



## Aristotle on Shame

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Does Aristotle's conception of *aischyne*, as articulated in the *Rhetoric*, overlap with what today we would call 'shame'? Scholars who characterize Greek culture as a culture of shame point out that, while for us guilt and shame are two interrelated concepts, the absence of the concept of guilt in classical philosophy and literature ought to play a role in our attempt to understand *aidos/aischyne*.<sup>1</sup>

Guilt, the argument goes, is an emotional response to the breaking of laws and to the damage others may suffer because of our actions and omissions. Shame, however, is not primarily related to an authentic concern for others; rather, it is fundamentally a selfish emotion. We feel shame at our bad actions because they may endanger our good reputation. Others play a role only insofar as we care about their opinions.<sup>2</sup> With respect to Aristotle's conception of shame, the question is if a concern for reputation may entail a concern for noble action, and to what extent shame may play a role in the virtuous life.

Aristotle helps us correct prejudices against the so-called 'culture of shame' by drawing our attention to the sensitivity involved in this emotion. As I shall argue, Aristotle conceives of shame from two different but inter-related perspectives. From the point of view of self-evaluation, shame allows an agent to perceive and acknowledge his or her responsibility with respect to bad actions, omissions, and

<sup>1</sup> For the passage from a shame culture to a guilt culture, see Benedict 1946 and Creighton 1990. For the characterization of Greek culture as a culture of shame, see Dodds 1951 and Adkins 1960. For an excellent and still influential treatment of the emotions of self-assessment, see Taylor 1985. Definitions of guilt and shame vary with authors and philosophical (or psychological) perspective. Generally, guilt is understood as an emotion felt for transgressions and wrongdoing, while shame is related to failure and shortcomings. For example, Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni 2012, 114 describes guilt as 'the experience of an action or omission of ours as infringing a normative requirement to which we adhere'. In turn, the authors characterize shame as 'the feeling of our being incapable of honoring even minimally the demands entailed by self-relevant values'.

<sup>2</sup> After reviewing the most recent literature on shame and guilt, Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni 2012, 48 organizes the conclusions of those studies along the following four lines: 'First, guilt promotes interaction with others, whereas shame motivates concealment from them. Guilt is thus associated with taking responsibility, shame with shirking responsibility. Second, guilt is associated with other-oriented empathy, whereas shame is associated with self-oriented distress. Guilt, thus, manifests and fosters concern and care for others, while shame makes us oblivious or indifferent to others' feelings and needs. Third, shame is connected with anger in a way that guilt is not. As a result, shame is likely to go hand-in-hand with hostile and destructive behavior. Fourth, and finally, shame is distinctively associated with depression, a connection that has not been shown to exist in relation to guilt. Consequently, shame is also linked to decreased well-being and has obvious damaging consequences for constructive social interactions.'

character flaws. In this sense it is similar to what we would call guilt. From the point of view of the larger context of affective and social interactions, shame contributes to the awareness that certain situations are diminishing or humiliating. In this sense it concerns a wider range of phenomena than guilt, since it draws our attention not just to ourselves qua agents, but also to how others treat us.

My main goal is to show how Aristotle's analysis allows us to understand shame both as a response to the agent's responsibility for actions that betray vice, and as a response to situations or behaviors of others that the agent finds potentially degrading.

Before confronting Aristotle's overall argument, a terminological problem must first be addressed. Aristotle speaks of shame not only in the *Rhetoric* (when he addresses the emotions), but also in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (where his focus is on virtue and vice), and he employs two different terms with slightly different meanings: in the *Rhetoric* he speaks of *aischyne*, while in the *Nicomachean Ethics* his focus is on *aidos*. *Aidos* and *aischyne* do not seem to refer to the same emotion. While *aidos* roughly corresponds to a prospective and inhibitory sense of shame for future actions, *aischyne* corresponds to the shame one feels for past actions.

I address both the distinction between *aidos* and *aischyne* in Aristotle's work and the relevance of shame in Aristotle's ethical theory. With respect to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I concentrate on the reasons why Aristotle maintains that *aidos* can be helpful in the education to virtue but cannot itself be considered a virtue. With respect to the *Rhetoric*, I first address the terminological distinction between *aidos* and *aischyne*, and then, focusing on *aischyne*, I examine the relevance of temporality and the role that witnesses are supposed to play with respect to shame.

Having shown in sections I and II that Aristotle attributes to shame certain functions that we would commonly attribute to guilt, in section III I claim that for Aristotle shame covers a wider range of phenomena than we might be inclined to expect: not only actions for which an agent can be held responsible, but also situations in which the agent plays no active role, or even events in which the subject passively suffers evil done by others.

The person who feels shame is faced with a gap between her beliefs and expectations about herself and a perspective from which she is seen as defective or degraded. When the feeling of degradation is a response to the apparent culpable behavior of others, shame paves the way to anger. The last part of section III is devoted to exploring the relationship between shame and anger. I discuss why shame can induce someone to anger and why, by contrast, someone feeling angry may remain insensitive to shame.

### I. *Aidos* and *aischyne*: their difference and their role in a virtuous life

In *Nicomachean Ethics* iv Aristotle defines *aidos* as a particular kind of fear, i.e., fear of disrepute:

It is not fitting to speak about a sense of shame (*aidos*) as a particular virtue, for it seems more like a passion than a characteristic. It is defined, at any rate, as a certain fear of disrepute, and it turns out to resemble the fear of terrible things, for those who feel shame blush and those who fear death turn pale. Both, then, appear in some way to be bodily, which seems to be more a mark of a passion than of a characteristic (NE 1128b10-16).

While generic fear (*phobos*) is pain at imagining imminent evils that cause destruction or pain, *aidos* is pain at imagining evils that damage one's reputation. *Phobos* is concerned with *ta kaka* (bad things, the opposite of *ta agatha*, good, desirable things) while *aidos* is a sensitivity to *aischra* (to things ignoble, shameful, dishonorable—the opposite of *ta kala*: noble things).

Aristotle also addresses *aidos* briefly when he discusses courage in book 3. Here he claims that it would be mistaken to believe that a courageous person ought to be without fear with respect to all kinds of bad things, since certain kinds of bad things ought to be feared by a decent person, and disrepute is one of them:

We fear, then, all the bad things—for example, disrepute, poverty, sickness, friendlessness, and death—but the courageous person is not held to be concerned with all of these. For some things one even ought to fear, and it is noble to do so and shameful not to, for example, disrepute, since he who fears this is decent and bashful, whereas he who does not is shameless, though he is said by some to be courageous in a metaphorical sense: he bears a certain likeness to the courageous man because the courageous man is in fact a sort of fearless person.

