes of one's own conscience and in the eyes of God, shame can play a significant role in the moral life. In its prospective form, shame can inhibit one from committing disgraceful acts, especially the vices of intemperance deemed as the most repugnant and unbecoming to human excellence. In its retrospective form, shame can beneficially remind one of having overstepped the boundaries of what is morally acceptable within the community and might thus lead one to repentance and self-reform. At bottom, in shame one fears more than just a bad reputation; rather, one fears being unworthy of the love of relevant others and hence fears rejection by them. It is for this reason that shame might prompt one to make amends for wrongdoing and to comply with the standards of acceptable behavior, for this would ensure one's social and moral acceptability.

In order to elaborate this argument, this study is organized in two parts, each comprising three chapters. Part One, bearing the heading «The Nature of Shame», investigates the nature of shame and its core features as they are conceived, first, by Aquinas's authors of reference, and later, by Aquinas himself. Part Two, titled «The Role of Shame in the Moral Life», focuses on examining the the constructive role of shame in the moral life in general (shame as an integral part of temperance) and in the process of moral development in particular (shame as a catalyst for moral growth).

Chapter I surveys the concept of shame as it is expressed in αἰδώς and αἰσχύνη (by Aristotle, Nemesius, and Damascene) and in *pudor*, *verecundia*, and *erubescentia* (by Cicero, Ambrose, and Augustine). By and large,

in Aquinas's *auctoritates* shame is associated with the idea of being seen as having fallen short of a certain ideal, which exposure diminishes one's self-image and endangers one's honor. The nature of shame oscillates between passion and virtue. Subsequently, Chapter II presents Aquinas's account of shame by means of a close reading of *De vere*. and other key passages from the rest of the Thomistic corpus. Defined as fear of disgrace, shame first and foremost regards reproach and ignominy; hence, the ashamed person in the first place fears not the very act of sin itself, but the disgrace or ignominy that results therefrom. Though shame is appropriate and has moral import when it regards disgrace as due to voluntary defects such as sins, in human opinion shame regards any kind of defects, so that one may feel shame also for disgrace such as that due to involuntary defects (low birth, physical deformities, etc.) While the former type of shame is elicited by disgrace according to truth and can be rightly termed «moral shame», the latter type is triggered by disgrace according to opinion alone and thus, strictly speaking, does not entail moral import but constitutes solely a «natural shame». Chapter III provides further rationale for why it is more appropriate to consider moral shame, however praiseworthy it is, as a passion rather than as a virtue. Moral shame is not a virtue in the proper sense of the term, since it is not a *habitus electivus* which operates from choice, but it flows from an impulse of passion. The chapter points to the mechanism of overflow as an explanation for how spontaneous moral shame can be an effect and a sign of good will without directly resulting from an act of deliberate choice.

Chapter IV, the first in Part Two, explains the notion of shame and sense of honor as integral parts of temperance, investigates the concepts of honor, dignity, glory, and praise in Aquinas, and explores the role of the conscience in the experience of shame, suggesting that shame is not incompatible with autonomy. Chapter V draws a plausible sketch of Thomistic «stages» of moral development, looks into shame's linkage with the desire of love for union with the relevant others, and sheds more light on the constructive role of shame and shaming in moral growth, in the process of fraternal correction, and in ecclesial excomunication. Finally, Chapter VI considers the limits of shame by examining the connections between shame and social rank, shame and gender, and shame and violence. The chapter proposes some additional conditions relevant in order to avoid shame's becoming toxic or becoming an informal mechanism of social control whereby a society enforces morally unjustified standards of behavior. The last chapter concludes with a brief consideration of whether shame and shaming still have a role to play in the contemporary society.

PART ONE

THE NATURE OF SHAME

CHAPTER I

Between Passion and Virtue: Shame in the Thought of Aquinas's Predecessors

«ἡ γὰρ αἰδὼς ἀρετὴ μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν, ἐπαινεῖται δὲ καὶ ὁ αἰδήμων»[1]
(Aristotle, *EN* 2.7.1108a31-32)

«Pulchra igitur virtus est verecundia et suavis gratia»[2]
(Ambrose, *Off*. 1.67)

Shame is a multifaceted phenomenon; it appears to have a complex and ambiguous character. The elusiveness of its nature makes some ancient philosophers remain doubtful whether shame is a mere passion or, to a certain extent, it can enjoy the status of a virtue. Plato, for example, on the one hand places shame (αἰδώς) along with the civic virtue of justice (δίκη) sent down by Zeus to humans in order to create the bonds of friendship which make orderly coexistence in a city-state possible (*Protagoras* 322c). Nevertheless, on the other hand, despite the fact that the legislators of the city-state value shame (αἰσχύνη) highly due to its crucial contribution in safeguarding the citizens' proper conduct and give it the name of «modesty» or «sense of shame» (αἰδώς), Plato categorizes shame (αἰσχύνη) as a kind of fear (φόβος). It is a fear of getting a bad reputation for doing or saying disgraceful things (*Laws* 1.646a-647a). When one is ashamed (αἰσχύνηται), one might not dare to say what one

[1] «Shame is not a virtue, but the person prone to shame receives praise». The translation of passages from the *Nicomachean Ethics* cited in this work is that of T. Irwin (1999) with slight modifications by the author, based on comparison to other translations of W.D. Ross (2009), R. Crisp (2004), and C.D.C. Reeve (2014).

[2] «What a beautiful virtue a sense of shame is, then; how delightful and full of grace it always is». The English translation is that of I.J. Davidson (2002), with modification.

thinks and so be forced to contradict oneself (*Gorgias* 482e-483a). Plato admits that a sense of shame (αἰδὼς) is ambiguous because it can be either good or bad, and, as such, it is different from the virtue of temperance (σωφροσύνη), which is always good (*Charmides* 161a-b).