(NE 1115a10-14)

Given the importance that cultivating a sense of shame has in education, and given that shamelessness resembles a vice, one might think *aidos* to be a virtue, but Aristotle raises four objections against this hypothesis in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: (1) Virtues are stable dispositions, and as such do not express themselves in sudden bodily changes. However, *aidos*, like *phobos*, seems to be a bodily occurrence: those who fear terrible things become pale, while those who fear disrepute blush. Hence *Aidos* must be, like *phobos*, an emotion, not a disposition. (2) Virtues are dispositions to perform certain actions in view of what is noble in the given circumstances. *Aidos*, on the other hand, prevents us from doing bad things: it is not responsible for our doing good things. Since it is activated only when we are about to act in ways that might be considered shameful, its function is inhibitory and prospective.<sup>3</sup> (3) *Aidos* is primarily motivated by self-interest

<sup>3</sup> That virtues are characterized by noble action rather than by abstaining from bad actions is not stated in the discussion of *aidos*; however, what Aristotle says elsewhere to this effect can be applied to *aidos* as well. See, e.g., NE 1120a10-15: 'Thus it belongs to the liberal person more to give to whom he ought than to take from whom he ought or to refrain from taking from whom he ought not, since it belongs to virtue more to act well than to fare well and to do what is noble than not to do what

and is only secondarily an other-regarding attitude. The sphere of what is good or bad enters the picture when one feels *aidos*, but only insofar as doing something contrary to what a virtuous person would do evokes a fear of disrepute. Though their actions may be the same, someone who acts out of *aidos* is less admirable than someone who acts in view of the noble. Only the first is a virtuous person (his or her goal is virtue), while for the latter a concern for virtue is instrumental to the goal of preserving one's reputation.<sup>4</sup> (4) When a person is virtuous the different parts of his or her soul are in harmony. In the case of *aidos*, however, a person is conflicted between desiring something bad and thinking that it is inappropriate to pursue it. If the person, thanks to *aidos*, prevails over her desires, she is self-controlled, but there is a considerable difference between self-control and virtue. Aristotle holds that *aidos* is an emotion appropriate to young people, who are still in the grip of their passions and make many mistakes. It is not appropriate to mature people, who ought not to feel attracted to shameful things (and feeling *aidos* clearly testifies to such attraction).<sup>5</sup>

When he speaks of shame Aristotle also employs the term *aischyne*. It is debatable to what extent the meanings of *aidos* and *aischyne* overlap, but Konstan 2006, 95 helpfully points out that in Aristotle's ethical works *aidos* never refers to past events (it is, as we have seen, a prospective and inhibitory emotion).<sup>6</sup> *Aischyne*, on the other hand, can refer to both past, present and future events, as is evident in Aristotle's definition of shame in the *Rhetoric*:

Let shame [*aischyne*] be [defined as] a sort of pain and agitation concerning the class of evils, whether present or past or future, that seem to bring a person into disrespect, and [let] shamelessness [be defined as] a belittling about these same things.<sup>7</sup> (*Rhet.* ii 6.1383b13-16)

is shameful.'

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., *NE* 1116a17-29, for Aristotle's argument that civic courage is only similar to true courage because it is motivated by fear of punishment and fear of disrepute rather than by a desire to endure dangers for the sake of the noble. On this point, see Cairns 1993, 420; on the role that in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle attributes to *aidos* (contrasted with fear) for the education of the young, see Burnyeat 1980.

<sup>5</sup> See *Rhet.* i 8.1367a6-19: 'And [are noble] things that are the opposites of those of which people are ashamed (for they feel shame when speaking and doing and intending shameful things), as also Sappho has written in a poem:

(Alcaeus speaking) I wish to say something, but shame hinders me.  
[Sappho] If you had a longing for noble or honorable things  
And your tongue had not stirred up some evil to speak,  
Shame would not have filled your eyes,  
But you would have been speaking about what is just.'

When not otherwise noted, I will quote Aristotle's *Rhetoric* from Kennedy 1991.

<sup>6</sup> See also the following observation: 'The emotion, as Aristotle understands it, is uniform; what varies is simply the timing of the perceived ills. The lexicographers are thus wrong to split *aischyne* into subdefinitions, for there is nothing to disambiguate' (Konstan 2006, 99). On the debate concerning the relationship between *aidos* and *aischyne* in *NE* 1128b15-23, cf. Grimaldi 1988, 105-107.

<sup>7</sup> ἔστω δὴ αἰσχύνη λύπη τις ἡ ταραχὴ περὶ τὰ εἰς ἀδοξίαν φανόμενα φέρειν τῶν κακῶν,

We saw that in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle considers *aidos* a form of fear, and fear is clearly of future events. In the *Rhetoric*'s definition, however, *aischyne* is not just a prospective inhibitory emotion—it can be felt also with respect to past actions or events. Is it the case then that *aischyne* in Aristotle's view is not, like *aidos*, a form of fear? I do not think so. *Aischyne* in the *Rhetoric*, like *aidos* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is indeed a form of fear, and as such it involves pain generated by imagining that something bad might happen to us.

What might happen to one's future reputation remains the primary concern of shame,<sup>8</sup> while all three temporal dimensions are relevant with respect to the actions or events that may cause disrepute. Let us consider examples of present, future, and past actions that may cause someone to feel shame.

Suppose I am running away, and I imagine that one of my fellow soldiers sees me as I abandon the battlefield: from this moment I will be known as a coward. Out of shame I may try to overcome my terror, and do my duty as a soldier. In this case feeling shame prevents me from doing something, right now or in the immediate future, that I would also blame someone else for doing. The recollection of a past action can arouse shame as well. Suppose I go back in my mind to when I boasted about achievements for which someone else was in fact responsible. Whether at the time someone actually saw through my boasting or not, I may feel ashamed of myself at the thought of how people I respect would respond to that kind of behavior. Even if the episode happened a long time ago, as I recollect it I see myself as a fraud.

Shame makes us focus our attention on what is blameworthy in our behavior. The charge that this emotion generates conformism and uncritical acceptance of social pressure is misguided. Aristotle does not say that shame *constitutes* its object as blameworthy on the basis of public opinion. Rather, he maintains that, among actions or situations that a subject has reason to consider bad (evil deeds, character flaws, etc.), shame will help him identify those that will also cause a bad reputation.

Concerning the timing of shame, we can imagine that someone consciously doing an evil deed may not feel shame at the time of her action. There is a difference between judging certain actions as blameworthy and considering those same actions in light of our living together with people who have definite ideas about us. The occasions for shame are many and often due to unpredictable circumstances. Shame moves an agent to reconsider his actions in light of his reputation. In sum: the action or the situation leading to shame may be present, past, or future with respect to the moment in which the emotion is felt. Shame occurs when the action or situation in question is seen as a potential cause of disrepute.

η παρόντων ἡ γεγονότων ἡ μελλόντων, ή δ' ἀναισχυντία ὀλιγωρία τις καὶ ἀπάθεια περὶ τὰ αὐτὰ ταῦτα.

<sup>8</sup> 'Since shame is imagination [*phantasia*] about a loss of reputation and for its own sake, not for its results' (*Rhet.* ii 6.1384a24-25).

## II. Witnesses of shame

Shame can be short-lived or enduring, depending on the place and time occupied by the witnesses of a certain action with respect to the person who feels the emotion. Aristotle makes this point when he considers the importance of being seen by others:

And they feel more shame at things done before these people's eyes and in the open; hence, too, the proverb 'Shame is in the eyes.' For this reason people feel more shame before those who are going to be with them and those watching them, because in both cases they are 'in' their eyes. (*Rhet.* ii 6.1384a34-b1)

In the first place, let us notice that Aristotle invites us to consider the temporality of shame from the perspective of its persisting beyond the moment it is first felt. In this sense, it is like anger; the pain caused by having been insulted is compensated by the pleasure of dwelling on the possibility of revenge:

It is pleasant for him to think he will get what he wants, but no one wants things that seem impossible for himself to attain. Thus, it has been well said of rage [*thymos*],

A thing much sweeter than honey in the throat,  
It grows in the breast of men.