While developing his account of shame in *De verecundia* (*ST* 2–2. 144), Thomas Aquinas also appears to be fully aware of the ambivalence of this phenomenon. In fact, his first question is whether shame (*verecundia*) is a virtue or a passion. He notices that some authors grant the status of virtue to shame. Cicero speaks of shame (*verecundia*) as the essence of the fourth cardinal virtue, which virtue he preferentially calls *decorum* (propriety) instead of *temperantia*[3]. In shame, the virtue of *decorum* exerts its maximum force. What is proper (*decorum*) is honorable (*honestum*), and what is honorable is proper (*Off*. 1.93). In this sense, as Aquinas observes, for Cicero «the honorable and the virtuous are convertible» (*honestum cum virtute convertitur*; *ST* 2–2.144.1 obj.3). Then, Aquinas finds that Ambrose depicts shame (*verecundia*) as a virtue, for shame is a quality that produces tranquility of mind: it shuns effrontery, keeps clear of all excess, loves sobriety, cherishes what is honorable, and searches for what is proper (*Off*. 1.211; *ST* 2–2.144.1 obj.3). Indeed, in the same work Ambrose praises shame as a beautiful virtue: «Pulchra igitur virtus est verecundia et suavis gratia» (*Off*. 1.67).

Other authors, Nemesius (or Gregory of Nyssa, for Aquinas) and John Damascene, enumerate «modesty/sense of shame» (αἰδώς; *erubescentia*) and shame (αἰσχύνη; *verecundia*) among species of fear (φόβος; *metus*). Because of «modesty/sense of shame» (*erubescentia*) «a man refrains from vicious acts through fear of reproach», and because of shame (*verecundia*) «a man while doing a disgraceful act avoids the public eye through fear of reproach» (*ST* 2–2.144.2 co.). Aristotle, though, recognizing that shame (αἰδώς) is a mean (μεσότης) between excess and deficiency and that the «modest person» or the «person with a proper sense of shame» (ὁ αἰδήμων) is praiseworthy, denies repeatedly the status of virtue (ἀρετὴ) to shame (*EN* 2.7.1108a31-32; 4.9.1128b10-11). Aristotle defines shame (αἰδώς) as a fear of dishonor (φόβος τις ἀδοξίας, *EN* 4. 9.1128b11; *timor ingloriationis*, *ST* 2–2.144.2 obj.1). As the passion of fear makes the person turn pale, the occurrence of shame also involves

[3] *Off*. 1.93: «Sequitur, ut de una reliqua parte honestatis dicendum sit, in qua verecundia et quasi quidam ornatus vitae, temperantia et modestia omnisque sedatio perturbationum animi et rerum modus cernitur. Hoc loco continetur id, quod dici Latine decorum potest; Graece enim πρέπον dicitur». For an explanation of why Cicero prefers to name the fourth cardinal virtue *decorum* rather than *temperantia* see section 2 below.

CONCLUSION

«Aliquae passiones, quamvis non proprie loquendo, sint virtutes, tamen inquantum sunt laudabiles, habent aliquid de ratione virtutis; sicut misericordia et verecundia»
(*Sent*. 3.33.3.4.4 ad3)

1. **Summary Remarks**

The main objective of this study has been to provide an historical and philosophical elucidation of Aquinas's notion of shame as a praiseworthy passion. The study shows that, due to shame's multifacetedness, many thinkers prior to Aquinas, despite generally agreeing that shame can play a positive role in the moral life, have put forward different opinions with regard to shame's very nature: whether it should be conceived of merely as a passion or can be viewed as a moral virtue. Following in the footsteps of Aristotle, Aquinas holds that shame is properly speaking not a virtue but a passion of the soul. More precisely, shame is a species of fear, that is, a motion of the sensitive appetite in response to some perception of disgrace spoiling one's reputation. Shame is multifaceted, since it can be felt for a wide range of reasons—many of which have no moral import—and not all shame is good and salutary. Some passion of shame, however, is good, salutary, and morally praiseworthy, and, as such, it shares some feature of moral virtue, so that—here Aquinas slightly departs from Aristotle—it might be called a virtue, albeit only in the loosest sense of the term. The task undertaken in this study, therefore, has been to bring to light when and how, precisely, the passion of shame can be morally praiseworthy.

First, it is clear that any kind of defects perceived as diminishing one's self-worth or reputation in others' eyes can naturally bring about the feeling of shame. For instance, one may understandably feel shame for simply being born in a lower-class family or for having a crooked nose. Another person's disgraceful conditions (e.g., being unintelligent) or

actions (e.g., cheating) may likewise provoke one to feel shame, if the person is particularly related to or associated with one, since the person's defect reflects on one's own worth. Further, one may experience shame not because one has actively committed a disgraceful action, but, instead, because one has passively suffered a humiliating or degrading action (e.g., sexual abuse, bullying) committed by another upon oneself. Hence, one might undergo shame for being a victim of another's disgraceful action, not for acting disgracefully. Even an ungrounded slander, as it gives rise to an impression that one is a defective person, can unavoidably generate shame. The passion of shame particularly qualified by Aquinas as good is that which is felt by one with regard to—either in anticipation of or in response to—the disgrace of one's sinful act (*turpitudo peccati*/*turpitudo culpae*), and so with respect to a voluntary defect (*defectus voluntarius*) for which one is fully responsible and is thus deservedly reproachable. While shame felt in anticipation of a disgracefully sinful act (prospective shame) may inhibit one from sinning, shame felt in response to the disgrace of a sinful act already committed (retrospective shame) may lead one to repentance.

Second, besides being experienced in regard to a right object (i.e., *turpitudo peccati*), the passion of shame is praiseworthy when it is felt in the right quantity (*esse in medio*), that is, neither too much—for that would be bashfulness—nor too little—for that would be shamelessness. As a mean between two extremes, shame does share one of the basic features of a moral virtue (*virtus moralis*). Yet, this feature alone, despite rendering shame praiseworthy, does not suffice for shame to qualify as a moral virtue in the fullest sense of the term. More than just a mean, for Aquinas moral virtue is properly speaking an elective habit (*habitus electivus*), that is, an enduring habit which inclines one to choose and to do a good deed well. Indeed, as a good habit, moral virtue facilitates one's producing good deeds (*habitus operativus*), and yet moral virtue works not through some kind of automaticity but requires free choice of the will (*cum electione*)[1]. In this sense, according to Aquinas shame falls short of the quality of a true virtue, since shame's arousal does not require choice; it results from a sudden impulse of passion/feeling rather than from an act of freedom. Moreover, while it is true that the right proportion of prospective shame can lead one to shun disgraceful acts of sin and to do good, this is unfortunately not always the case. Admittedly, there are also cases where shame hampers one from doing what one's

[1] *ST* 1–2.58.4 ad1: «Sed inclinatio virtutis moralis est cum electione».

right judgment has counselled one to do, as, for example, when shame holds one back from confessing one's sins.

Third, notwithstanding its instantaneous arousal, the passion of shame (in the right amount and with respect to the right object) is praiseworthy because its occurrence attests to one's good will (*bona voluntas*). One can be liable to moral shame only if one has already subscribed to or loved what is morally good and beautiful (*honestum*) and at the same time has detested what is morally evil and ugly (*turpe*). Otherwise, one would be shameless. Shame is, for Aquinas, an effect and a sign of a good will; its motion follows upon a good will (*ex bona voluntate consequitur*). As explained in Chapter III, shame, as a motion of the sensitive appetite, is related to the will (the intellective appetite), and thus participates in reason and voluntariness, not in a direct way through a command (*per imperium*) or a choice (*per modum electionis*), but in an indirect way through a kind overflow (*per redundantiam*). Occasioned by *turpitudo inhonestatis*, namely, one's failure to exemplify one's moral values and ideals of excellence, the presence of shame can bear witness to one's uncorrupted conscience or one's moral integrity, whereas the absence of shame can be indicative of one's lack of values, ideals, and commitments[2]. In a similar vein, Spinoza once affirmed that «Shame, although not a virtue, can be good insofar as it is an indication that the man who feels ashamed has a desire to live honorably […]. Therefore, although the man who is ashamed of some deed is in fact pained, he is nearer perfection than is the shameless man who has no desire to live honorably»[3].

Fourth, shame is praiseworthy as it, alongside a sense of honor (*honestas*), forms an integral part of the cardinal virtue of temperance. By inspiring one with the horror of dishonorableness, a sense shame contributes to constraining one from indulging the appetites for sensual

[2] Cf. A. BEN ZE'EV, *The Subtlety of Emotions*, 528: «The feeling of shame can bear witness to an uncorrupted conscience; and such a person is better than one who is both wicked and shameless». For John Rawls, it is because one is drawn by certain ends and ideals of excellence that one becomes liable to shame: «And since being moved by ends and ideals of excellence implies a liability to humiliation and shame, and an absence of a liability to humiliation and shame implies a lack of such ends and ideals, one can say of shame and humiliation also that they are a part of the notion of humanity». J. RAWLS, *A Theory of Justice*, 428.

[3] B. SPINOZA, *Ethica*, IV, prop.58, schol.: «Pudor, quamvis not sit virtus, bonus tamen est, quatenus indicat, homini, qui pudore suffunditur, cupiditatem inesse honestate vivendi […]. Quare, quamvis homo, quem facti alicujus pudet, revera sit tristis, est tamen perfectior impudenti, qui nullam habet honeste vivendi cupiditatem».

pleasures, a tendency human beings have in common with the nonrational animals, in a manner inconsistent with one's dignity as a rational being. Shame lays the first foundation of temperance by disposing one to behave temperately but does not constitute the essence of temperance. A sense of shame helps to constitute temperance, but temperance is decidedly more than and irreducible to a sense of shame, for temperance is an elective habit. If a temperate person habitually pursues and enjoys sensual pleasures in a moderated and dignified manner, that is because he has grasped the inherent good (*bonum honestum*) underlying the moderation: acting temperately is becoming (*conveniens*) to his overall well-being and is hence consonant with the good of reason (*bonum rationis*). He is not driven solely by the fear of dishonor/disgrace. This does not imply, nonetheless, that the temperate person can completely get rid of shame, to the extent that a sense of shame no longer plays a role in his life at all. As an integral part of temperance, the concurrence of shame is indispensable for temperance to be habitually operative. In fact, as Aquinas himself admits, «the virtuous man should avoid not only what is really evil, but also what according to opinion is regarded as evil»[4]. This entails that a virtuous person, as a social being, continues to be concerned with his self-worth in the opinion of others, for he does not want merely to be good but also to be reputed as good, without being necessarily obsessed with fame[5].