A kind of pleasure follows from this and also because people dwell in their minds on retaliating; then the image [*phantasia*] that occurs creates pleasure, as in the case of dreams. (*Rhet.* ii 2.1378b2-9)

In the case of shame the process is similar but the central feeling is pain: if someone who has been present when we acted badly continues to be close to us, the pain of shame will not subside. The other's presence forces us to remember as if we continued to be before his or her eyes: the scene repeats itself over and over again in our minds and we are frozen in that revealing moment of weakness.

Let us consider now a second point: Aristotle states that people 'feel more shame at things done before these people's eyes and in the open'. If the action has no witnesses, and especially if it is not made known to those by whom we would like to be appreciated, we may feel no shame, or feel it with considerably less intensity.

It would be a mistake to infer from this that if we do not feel shame we will also not be able to reproach ourselves if we did not act the way we think we should have.<sup>9</sup> The absence of witnesses, or the presence of witnesses who play no role in our public image (children, animals) inhibits the feeling of shame, but it does not necessarily inhibit feelings connected with our sense of responsibility or with our sense of failure. We can be disappointed with our behavior without feel-

<sup>9</sup> 'Whatever we may feel at the knowledge that we have inflicted a secret injury on another, it only becomes shame in the fullest sense when the evidence of our vicious character has reached the ears of those whose opinion we value' (Konstan 2006, 104).

ing shame. We can feel a need to make amends without feeling shame.

When I feel shame, others enter the picture. Shame makes me respond to the emotions that my imagination leads me to attribute to the real or virtual spectators of my deeds.<sup>10</sup>

Aristotle makes a small inventory of those I can imagine will be emotionally touched by my behavior. Setting aside people I respect and those who in turn respect me, there is an intermediate world of spectators whose opinions would be of no importance were I not compelled to consider the amount of damage they could cause to my reputation. There are, for example, those who cannot be accused of my same mistakes, and those who are never indulgent towards the mistakes of others: they will be easily moved to contempt (someone else, prone to similar failures, will be able to look at me without indignation). I will also have to consider those who love gossip and spend their time prying into the affairs of others, and those who not only disclose secrets, but also feel particular pleasure in finding something bad to say, spreading embarrassing or incriminating facts. Among those who enjoy discovering and revealing the misdeeds and shortcomings of others stand out the comic poets, whose business is not as much to generate contempt or indignation, but rather to expose people to ridicule. I could hardly fear something worse than falling into their hands.<sup>11</sup>

Since the recurrent character of shame may depend on the presence and alertness of those who can damage my reputation, I can hope to find a relief from it thanks to my neighbors' forgetfulness. This does not necessarily show shame to be ethically unreliable, but it does show that the perception of what is blameworthy is not solely responsible for the contempt that we may sometimes feel towards ourselves.

In order to feel shame we need something more than regret, guilt, or self-disappointment. We need to imagine that those who are important in our lives look at

<sup>10</sup> I agree with Deigh 1983 that accounts of shame are not satisfactory if they do not allow us to distinguish shame from self-disappointment, and I am arguing here that Aristotle does not make this mistake. If, with Rawls 1971 and with Deonna, Rodogno, and Teroni 2012, we connect shame too tightly with self-esteem, we can understand why shame can also be in our own eyes, but we become unable to explain those cases in which, self-esteem being lowered, the presence (or the thought) of others makes us feel shame and not just self-disappointment. I can feel disappointed with my writing if I realize now, after rereading it, that it is sloppy and badly written, while yesterday I thought I had done a great job. If I gave it to my most respected colleague the moment I finished it, and I now realize that it is sloppy and badly written, I will feel not just disappointed but ashamed. Deigh also points out cases in which others make us feel ashamed while our self-esteem remains intact (Deigh 1983, 239, 242-245).

<sup>11</sup> It is hard to imagine a more devastating and prolonged source of shame than ancient comedy. On derision as a source of shame, see Williams 1995 89-90: 'What arouses guilt in an agent is an act or omission of a sort that typically elicits from other people anger, resentment, or indignation. What the agent may offer in order to turn this away is reparation; he may also fear punishment or may inflict it on himself. What arouses shame, on the other hand, is something that typically elicits from others contempt or derision or avoidance. This may equally be an act or omission, but it need not be: it may be some failing or defect. It will lower the agent's self-respect and diminish him in his own eyes.'

us and find us wanting. If they are not present and do not know about us, in order to feel shame we need to believe that if they were present they would feel disconcerted, disappointed, or even inclined to laugh at us (for shame we do not need an actual witness, since a spectator may be present in our imagination, but we are still in a spectatorial perspective).

Not all the important people in our lives actually matter when it comes to shame. Children are among the most precious possessions, yet, while they are small they do not have sufficient judgment to generate concerns of this kind in their parents. Conversely, friends of friends, or their servants—people whose judgment we would otherwise not take into account—end up becoming very relevant, because they could let our friends know things we would want at all costs to keep from them.

One could argue that the group of those who can unleash shame is too large, and that it is organized according to principles of dubious value. If it is true that we can feel shame in front of people we barely know, while we may not be able to feel shame when our blameworthy behavior has no witnesses, shame could be accused of making us lose sight of what is truly relevant.

We could respond that Aristotle's account of shame in the *Rhetoric* is not meant to be exhaustive. Emotions are analyzed here insofar as they are important for rhetoricians, i.e., because persuasion affects people's emotions. Ethical questions concerning shame are not addressed because they are not relevant to Aristotle's present discussion. However, we can still raise such questions. Given Aristotle's stress in the *Rhetoric* on the role of others for shame, should we conclude that this emotion is of dubious value? I do not think so, but the answer is not immediately obvious. We should follow carefully Aristotle's complex picture.

First of all let us notice that he establishes primary and secondary conditions with respect to the role others play in shame. Servants, comic poets, slanderers, and all those who spread rumors intentionally or accidentally, are people in front of whom we would not be ashamed if they lacked the power to make our deeds known. They are relevant only insofar as they make us look bad in front of the people whose judgment we truly value. Aristotle explains it this way:

Since shame is imagination (*phantasia*) about a loss of reputation and for its own sake, not for its results, and since no one cares about reputation [in the abstract] but on account of those who hold an opinion of him, necessarily a person feels shame toward those whose opinion he takes account of.<sup>12</sup> (*Rhet.* ii 6.1384a24-27)

Second, shame is not concerned with the consequences of the loss of reputation (if any punishment, loss of property, or any other damage can be caused by it). The concern is the loss of esteem as such. Furthermore, it is not about opinions in

<sup>12</sup> ἐπεὶ δὲ περὶ ἀδοξίας φαντασία ἐστὶν ἡ αἰσχύνη, καὶ ταύτης αὐτῆς χάριν ἀλλὰ μὴ τῶν ἀποβανόντων, οὐδεὶς δὲ τῆς δόξης φροντίζει ἀλλ᾽ ἡ διὰ τοὺς δοξάζοντας, ἀνάγκη τούτους αἰσχύνεσθαι ὥν λόγον ἔχει.

general, but about opinions inasmuch as they belong to certain people.