Fifth, shame felt in response to the disgrace of a voluntary wrongdoing is praiseworthy because its occurrence not only indicates that one has a good will, a well-formed conscience, and adequate concern for others' evaluation of one's moral worth, but can also helpfully prompt one to repentance and self-improvement. For Aquinas, the shame experience is typical of an incontinent man who knows and desires to do what is good but performs what is evil following his bad passions. Having his conscience in place and being sensitive to others' censure, the incontinent man is amenable to fraternal correction. On the one hand, shame felt before the eyes of others can galvanize a wrongdoer—be he an incontinent

[4] *ST* 2–2.144.4 ad2: «vitanda sunt virtuoso tam ea quae sunt mala secundum veritatem, quam ea quae sunt mala secundum opinionem». Cf. *SCG* 3.132.24: «virtuosus non solum debet fugere turpia, sed etiam quae turpia videntur». Aquinas refers to *EN* 4.9. 1128b22.

[5] Cf. *Sent*. 3.34.2.1.3 co.: «In omni enim virtute hoc est commune, secundum Philosophum [*EN* 3.8.1116a27], quod virtuosus operatur boni gratia vel propter turpis vitationem… Virtuosus abstinet a malis, fugiens et timens inconveniens rationis quod est turpe».

man or a continent and a temperate man who sometimes may relapse into an incontinent act—to repent and to reform, because shame is inextricably bound up with the desire of love for union with the relevant others. In desiring to be honored, in fact, one desires to be loved, and so the more dishonorable one is the more unlovable one is. Shame tells one that one's disgraceful act has rendered one not the person the relevant others have expected one to be and, accordingly, unless one changes oneself for the better, the relevant others are warranted in lacking the desire of love for union with one. On the other hand, shame felt before the eyes of one's own conscience indicates that one's shame results not merely from failing to measure up to the standards or ideals set up for one by others (i.e., failure to meet relevant others' expectation), but results from failing to measure up to those same standards or ideals adopted as one's own. Since one's adoption of those standards or ideals is tied to others' holding them and evaluating one in terms of them, in shame one feels inadequate both to oneself and to others, so that shame is fundamentally shame of oneself before others. Thus, shame has the potential to motivate one to improve oneself, because, by meeting those shared standards or ideals, one augments one's honorability (*honestas*) and thereby ensures the others' desire of love for union with one.

Sixth, in its retrospective form shame can play a constructive role in development and moral change when it is accompanied by humility (*humilitas*) and confidence (*fiducia*). Since what shame reveals is one's faulty and imperfect self, causing one to feel contemptible and unworthy before others, in shame one spontaneously tends to look away from others or to want to hide. Shame is painful because it lays bare the fact that one is not the sort of person one and the relevant others assumed or hoped one was or should be. Indeed, shame has the potential of becoming destructive, as it may debilitate one, leading one to depression and perhaps to acts of violent rage. In order to prevent such a destructive outcome from happening, shame needs to be honestly acknowledged and courageously confronted, and for this purpose, as was argued in Chapter VI, one needs both humility and confidence. Humility, together with confidence, allows one to accept and work through one's disgraceful aspect, vulnerability, and limitedness without running out of hope. Being realistic and not thinking of himself as being above who he is, a humble person can experience shame as a healthy reminder that he is not omnipotent, not God. In a humble and confident person shame will less likely become toxic; rather, it can become a motivational impetus for growth. In this light, Pope Francis's statement that «Shame is a true Christian virtue… a virtue of the humble»[6], cited in the general introduction of this study, is perfectly understandable. A humble person is not afraid to undergo shame for the sake of attaining a more valuable end, as was exhibited, according to Aquinas, by the humble Jesus in His choosing and bearing the most shameful manner of death (*turpissimum genus mortis*): «it pertained to His humility that He did not refuse to suffer shame (*confusionem pati*) in so celebrated a place [Ierusalem]»[7].

Seventh, spontaneous shame can be praiseworthy when it is not only (antecedently) informed but also (subsequently) guided by right reason. Aquinas insists throughout his works that shame arises instantaneously from the impulse of passion—without being directly preceded by a judgment of reason (*sine iudicio rationis*)—and nonetheless shame is praiseworthy, insofar as it arises in a person of a good will who detests the disgrace of sin. In this sense, though not directly commanded, shame is antecedently informed by right reason. Obviously, one cannot feel shame at will or by design, just as one cannot command another to feel shame, either, by giving him an order «Be ashamed!» but can only expect or tell another that he ought to feel ashamed of himself by exclaiming, «Shame on you!». Even though one cannot feel shame at will, yet, soon after the passion of shame has arisen, one can subsequently use his reason to evaluate whether his shame is appropriate and justifiable and can accordingly bring about an affective change by making fresh and better judgments. Aquinas hints at this possibility when he says that «by applying certain general considerations one moderates anger, fear, and the like, or incites it»[8]. For example, a girl who grew up in a patriarchal society and was socialized within the belief that it is shameful for women to dispute with men in public will spontaneously feel shame whenever she happens to engage in public dispute with men. Yet, with her reason she might critically reassess her shame and reconsider whether the prevailing belief causing her shame is justifiable. As now she finds that such a belief is actually unjustifiable, she might slowly feel less shame, and perhaps finally no shame, when she has to dispute with men publicly. Hence, how one rationally responds to the involuntary arousal of shame is crucial in

[6] His complete statement in Italian reads as follows: «La vergogna è una vera virtù cristiana e anche umana… e vergognarsi è una virtù dell'umile, di quell'uomo e di quella donna che è umile». FRANCIS (Pope), *La verità è un incontro*, 106.

[7] *ST* 3.46.10 co.: «Hoc maxime conveniebat humilitati eius [Iesu], ut scilicet, sicut turpissimum genus mortis elegit, ita etiam ad eius humilitatem pertinuit quod in hoc loco tam celebri confusionem pati non recusavit».