This last point may remind us of the distinction between anger and hate: people feel angry with particular persons, while those who hate can hate entire groups (the thief or the sycophant), without having in mind anyone in particular.<sup>13</sup> Shame is similar to anger in this respect. It is about the particular both with respect to its causes (I am ashamed for *that* gesture, for *that* situation I was in, because I suffered *those* humiliations) and for its interlocutors. Even when the judge is internalized, he keeps the traits that make him potentially recognizable. I may not have clearly in mind one particular soldier who saw me leave the battle-field in a frenzy, but I will never feel ashamed before abstractions or concepts: not before the good itself or before the categorical imperative (if I feel shame before God it is because I imagine him as a person).<sup>14</sup> Shame goes together with the image (*phantasia*) of someone who looks at me and whose love, whose esteem, whose benevolence I risk losing.

Aristotle makes a list of the people towards whom one can feel shame because their opinion is important:

He takes account of those who admire him and whom he admires and by whom he wishes to be admired and those to whose rank he aspires and those whose opinions he does not despise. Now people want to be admired by those and admire those who have something good in the way of honors or from whom they happen to be greatly in need of something those people have in their control, as lovers [want love or sexual favors]; but they aspire to the rank of those [they regard as] like themselves, and they take account of prudent people as telling the truth, and their elders and educated people are of such a sort. (*Rhet.* ii 6.1384a27-33)

This list too, the moralist among us might object, is too long. Shame is felt in front of people whose opinion is important. Thus, if we believe that something we did betrays a vice (such as abandoning the shield is a sign of cowardice and showing excessive distress for the troubles of another person in his presence is a sign of flattery), we feel shame in front of those people who share our opinion. We are ashamed, that is, not so much because someone would cease to love us if he thought we were flatterers, but because we deem his view—that flattery is a bad thing and that our actions were those of a flatterer—correct.

If shame were explained in this way, the only real candidate on the list of those whose judgment truly matters should be the last: a sensible, trustworthy, prudent person, someone educated or made wise by old age. This, however, is not the

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Rhet.* ii 4.1382a3-7: ‘Now anger comes from things that affect a person directly, but enmity also from what is not directed against himself; for if we suppose someone to be a certain kind of person, we hate him. And anger is always concerned with particulars, directed, for example, at Callias or Socrates, while hate is directed also at types (everyone hates the thief and the sycophant).’

<sup>14</sup> On the relationship between the concrete other and the internalized other, and on the difference between the latter and a conceptual abstraction, see Williams 1995, 84ff.

whole picture. Shame entails ethical considerations, but it is not just concerned with right or wrong. Let us concentrate on the narrowly conceived moral evaluations first and on the larger picture later.

That evaluations concerning vices and virtues have great importance is clear: Aristotle's list of the bad things that can move us to shame includes the most important vices. Furthermore, he repeatedly distinguishes between things of which people are ashamed by convention and things that are truly shameful.

For example, he includes among the irrelevant opinions those of people one does not know:

But on the whole they are not ashamed before those whose reputation of telling the truth they much look down on (no one feels shame before babies and small animals); nor [are they ashamed] of the same things before acquaintances and strangers, but before acquaintances [they are ashamed] of things truly regarded [as wrong and] before those from abroad [they are ashamed] of things conventionally so regarded. (*Rhet.* ii 6.1384b23-26)

Aristotle makes this point also when he speaks of friendly feeling:

And [we have friendly feelings towards] those with whom we are on such terms that we do not blush before them for faults merely condemned by public opinion, provided that this is not due to contempt; and those before whom we do blush for faults that are really bad.<sup>15</sup> (*Rhet.* ii 4.1381b18-20)

As we have seen above, *aidos* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is considered an emotion useful for the development of virtue in the young, and, in this sense, it is a quasi-virtue. And yet, when in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle describes the typical traits of the young, he criticizes them for being overly attached to the values of their upbringing:

And they [the young] are sensitive to shame; for they have been educated only by convention and do not yet understand other fine things. (*Rhet.* ii 12.1389a29-30)

From all these points I believe we can infer that everyone in a sense deserves the kind of shame she is prone to. A reasonable person will know when shame is appropriate and when it is not. A thoughtless person will not question conventional views and will value appearance above substance: she will be likely to feel ashamed for things that a wise person would consider irrelevant. In turn, a wise person will probably feel ashamed when more superficial individuals would not find any reasons for shame.<sup>16</sup> If we are inclined to conformism, the distinction

<sup>15</sup> καὶ πρὸς οὓς οὔτως ἔχουσιν ὥστε μὴ αἰσχύνεσθαι τὰ πρὸς δόξαν, μὴ καταφρονοῦντες. καὶ πρὸς οὓς αἰσχύνονται τὰ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν. For this passage I used Freese 1926.

<sup>16</sup> As we have seen, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle argues that in principle a virtuous person will not be prone to shame, but I am thinking here of a case like that of Socrates in the *Gorgias*. While Socrates finds shameful holding false opinions in his mind, his interlocutors do not really care

between what is shameful by nature and what is only conventionally so will not play a major role for us. If, however, when we choose the people who matter in our lives we also value their ability to distinguish between what is commonly believed and what is truly important, we shall be ashamed in front of them only when there is truly reason to be.

Yet, we do not feel shame before them only because we share their views about what is noble and what is not, but also because we love them and we want to be loved in return, because they are important to us and we want to be important to them. A lover can be important, but also someone against whom we compete for something, or someone we just met, and we have reason to admire.

For shame virtues and vices are relevant insofar as they play an important role in a world of social, political, and personal relationships. This is where it is established that someone counts for something, that he is trustworthy, that he has power, that he deserves it, that he would be able to defend his power and his position in the world were someone trying to take it away from him. Shame expresses a preoccupation with the ingredients that make up our reputation, and a very important ingredient (but not the only one) is our behaving as people who are worthy of that reputation in the eyes of those whose opinion we value.

### III. Shame that makes us angry

Aristotle's discussion in the *Rhetoric* shows that shame exhibits a sensitivity to virtue and vice that would not be appreciated if we held on to the most common prejudices against the so-called 'culture of shame'. Once we recognize that shame is similar to guilt in this respect, however, we also have to understand that what motivates shame is not reducible to the agent's responsibility. The realm of shame is wider than that of guilt, and very interestingly so.

It is time to explore territories of shame that do not intersect with those of guilt and that, from Aristotle's perspective, illuminate important aspects of our ethical life.

The first task at hand is to see that our prejudices in favor of guilt may play a problematic role in translating Aristotle's text, in particular when the difference between shame and guilt is implicitly at issue. In this context it may be instructive to compare two different translations of the definition of *aischyne* in the *Rhetoric*. The first translation, which I quoted earlier, is the more recent:

Let shame be [defined as] a sort of pain and agitation concerning the class of evils, whether present or past or future, that seem to bring a person into disrespect, and [let] shamelessness [be defined as] a belittling about these same things.<sup>17</sup>

The older translation, by Freese, interprets the same passage as follows:

about truth and are ready to lie rather than risk losing an argument. Socrates finds no shame in being refuted, while Gorgias Polus, and Callicles do all they can to avoid the shame of refutation. Of course, in the *Gorgias* we can witness the shame of Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles, but not Socrates' shame.

<sup>17</sup> *Rhet.* ii 6.1383b13-16: ἔστω δὴ αἰσχύνη λύπη τις ἡ ταραχὴ περὶ τὰ εἰς ἀδοξίαν φαινόμενα φέρειν τῶν κακῶν, ἡ παρόντων ἡ γεγονότων ἡ μελλόντων, ἡ δ' ἀναισχυντία

Let shame then be defined 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.

While Kennedy's translation does not specify which kinds of evils Aristotle may have in mind, Freese interprets the evils in questions as 'misdeeds', i.e., bad actions, misdemeanors, transgressions. We can feel guilty for our misdeeds, while we have no reason to feel guilty for evils that befall us by chance or because of the ill will of others.

Freese takes for granted a coincidence between causes of shame and causes of guilt. However, such coincidence is forced into the text; Kennedy's translation is more trustworthy here, since Aristotle speaks of evils (*kaka*) without further specification, and therefore lets us infer that the evils, present, past, or future that can cause us to fear disrepute are not necessarily all of our doing. Otherwise put: while Kennedy's translation allows us to wonder whether the evils that arouse shame coincide with those that arouse guilt, Freese answers the question before we can ask it. If shame is aroused by our misdeeds, then shame and guilt are concerned with the same kinds of evils.

Yet, if we take for granted that the causes of shame are the same as the causes of guilt, we are going to miss the overall structure of Aristotle's argument. In fact, he divides the evils that elicit shame into three classes: evil actions, situations in which a subject is not able to enjoy the goods enjoyed by his peers, and those in which a subject is passive with respect to the outrageous behavior of others. The three categories of evils can be seen as a progression from conditions of activity (the subject's evil actions and mistakes), to conditions in which shame is aroused not by actions but by situations (the subject's situation of inferiority with respect to his peers), to conditions of extreme passivity (the subject's being exposed to hubristic behavior). For the intermediate state we can think, broadly speaking, of moral luck.

I assume we are all familiar with typical attempts at alleviating someone's feelings of shame by saying something like 'Don't be ashamed. You did not do anything wrong.' Are we missing something when we try to console people by offering this kind of support?

Why, one may ask, should a person be ashamed of things for which she is not responsible?

Such a question implicitly assumes that the fundamental model of shame is the first of the three sets of evils, namely, that of evil deeds. Indeed, we can reformulate our question this way: if I am ashamed when I feel responsible for bad actions, where is my fault when I have nothing to reproach myself? This formulation clearly implies that in those cases where there seems to be no fault, if there is a reason for shame some fault must come to light. However, this way of thinking does not seem to correspond to Aristotle's view.

Though he certainly considers the first class of evils the most relevant and pervasive (most of his examples concern bad actions and bad character traits), he also makes sure that we identify cases in which shame is related to no fault of the subject. He provides only one example of the second class of evils:

And in addition [it is shameful] not to share in the fine things of which all have a share, or all those like oneself or most of them. By *those like oneself* I mean those of the same nation, fellow citizens, those of the same age, relatives—generally, one's equals; for in the first place it is shameful not to share to the same extent in education and similarly in other ways, but all these [lacks] are more shameful if they seem to be one's own fault; for thus they now [seem to come] more from vice if one is the cause of [one's own] past, present, or future [deficiencies]. (*Rhet.* ii 6.1384a9-16)

It must be noted that Aristotle considers the subject's responsibility in this case only as an aggravating circumstance. In other words, he does not think that this particular condition of shame should be reduced to the case he just finished addressing (i.e., shame caused by one's actions). It is not hard to imagine situations in which we realize we do not have what we think we should have, and because of that we feel a sense of inadequacy that has nothing to do with our misconduct. We can be ashamed of not having a home, of being poor, of not having been considered for honors that have been bestowed upon our peers instead. If for reasons related to accidental circumstances (poverty, mentality, cultural biases) no one found it necessary to give us a proper education, it is not our fault if, with our peers, we are now unable to enjoy certain kinds of conversations. And it is entirely understandable that we may feel this situation as painfully inadequate and shameful.

Aristotle does not expand on this point, but we are free to infer that sometimes feeling shame is a way to signal that something in our social and political circumstances went seriously wrong. On such occasions, rather than think that those who feel ashamed are overreacting (or, conversely, infer that they must after all have contributed to their predicament), we should consider critically the social and political conditions that are causing certain kinds of shame. In other words, instead of adding insult to injury by telling others that they are feeling the wrong emotion, we could accept shame as the appropriate response and try to learn something from it.

Let us now turn to the third class of evils. Here too the temptation to reduce it to the first class is particularly strong:

People feel shame when they suffer or have suffered or are going to suffer such things as contribute to dishonor and censures, and these are things that include providing the services of the body or engaging in shameful actions, of which being physically violated (*to hybrizesthai*) is one (and though actions voluntary and involuntary are a part of licentiousness, the

involuntary are done by force); for submission and lack of resistance comes from effeminacy or cowardice. (*Rhet.* ii 6.1384a16-22)

The ambivalence in this case has to do with sexual codes. Aristotle wants to consider reproachful those situations in which someone undergoes licentious acts without opposing any resistance, since these are situations that in his eyes verge on prostitution. Being subject to *hybris* (*to hybrizesthai*) is also seen as an ambiguous phenomenon, since not resisting physical violence can be a sign of cowardice. Enduring violence without defending oneself manifests a form of impotence similar to that of the slave, and is therefore considered unworthy of a free man.<sup>18</sup>

If, however, the subject who undergoes violence is a woman (or a child), and she is overcome by superior force, cowardice or manliness are not at issue. She cannot be deemed responsible for what she undergoes and her condition will be considered shameful because it is humiliating. Extreme passivity can be considered shameful not only when it might entail cooperation with the aggressor, but also when it exposes the powerlessness of the victim. Being the object of violence is humiliating for the victim, and it calls for a reaction. The appropriate answer to this kind of shame is anger.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, when he speaks of the right attitude about anger, Aristotle says that we should be angry for the right reasons, and that anyone who does not get angry in such cases is at fault:

For those who do not get angry at the things they ought are held to be foolish, as are those who do not get angry in the way they ought or when or with whom they ought. For such a person seems to lack perception and even not to feel pain; since he does not get angry, he seems not apt to defend himself against an attack. Yet to hold back in this way after having been treated insolently, and to overlook such treatment of one's kin, is held to be slavish. (*NE* 1126a6-8)

If women or children belonging to one's kin undergo violence or outrage, anger and desire for revenge are the most understandable and appropriate reaction to the circumstances. In the chapter devoted to anger in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle insists that when people we care about and who depend on us are being slighted, it is natural that we get angry, and we should be ashamed if we did not come to their defense:

<sup>18</sup> In Plato's *Gorgias* 482c-486d Callicles accuses Socrates of being unmanly and of having a slave mentality. From Callicles' perspective Socrates is unmanly both in theory and in practice. Not only the philosopher maintains that it is better to suffer injustice rather than do it, but, by dint of philosophizing with two or three boys at the corners of the streets, he is estranged from political activity and, in the opinion of Callicles, he is no longer able to defend himself against injustice. Anyone could attack Socrates or those who are dear to him and he, just like any slave, would be shamefully helpless. In the *Gorgias* Callicles defends some fundamental traits of the Homeric code of honor, and he rightly perceives both Socrates' arguments and his behavior as substantial deviations from that form of morality.