[8] *ST* 1.82.3 co.; *QDV* 25.4 co.

determining the outcome. In Aquinas's view, passions are open to rational guidance, though, of course, reason has no absolute power over passions, since passions are motions of the sensitive appetite and reason's rule over passions is only a «political rule», not a «despotic rule». So, despite the girl's rational response, the possibility for her shame to become recalcitrant is always there, as Aquinas himself has warned that «some feeling of shame, as with other passions, may forestall the stand one makes on ground of reason»[9].

2. **Aquinas's Account of Shame: Significance and Limitation**

In a recent book about shame, Krista Thomason[10] identifies and classifies contemporary philosophical perspectives on the value of shame and the role it plays in moral life into three groups: (1) traditional view, (2) naturalistic view, and (3) pessimistic view. A quick look at where Aquinas's account of shame might fit within this threefold division will help to highlight both the significance of Aquinas's account for a study on the moral value of shame and its limitations.

The traditional view, according to K. Thomason, holds that shame is a painful emotion arising out of a realization that one has failed to live up to some norms, standards, or ideals one cares about[11]. Two prominent exponents of the traditional view are John Rawls and Gabriele Taylor. J. Rawls defines shame as an injury to self-respect or a blow to self-esteem experienced following a failure to exercise certain excellences or moral virtues central to one's conception of a good life[12]. G. Taylor points out two essential features of shame understood as a moral emotion: (1) the self-directed adverse judgment of the person feeling ashamed, and (2) the notion of the audience[13]. One feels ashamed when one thinks of oneself as being seen in a certain way, that is, as being inferior to what one believed or hoped oneself to be. Taylor writes: «It is because the agent thinks of herself in a certain relation to the audience that she now thinks herself degraded, but she does not think of this degradation as depending on an audience. Her final judgment concerns herself only»[14]. In other words, for Taylor shame is an emotion of self-assessment and the role of

[9] *ST* 2–2.144.4 ad3.
[10] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked, The Dark Side of Shame and Moral Life* (2018; hereafter *Naked*…).
[11] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 14, 22-23.
[12] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 19; Cf. J. RAWLS, *A Theory of Justice*, 388.
[13] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 20; Cf. G. TAYLOR, *Pride, Shame and Guilt*, 64.
[14] G. TAYLOR, *Pride, Shame and Guilt*, 68.

an audience in shame is metaphorical[15]. Whereas the self-directed averse judgment is constitutive of shame, the presence of an observer is a contingent matter. The person feeling ashamed needs only imagine how he might appear to others in a shameful situation; there is no need of a real, physically present audience, for an external (real or imagined) observer serves merely as a means for the person to make a shift in his viewpoint *vis-à-vis* himself (i.e., as a means of bringing about self-realization)[16]. In this way, Taylor claims that shame can function as an emotion of self-protection, for the liability to shame beneficially prevents one from failing to be the person one would like to be[17].

In K. Thomason's reading, the traditional view has been the favorite of many moral philosophers because this perspective successfully safeguards the autonomous dimension of shame and thus can explain shame's moral value in a satisfactory way[18]. Understood as a response to the failure to embody one's own cherished moral ideals or values, shame does appear to be morally valuable. On this account, shame is positive and constructive; the fear of shame helps one to stay on the right track[19]. Further, inasmuch as shame is caused by a failure, according to this view shame can be «undone by proofs of defects made good»[20], namely, by means of self-improvement. Notwithstanding all this, in its attempt to decipher the phenomena of shame, according to Thomason, the traditional view has focused solely on voluntary acts (lying, stealing, cheating) as its case examples, with the consequence that this view cannot satisfactorily account for shame about nudity, sex, social class, and physical appearance[21]. Likewise, the traditional view (still according to K. Thomason) has also difficulty explaining the shame suffered by abuse victims, since clearly they have not failed to live up to some valued ideals, norms, or standards. At best, the strategy of the traditional view is to draw a distinction between moral shame and natural shame and then to regard shame about nudity, sex, social class, physical disability, and being a sexual abuse victim as forms of natural shame[22]. Another strategy employed by some proponents of the traditional view is to label these

[15] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 20; G. TAYLOR, *Pride, Shame and Guilt*, 66.
[16] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 20; G. TAYLOR, *Pride, Shame and Guilt*, 66.
[17] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 20; G. TAYLOR, *Pride, Shame and Guilt*, 81.
[18] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 19.
[19] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 23.
[20] J. RAWLS, *A Theory of Justice*, 424; cited in K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 23.
[21] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 28.
[22] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 28-29.

latter cases of shame as unwarranted or irrational: there is, in fact, nothing to be ashamed of[23].

The naturalistic view, developed by, among others, Allan Gibbard[24] and Heidi Meibom[25], attempts to give an account of shame which is compatible with psychological evolutionary evidence about shame. In this view, «Shame is an emotion that both responds to the disapproval of others (usually others from a dominant or powerful group) and communicates to those others that the person who feels shame recognizes she has violated their norms»[26]. Hence, as Thomason sees it, the naturalistic view still understands shame in terms of failures to live up to certain ideals, but the ideals in question are *public* ones, especially those valued by the dominant group. These ideals, moreover, are not necessarily moral ideals or character ideals, and the one feeling ashamed does not necessarily accept them[27]. Unlike the traditional view, which thinks of shame as fully autonomous, the naturalistic view thinks of shame as fully heteronomous[28]. This is because, evolutionarily speaking, shame functions to display appeasement and, as such, serves as a mechanism which promotes pro-social behaviors and which induces people to conform to social norms. Gibbard writes, «Shame stems from things that indicate a lack of the abilities, powers, or resources one needs if one is to be valued for one's cooperation and reciprocity»[29]. The naturalistic view, in K. Thomason's opinion, can provide a satisfactory explanation of, for example, why people of lower social class more easily feel ashamed than people of higher social class or why women tend to feel more shame than men[30]. The traditional view, by contrast, has difficulty explaining why class and social setting should matter if shame is, after all, about failing to live up to virtues. The problem with the naturalistic view is that, if shame is fully heteronomous, it cannot be understood as morally relevant. «If shame is primarily concerned with how one appears to others, it seems as though moral agents are captive to the opinion of others», and shame seems to