And [they become angry] at those belittling others whom it would be shameful for them not to defend, for example, parents, children, wives, dependants.<sup>19</sup> (*Rhet.* ii 2.1379b28-29)

With specific regard to women, in a passage from the first book of the *Rhetoric* where Aristotle discusses the types of people against whom it is easier to commit injustice, he affirms:

And [they commit crimes] that those wronged are ashamed to mention; for example, outrages (*hybreis*) against the women of their household or against themselves or their sons. (*Rhet.* i 12.1373a34-35)

Undergoing violence in their own family brings such sense of humiliation to the women involved that the aggressors can count on their silence.

In the chapter on anger, Aristotle further clarifies the connection between being the object of *hybris* and feeling shame:

The person who gives insult also belittles; for insult is doing and speaking in which there is shame to the sufferer, not that some advantage may accrue to the doer or because something has happened but for the pleasure of it; for those reacting to something do not give insult but are retaliating.<sup>20</sup> (*Rhet.* ii 2.1378b22-26)

The person who commits *hybris* does so for no other reason than making his victim feel humiliated. Ironically, we can say that he who gives insult acts in a disinterested way: he is pursuing no benefits, and, differently from the person who seeks revenge, he is not reacting to any wrongs. As Cope 1877, 17 observes:

*hybris*...is wanton outrage, an insult or injury which disgraces and humiliates its victim, and is prompted by no motive but the mere momentary gratification of humiliating another and therein indulging the love and the sense of power.

The emotional consequence of the shame felt by a victim of *hybris* is anger, i.e., the desire to take revenge by making the perpetrator feel, in turn, belittled.<sup>21</sup> This desire for revenge expresses the need to restore a balance of power that the hubristic person has momentarily threatened to dissolve. If someone, for example

<sup>19</sup> See Plato's *Laws* 874c concerning acceptable reactions to violence done to members of one's family: 'The man who forcibly violates a free woman or boy shall be slain with impunity by the person thus violently outraged, or by his father or brother or sons. And should a man discover his wedded wife being violated, if he kills the violator he shall be guiltless before the law.'

<sup>20</sup> καὶ ὁ ὑβρίζων δὲ ὀλεγοεῖ: ἔστι γάρ ὑβρίς τὸ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν ἐφ' οἵς αἰσχύνη ἔστι τῷ πάσχοντι, μὴ ἵνα τι γίγνηται αὐτῷ ἄλλο ἢ ὁ τι ἐγένετο, ἀλλ' ὅπως ἡσθῇ: οἱ γάρ ἀντιποιούντες οὐχ ὑβρίζουσιν ἀλλὰ τιμωρούνται.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of vengeful anger, cf. Griswold 2013. On the quality of vengeance that seems to follow the 'eye for an eye' mode, Griswold 2013, 89 observes: 'anger seeks to restore equality of regard, not of pain or condition, and it sometimes uses means—say, the taking of an eye (or two) for an eye—that compel recognition of that equality. Perhaps what vengefulness hopes to regain is a kind of parity, with suffering employed in part because of its capacity to symbolize and communicate equality and in part to compel the wrongdoer to acknowledge that parity.'

a woman, were unable to obtain revenge by herself, her family and friends would have to come to help. As we have seen, failure to do so would, in turn, expose their lack of power, or their cowardice: the victim's shame can become their shame in a peculiarly transitive fashion (but here shame is not necessarily felt as an emotion. It seems to characterize an objective condition that may or may not be accompanied by the corresponding emotion).

Williams 1995, 220, after exploring the connection between shame and nudity, observes:

The root of shame lies in exposure in a more general sense, in being at a disadvantage: in what I shall call, in a very general phrase, a loss of power. The sense of shame is a reaction of the subject to the consciousness of this loss...

In contrast to guilt, there is no need with shame that the viewer should be angry or otherwise hostile. All that is necessary is that he should perceive that very situation or characteristic that the subject feels to be an inadequacy, failing, or loss of power.<sup>22</sup>

Williams is not referring to Aristotle here, but I believe that his point can help us reflect on the relationship between the three classes of evils from which, according to Aristotle, shame can originate. Williams's thesis actually reverses the process of explanation that one is tempted to follow if one has the paradigm of guilt in mind: he invites us to consider moral shame (the one we feel for acts contrary to virtue) as derivative. The original motivation, if we follow his reasoning, is identifiable in the second and third categories of evils, that is, in those evils that expose our loss of power, our being in a situation of disadvantage. Not being able to participate in the kinds of goods that our peers enjoy, then, far from being a difficult case to explain, becomes a prime example. Hubristic violence also causes shame by making someone feel powerless and unable to demand and obtain due respect.

We can consider the position of a subject with respect to her actions, to her social status, and to the actions that others commit against her from the perspective of the loss of power and the feeling of incongruity between her worth and her behavior and appearance. Shame responds to the gap between the kind of person one believes oneself to be, and the way one appears to be on the basis of the actions, the particular conditions of life, or the kinds of evils one may be made to suffer at the hands of others.

With regard to the first set of evils, shame is caused by the perception of a gap between the kind of person we believe we are, and who we appear to be when an action points to a character flaw and the gaze of others heightens the sense of that gap. If we acted shamefully in front of someone we respect, and this person will continue to be with us, the thought that she will remember our action will make us unable to forget it.

<sup>22</sup> On exposure and self-protection in shame, cf. Scheler 1987.

With regard to the second and third sets of evils, shame responds to the gap between what we think we deserve and the circumstances in which we find ourselves. The gaze of others may be more or less correct in helping us realize that we are at a disadvantage. Whether we are responsible for our condition or not, the pain of shame underlines its being inadequate.

With regard to the third type of evil, the way the other sees us proves totally inadequate: when we suffer wanton outrage, or when we are belittled (*hybris, oligoria*), we believe we are treated with an intolerable lack of respect.<sup>23</sup> Being able to imagine a possible revenge can be a liberating response to the powerlessness felt when one suffers wanton violence. This is why, I think, in Aristotle's view shame can pave the way to vengeful anger.

It is necessary, in this context, to distinguish the attitude of the person who humiliates, and that of the witnesses to the humiliation. The witnesses may be people who hold us in great esteem: that *they* see us humiliated is special reason for our shame to turn into anger (more on this below). Both shame and anger have a very strong inter-subjective component, and this is why in order to be successful our revenge must have, in our mind, a public character. Anger, according to Aristotle, is a desire for *manifest* retaliation (τιμωρίας φαινομένης, *Rhet.* ii 2.1377a31) in response to a *manifest* offence (διὰ φαινομένην ὀλιγωρίαν).<sup>24</sup> The angry man (differently from the man dominated by hatred) does not wish that evil things (*kaka*) befall the person who offended him, because evil things may come upon someone without his knowing it. When angry, one wishes that the other *suffer* (pain, differently from evil, entails awareness). He must know that he is paying for what he did:

The former [anger] is the desire [that the other may feel] pain, the latter [that he may suffer] evil; for one who is angry wants his anger perceived, but to the one who hates it does not matter [whether the object of his hatred knows it]. Painful actions [inflicted by one person on another] are all perceived by the

<sup>23</sup> Following Aristotle, among others, Deigh 1983, 242-243 views shame as analogous to fear. In this sense he considers it as a self-protective emotion: 'we should conceive shame, not as a reaction to a loss, but as a reaction to a threat, specifically, the threat of demeaning treatment one would invite in giving the appearance of someone of lesser worth. Its analogues then are, not grief and sorrow, but fear and shyness. Like fear, shame serves to protect one against and save one from unwanted exposure... We might say that the doing or exposure of something that makes one appear to have less worth than one has leaves one open to treatment appropriate only to persons or things that lack the worth one has, and shame in inhibiting one from doing such things and in moving one to cover them up thus protects one from appearing to be an unworthy creature and so from the degrading treatment such appearance would invite. This idea that shame is a self-protective emotion brings together and explains two important features: first, that a liability to shame regulates conduct in that it inhibits one from doing certain things and, second, that experiences of shame are expressed by acts of concealment.' I do not think Aristotle would agree with the idea that shame responds to 'the threat of demeaning treatment', since he stresses that shame is fear of *adoxia* as such, not of its consequences. However, I believe he would agree with the idea that shame is a self-protective emotion.

<sup>24</sup> See Grimaldi 1988, 21 for the correspondence between manifest revenge and manifest disregard.

senses, but the greatest evils— injustice and thoughtlessness— are least perceived; for the presence of evil causes no pain.<sup>25</sup> (*Rhet.* ii 4.1382a9-12)

Consistently with this view, at *Rhet.* ii 3.1380b20-27 Aristotle explains that people do not get angry, and indeed remain calm, if they do not believe that those by whom they have been offended will be aware of their revenge.<sup>26</sup> Being able to imagine a possible revenge can be a liberating response to the powerlessness felt when one suffers wanton violence, and this is why shame can pave the way to anger. Once known by all the parties involved, vengeance re-establishes the original balance of power, or so the angry man imagines, and the thought gives him pleasure.

The close relationship between shame and anger is also visible if we consider the role played by witnesses in both emotions. According to Aristotle, men get angry especially if someone offends them in front of five types of people—and they are more or less the same types of people before whom they are prone to feel shame:

[they become angry] at those belittling them before five classes of people: those with whom they are rivals, those they admire, those by whom they wish to be admired, or [those] before whom they are embarrassed or [those] who are embarrassed before them. If someone belittles them among these they become all the more angry.<sup>27</sup> (*Rhet.* ii 2.1379b24-27)

Furthermore, Aristotle maintains that men get easily angry with those who do good to others but not to them, ‘for this, too, is contemptuous, not to think them also worthy of what they do for all [others]’ (*Rhet.* ii 2.1379b32-34). Here too the correspondence with his analysis of shame is striking. If it is true, as we have seen, that people feel ashamed when they cannot share in the same goods enjoyed by their peers (*Rhet.* ii 6.1384a9-16), it is fully understandable that they get angry if they deem someone responsible for their potentially shameful condition of disadvantage. Yet, if they realize that they alone are responsible for their situation, they do not feel angry at all, and the embarrassment of not being able to share in

<sup>25</sup> On this point, see Grimaldi 1988, 83.

<sup>26</sup> As Griswold 2013, 86 points out, anger has a retributive aspect (it claims to give the offender what he deserves), and a personal aspect. In this latter sense, it often has the characteristic of a payback, and it ‘would have its target—the wrongdoer—understand the payback not just as painful but as intended by that wrongdoer’s victim as payback. This has been referred to as “double intentionality”. In a footnote to this passage Griswold quotes Adam Smith on the gratification of resentment being based on double intentionality. To my knowledge Aristotle was the first to make this point clearly in the *Rhetoric*.

<sup>27</sup> ἔτι τοῖς ὀλιγωδοῦσι πρός πέντε, πρός οὓς φιλοτιμοῦνται, πρός οὓς θαυμάζουσιν, ὑφ' ὧν βούλονται θαυμάζεσθαι, ή οὓς αἰσχύνονται, ή ἐν τοῖς αἰσχυνομένοις αὐτούς: ἂν τις ἐν τούτοις ὀλιγωδή, ὁργίζονται μᾶλλον. Kennedy translates ή οὓς αἰσχύνονται as ‘[those] before whom they are embarrassed’. Literally, these are people one respects, in the sense that one feels shame before them. For the list of the kinds of people before whom one is inclined to be ashamed, see *Rhet.* ii 6.1384a27-33 (quoted above).

the goods that others enjoy can give way to moral shame.

In sum, shame can only turn into anger if its causes are thought by the subject to be evils of the second and third kind. When the subject realizes that he is responsible, he cannot blame others for his condition, and he remains calm:

And [people become calm] if they think they themselves have done wrong and suffered justly; for anger does not arise against justice nor against what people think they have appropriately suffered; that was [implicit in] the definition of anger.<sup>28</sup> (*Rhet.* ii 3.1380b16-18)

While shame can pave the way to anger, it seems, on the contrary, that anger can inhibit shame. If we are very angry, we sometimes allow ourselves words or actions that, when anger subsides, will make us feel ashamed of ourselves. In the grip of anger concerns related to shame do not seem capable of capturing our attention. Why is that so? Aristotle can help us explain this phenomenon, since he also considers how emotions interfere with each other. In his discussion of pity he observes:

[And persons who think they are likely to suffer] are those who are not in a courageous emotional state, for example not in a state of anger or confidence (these feelings do not take account of the future). (*Rhet.* ii 8.1385b29-30)

If emotions that do not take the future into consideration make it difficult for us to feel emotions that are primarily concerned with the future, what Aristotle says about anger and pity can be said also of anger and shame. As we have seen, both *qua aidos* and *qua aischyne* shame is a form of fear, and fear, *qua* preoccupation with future dangers, is the emotional link between shame and pity.<sup>29</sup> The kind of concern that anger may have with the future is confined to the pleasure of revenge, but shame requires one to be preoccupied with the bad consequences that our actions and words will have on our reputation. While we are lashing out in anger we are not affected by such distant future: what we want is to take out our revenge, to see the other suffer for what we say or do, to show him what a bad idea it was to treat us as if we were unable to hurt him.

In the grip of anger, then, we are unable to feel *aidos*, the sense of shame that protects us from experiencing *aischyne*, belated shame. A significant example of the complex relationship between anger and shame in Greek literature is Sophocles's *Ajax*.<sup>30</sup> At the beginning of the tragedy we find Ajax angry because

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle is adopting here a point made by Socrates in his characterization of *thymos* at *Rep.* iv 440c: 'Think about someone who realizes he is in the wrong. Isn't it the case that the better his character, the less he is capable of feeling anger at having to endure hunger, cold, or anything like that at the hands of someone he regards as entitled to inflict these things on him? Isn't it his spirit, as I say, which refuses to raise any objection?'