[23] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 29-30. Thomason refutes the idea that shame about nudity, sex, social class, and physical appearance is irrational (i.e., a false shame). For her, shame about these things is real and intelligible/reasonable. ID, *Naked*…, 172.
[24] A. GIBBARD, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*.
[25] H.L. MAIBOM, «The Descent of Shame».
[26] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 41.
[27] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 42.
[28] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 43.
[29] A. GIBBARD, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, 138, cited in K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*..., 41.
[30] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 47.

be a sign of moral immaturity[31]. The naturalistic view succeeds in providing a descriptive explanation of shame at the cost of sacrificing the normative dimension of shame; this view cannot explain the everyday experience where people claim that one *should* or *ought to* feel shame or that one *should not* or *ought not to* feel it at all[32]. Additionally, the naturalistic view also has trouble explaining shame about nudity and sex, for this shame does not involve failure to meet up some public ideals or violation of social norms, but results only from an exposure to some undesirable audience[33].

The pessimistic view contends that «shame is inherently destructive, harmful, or backwards» and so «shame has no moral value and we would be better off without it»[34]. Shame is viewed as an unhealthy and primitive emotion belonging to the bygone era of the honor-culture, something contemporary human beings should be done with, for this emotion tends to lead people to violent acts against others or to self-destructive behaviors[35]. Thus, by moving away from shame, according to the pessimistic view, human beings are making moral progress. Arnold Isenberg, one of the advocates of this view, writes, «There is no such thing as the right amount of shame… *Every* shame, however circumscribed, must go»[36]. Another author, Martha Nussbaum, according to Thomason, despite recognizing that shame can be constructive, suggests that shame conceals narcissism at its core, where one demands to be «omnipotent» and demands that the world would revolve around one[37]. In Nussbaum's view, shame leads to a misguided and ultimately harmful pursuit of perfection and invulnerability. She writes, «It is only because one expects oneself to have control or even perfection… that one will shrink from or cover the evidence of one's lack of control or imperfection»[38]. Hence, shame is nothing less than an immature response to the imperfect realities of human life, and progress is made when one renounces one's demand to be in control and invulnerable. Against this view, Thomason argues that

[31] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 48.
[32] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 49-50.
[33] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 45.
[34] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 127.
[35] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 127.
[36] A. ISENBERG, «Natural Pride and Natural Shame», 14 (emphasis original); cited in K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 131.
[37] M.C. NUSSBAUM, *Hiding from Humanity*, 184-185; cited in K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 128.
[38] M.C. NUSSBAUM, *Hiding from Humanity*, 191; cited in K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 128.

«a liability to shame is constitutive of valuable moral commitments», and, consequently, «we should not wish to be rid of shame unless we also wish to be rid of other important parts of our moral psychology»[39]. For Thomason, the liability to shame shows that one is open to moral criticism and that one recognizes the moral standing of others.

Where would K. Thomason place Aquinas's account of shame in her above-depicted threefold division of viewpoints on shame? She would presumably group Aquinas's account in the traditional view, because Aquinas draws heavily on Aristotle and, according to her, Aristotle's views about shame are «most closely aligned with the commitments of the traditional view»[40]. Indeed, Aquinas shares many points of the traditional view. For example, Aquinas follows the Philosopher in emphasizing that shame is appropriate when it regards one's blameworthy faults: «verecundia proprie loquendo non respicit nisi voluntarios defectus, quibus debetur vituperium»[41]. Aquinas sees shame positively because the fear of experiencing shame can motivate people to control their behavior: «prae timor infamiae multi a peccato retrahuntur»[42]. The fear of shame or the aversion to it can lead one who is going astray to return to the right track: «aliquis a via rectitudinis discendens… potest ad viam rectitudinis reduci… per timorem turpis, aut odium ipsius»[43]. Aquinas likewise believes that feeling ashamed of one's culpable action (sin) can spur one to pursue self-improvement: «erubescentiam de peccatis… hoc est principium emendationis vitae»[44]. As such, Aquinas's account of shame seems to fit neatly into K. Thomason's category of the traditional view.

However, as has been shown in this study, besides drawing on Aristotle's account, Aquinas also draws insights from many other ancient authors, as well as from the Scriptures. Aquinas adopts, for example, Augustine's views on shame about nudity and sexual activity. Despite what Thomason claims, namely, that «Augustine's shame is… a bit more heavy-handed; [h]is remarks about shame… are often what lead some people to the pessimistic view»[45], St. Augustine has become for Aquinas a source not of a pessimistic, but of a naturalistic view about shame. Although while speaking of praiseworthy shame Aquinas generally limits

[39] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 133.
[40] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 16.
[41] *SLE* 4.17.103-4; Cf. *ST* 2–2.144.2 ad1.
[42] *ST* 2–2.33.7 co.
[43] *Sent*. 4.19.2.1 co.
[44] *In Ps*. 6, n.7.
[45] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 16.

himself to shame as due to disgraceful acts—«verecundia non est nisi de turpi actu»[46]—he is fully aware that actually «*de quolibet defectu* homo naturaliter erubescit»[47]. He shares Augustine's idea that sexual shame shadowing any act of matrimonial union is natural: «cum ea quae inter virum et uxorem aguntur, quandam *naturalem verecundiam* habeant…»[48]. This sexual shame is caused by «aliqua turpitudo in corpore hominis»[49] following the Fall, namely, by the fact that in the postlapsarian state «motus genitalium membrorum non subditur imperio rationis» and, consequently, «maxime autem verecundantur homines de actibus venereis… in tantum quod etiam concubitus coniugalis, qui honestate nuptiarum decorator, verecundia non careat»[50]. Before the Fall, the human body and soul were in a harmonious integration, so that nudity and sex were not a source of shame. Yet, with the Fall human beings have lost their body-soul harmonious integration, for now their flesh rebels against the spirit and, due to this defect, «membra generationis videntur esse turpia et verecunda»[51]. Having developed a distinctive explanation of shame about nudity and sex, Aquinas thus has gone beyond both the traditional and naturalistic accounts of shame delineated by Thomason.

Moreover, as shown in Chapter VI, in his writings Aquinas also displays, to a certain degree, an awareness that shame can serve the function of appeasing offended others and that those of the lower social rank are more shame-prone than those of the higher social rank. In this sense, Aquinas does share some intuitions of the naturalistic view. Of course, in comparison to the naturalistic view, Aquinas has a less strong historical consciousness than that which would have enabled him to see that shame might function as a powerful tool of informal social control and subordination (in favor of the dominant and powerful class). Aquinas shows little awareness that shame might serve badly to preserve an unjustified status quo. This admittedly constitutes a limitation of his account. That which Aquinas does see is that the passion of shame is intimately connected with the desire to belong, to be admired, and to be loved and that in this respect shame can force one to conform (for better or worse). Further, if Aquinas pays very little or no attention to shame as

[46] *Sent*. 4.31.2.1 obj.4; Cf. *ST* 2–2.144.2 s.c. Aquinas refers to John Damascene's *Fid. Orth.* 2.15 (PG 94, 932).
[47] *Sent*. 4.31.2.1 ad4. Emphasis added.
[48] *SCG* 3.125.3. Emphasis added.
[49] *ST* 2–2.164.2 ad8.
[50] *ST* 2–2.151.4 co.
[51] *Sent*. 4.1.2.3.2 obj.2.

a socio-cultural phenomenon involving some power relations and control, this is also because his main focus while discussing shame is on the nature of shame as a moral passion and on its constructive role the process of moral growth. Accordingly, he concentrates his reflection on the psychological and ethical dynamics of shame, rather than on the politics of shame as such.

To be sure, Aquinas does not share the core belief of the pessimistic view that shame is intrinsically destructive and morally valueless. He does admit that shame provoked by an undeserved slight might bring about rage or that shame might at times become bad if it leads the ashamed person to despair. Yet, overall, Aquinas looks at shame in a positive light and, as has been shown throughout in this study, he sees that on certain conditions shame might become morally praiseworthy. Aquinas would certainly disagree with the pessimistic view that human beings could and would be better off without shame, for in his opinion even the virtuous person would still be liable to feel ashamed if it happened that there was adequate reason to feel so. In this case, Aquinas would presumably agree with Thomason's affirmation that «shame is a morally valuable emotion in spite of its danger because our liability to it is an important part of moral life»[52]. One's liability to shame is indicative (if not constitutive, as claimed by Thomason) of one's valuable moral commitments. Aquinas once asserts: «nullus movetur ex odio vel timore turpis, nisi ille cui jam inest aliqualiter voluntas pulchri et boni»[53]. One need not specifically cultivate a liability to shame, but if one is committed to what is morally good and beautiful and thus cares about one's dignity and good name (i.e., one's moral worth among other moral agents), one will undoubtedly become liable to shame.

For Thomas Aquinas, in sum, shame is not limited to moral failings. «De quolibet defectu homo naturaliter erubescit»[54]. One naturally feels

[52] K.K. THOMASON, *Naked*…, 162. K.K. Thomason herself argues that, though shame is felt for a wide variety of cases, it is better not to draw a distinction of types between good and bad shame, false shame and real shame, natural shame and moral shame, for after all there is only one shame with a complex face. As an alternative to the traditional and the naturalistic view, she attempts to offer a unified account of shame, which shows how shame can be morally valuable, while at the same time making sense of its dark side. Thus, she defines shame as an experience of tension between one's identity (who I am or might be independently of who I think I am) and one's self-conception (who I think I am). Shame occurs when one's identity overshadows one's self-conception.

[53] *Sent.* 4.19.2.1 ad5.

[54] *Sent.* 4.31.2.1 ad4.

ashamed for any defects (actual or presumed) which stain one's reputation and render one contemptible or unworthy before others. One may feel shame about one's stupidity or one's ugliness even when one is well aware that there is nothing morally wrong with such qualities or that one is in no way responsible for having them. It is not only natural but also very human that «unusquisque de vitae suae maculis erubesc[i]t»[55]. Though completely understandable or intelligible, this kind of shame is in no sense recommended, let alone praiseworthy. Rather, if possible, one does well to get over it. On the contrary, shame is expected to occur and is deemed praiseworthy in the case where one has committed—or is thinking about committing—some disgraceful action for which one is—or would be—held responsible. «Verecundia proprie respicit ingloriationem secundum quod debetur culpae, quae est defectus voluntarius»[56]. The lack of feeling shame in the case of moral failings calls into question not only one's moral commitments and one's moral integrity, but also one's sensibility to others' viewpoints and one's respect for their moral standing. The absence of liability to shame is indicative of one's lack of a sense of humility. In fact, the humble person would not be ashamed of shame; instead, for the person of good will «the only shame is to have none»[57].

[55] This is a statement attributed to Bede in *Cat. aur. Marc.* c.1, l.13. The present author has modified the word *erubescat* to *erubescit*. The original and complete statement runs as follows: «In faciem procidit, quod humilitatis est et pudoris, ut unusquisque de vitae suae maculis erubescat».

[56] *ST* 2–2.144.2 ad1.

[57] B. PASCAL, *Pensées* §194 (L427/S681): «Il n'y a de honte qu'à ne point en avoir».

ABBREVIATIONS

Works by Ambrose

Off.	*De officiis ministrorum*
Virg.	*De virginibus*

Works by Aristotle

Cat.	*Categoriae*
De An.	*De Anima*
EE	*Ethica Eudemia*
EN	*Ethica Nicomachea*
Phys.	*Physica*
Rhet.	*Rhetorica*

Works by Augustine

Conf.	*Confessiones*
Civ. Dei	*De civitate Dei*
C. Iul. imp.	*Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*
En. Ps.	*Enarrationes in Psalmos*
Gen. litt.	*De Genesi ad litteram*
Nupt. et conc.	*De nuptiis et concupiscentia*

Works by Cicero

Att.	*Epistulae ad Atticum*
Catil.	*In Catilinam*
Fam.	*Epistulae ad familiares*
Fin.	*De finibus bonorum et malorum*
Font.	*Pro Fonteio*
Inv.	*De inventione*
Off.	*De officiis*
Q. fr.	*Epistulae ad Quintum fratrem*
Part.	*Partitiones oratoriae*

Rep.	*De republica*
Tusc.	*Tusculanae disputationes*

Works by John Damascene

Fid. Orth.	*De fide orthodoxa*

Works by Nemesius

Nat. Hom.	*De natura hominis*

Works by Thomas Aquinas

Cat. aur. Matt.	*Catena aurea in Matthaeum*
Cat. aur. Marc.	*Catena aurea in Marcum*
Cont. Imp.	*Contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*
CT	*Compendium theologiae*
De art. fid.	*De articulis fidei et ecclesiae sacramentis*
De caelo	*Sententia super librum De caelo et mundo*
De regno	*De regno ad regem Cypri*
In DA	*Sententia libri De anima*
In de div. nom.	*In librum beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio*
In Ioan.	*Super evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*
In Matt.	*Super evangelium S. Matthaei lectura*
In Meta.	*Sententia super Metaphysicam*
In Jer.	*In Jeremiam prophetam expositio*
In Peryerm.	*Expositio libri Peryermenias*
In Pol.	*Sententia libri Politicorum*
In Ps.	*In Psalmos Davidis expositio*
QDM	*Quaestiones disputatae de malo*
QDP	*Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei*
QDSC	*Quaestiones disputatae de spiritualibus creaturis*
QDV	*Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*
QDVC	*Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus in communi*
Quodl.	*Quaestiones quodlibetales*
SCG	*Summa contra gentiles*
Sent.	*Scriptum super libros Sententiarum (Sent.1 = commentary on book I of the Sentences, and so on [2, 3 and 4])*
SLE	*Sententia libri Ethicorum*
ST	*Summa theologiae (ST 1 = Prima Pars; ST 1–2 Prima Secundae; ST 2–2 = Secunda Secundae; ST 3 = Tertia pars)*
Super Eph.	*Super epistolam ad Ephesios lectura*
Super Gal.	*Super epistolam ad Galatas lectura*
Super Hebr.	*Super epistolam ad Hebraeos lectura*
Super Iob	*Expositio super Iob ad litteram*

Super Is.	*Expositio super Isaiam ad litteram*
Super I Cor.	*Super primam epistolam ad Corinthos lectura*
Super II Cor.	*Super secundam epistolam ad Corinthos lectura*
Super I Tim.	*Super primam epistolam ad Timotheum lectura*
Super II Tim.	*Super secundam epistolam ad Timotheum lectura*
Super Phil.	*Super epistolam ad Philippenses lectura*
Super Rom.	*Super epistolam ad Romanos lectura*
Super Tit.	*Super epistolam ad Titum lectura*

Other Abbreviations

a.	*articulus* (article)
ad	response to an initial objection
al.	*alii* (others)
c.	*caput* (chapter)
co.	*corpus* (body of an article or solution)
Cf.	confer
clav.	*clavis* (key or glossary in W. Moerbeke's Latin translation)
d.	*distinctio* (distinction)
ed.	editor
eds.	editions
e.g.	*exempli gratia* (for example)
expos.	*expositio* (exposition)
ff.	and following
ID.	*idem* (the shame)
i.e.	*id est* (that is)
l.	*lectio* (lecture)
lib.	*liber* (book)
no.	number
obj.	objection
p.	page
PG	*Patrologia Graeca* (J.-P. Migne)
PL	*Patrologia Latina* (J.-P. Migne)
prol.	*prologus* (prologue)
prop.	proposition
q.	*quaestio* (question)
q.c.	*quaestiuncula* (little question)
s.c.	*sed contra* (consideration «on the other hand»)
schol.	*scholium* (note; in Spinoza's works)
sec.	section
suppl.	*supplementum* (supplement to *ST* 3)
tr.	translator
trans.	translation
vol.	volume

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[1] For abbreviations of the Thomistic works used here, see p.388-89.

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