<sup>29</sup> According to Aristotle, we can feel pity for someone only if we are in a condition to fear that similar kinds of evils might befall us (those who are arrogant, those who are extremely happy, and those who are utterly ruined and feel they have nothing more to lose do not feel pity).

<sup>30</sup> It is interesting that there seems to be no agreement on Ajax's emotions. E.g., Williams 1995 72, 85, 101 interprets the end of the tragedy in light of shame, while Konstan 2006 105-106 finds that

Achilles' armor has been given to Odysseus and not to him. His anger is at the generals, but the original emotion, if we want to follow Aristotle, is shame at not been able to share in goods that others can enjoy. Shame leads to anger, and anger to revenge: Ajax wants to kill the generals. However, Athena tricks him and makes him momentarily insane; instead of killing the Greek generals he slaughters the sheep and cattle that have been taken as spoil in battle. When he comes back to his senses he is deeply ashamed, and realizes that his only way out is suicide.

Ajax's temporary madness shows how anger can make us blind to the consequences of our actions, and in general unconcerned with future events. We cannot feel pity for those who, we imagine, are going to suffer at our hands, and we are not worried about the practical consequences that may affect us later (the punishments, the losses we may have to endure for what we are about to do). Above all, we are temporarily immune to the emotion that usually protects us from future damages to our reputation. Made insensible to *aidos* by anger, we may lose touch with reality and fail to appreciate what lies in front of us. When anger subsides we realize that instead of obtaining sweet revenge we made ourselves vulnerable to blame and derision—and the thought can be unbearable.

#### IV. Conclusion

As we have seen, shame responds to three fundamental sorts of evils: the agent's blameworthy actions, situations of disadvantage with respect to one's peers, the humiliating behavior of others.<sup>31</sup>

When the cause is the agent's behavior, shame is concerned with character failings and actions that can also cause what today we would call guilt. Aristotle, however, stresses the spectatorial perspective ('shame is in the eyes'), i.e., the fundamental role played by real or imagined witnesses, and this is an important difference from guilt. When our blameworthy behavior has witnesses who directly or indirectly play a significant role in our life, shame can be acute and long-lasting. Furthermore, our imagination can project the spectatorial perspective into the future. The person feeling shame is or imagines to be considered with contempt or derision by people whose judgment she respects. In contrast with guilt, shame seems to need witnesses to such an extent that someone may fail to feel shame if she believes that nobody saw what she did, or if she is convinced that the people she considers important will never find out.

We have seen that shame, both in the sense of *aidos* and in the sense of *aischyne*, is a form of fear. It is distinguished from generic fear because the focus of

the fundamental emotion felt by Ajax is anger.

<sup>31</sup> Deonna, Rodogno, Teroni 2012 maintains that shame and felt humiliation are two different emotions. Throughout the book the authors argue that shame is not a social emotion while, as we have seen, Aristotle does highlight those aspects of shame that make it essentially social. Once he has distinguished the three categories of evil to which shame is a response, Aristotle does not find it necessary to differentiate between felt humiliation and shame. This is in keeping with his view that the ethical life includes expectations about how others ought to treat us.

shame is on one's reputation, not on other kinds of evils. Still, one might wonder what Aristotle means by 'results' when he claims that 'shame is imagination [*phantasia*] about a loss of reputation and for its own sake, not for its results' (*Rhet.* ii 6.1384a24). If the derision/contempt of others carried no consequences (for example destroying our friendships) or were themselves not consequences, would the loss of esteem be bad?<sup>32</sup>

I believe Aristotle has good reasons to distinguish the consequences that can be the object of fear from the specific preoccupations of shame, even though he may not be quite right when he claims that shame has no concern for consequences at all. We may want to argue that both fear and shame can be concerned with the consequences of one's action, but we should acknowledge, with Aristotle, that the two emotions direct our attention to different kinds of consequences.

If I am terribly ashamed of having been exposed as someone who plagiarized her dissertation, my thoughts will go to the people who count in my life and whose respect I will have lost. Shame will make me want to hide from view, blush when I meet certain people, etc. At the same time, I will also have all sorts of fears connected with the consequences of my action: will I lose my job? Will I become poor? Will I be able to hide this thing from my future employers? Will I have to face legal action? And so on. Those fears have to do with the results of my action (and the loss of reputation can, from this point of view, be considered as just one result), but they will not in themselves be expressions of shame: a prudent but shameless person could fear such things as well. Otherwise put: for a shameless person the loss of reputation might figure as one of several items counted as potential damages, or as something to consider as itself a cause of future losses (no reputation no job, no job, no house, etc.). For the person feeling shame the loss of reputation is the main focus, and concerns about the vulnerability of a friendship can very well fall within its scope. When I do something blameworthy and I fear the loss of a friendship, I can suffer on two different levels: at the thought of losing my friend (I will miss the pleasure of his company, the things I learned from him, his good character, etc.), or at the thought of losing his respect, his admiration, etc. In this latter case the good image of myself preserved in him will be damaged: this is the concern of shame.

That shame is an emotion largely dependent on our relationships with others came to light also when we noticed that Aristotle does not limit his conception of the causes of shame to the agent's blameworthy behavior: he considers the agent among his or her peers and notices that shame can derive from the unequal (and potentially unjust) distribution of goods. Those who are prevented from enjoying the same goods as others are put in a position of powerlessness that makes them feel belittled and ashamed.

Among the causes of shame Aristotle includes also situations in which someone undergoes violence or in any way suffers from the hubristic behavior of others. This particular form of shame has no relation to guilt. Instead, as I argued, it

<sup>32</sup> Charles Griswold pointed out this problem to me.

is strictly connected with another emotion, itself containing a communicative goal: anger. When someone responds with shame to situations in which his expectations of how others should treat him are frustrated, his emotional response is due to what we could call a sense of self-respect. Someone with self-respect will not tolerate being treated in certain ways. Shame, in this case, will be followed by anger: the person who felt diminished will reassert his own value and make others understand that certain boundaries cannot be crossed.

If shame can give way to anger, not reacting with anger on certain occasions can, in turn, be shameful. If certain forms of anger are appropriate to a virtuous person, then certain forms of shame are important instruments in the ethical life: as we saw, someone may feel ashamed of having done something wrong, of having undergone something diminishing, or of not having reacted with anger when that was the proper emotion to feel.

Lastly, one can be ashamed of what one did while in the grip of anger. This particular case of the relationship between shame and anger brought us back to the discussion with which I began, namely, the prospective and inhibitory function of *aidos*. Anger is an emotion with no concern for the future consequences of our actions, while *aidos* is a concern for the bad consequences that our actions may have on our reputation.

As I have argued, from Aristotle's perspective the two emotions can collaborate when shame is caused by the offensive behavior of others and anger is a reaction to what appears unjust, blameworthy, or simply disrespectful. They can also interfere with each other: anger can inhibit shame by making us blind to the future and too focused on certain particular persons and events. In the fury of anger a very narrow part of reality (generally centered on ourselves and those nearest to us) absorbs attention and energy. The result can be a failure to consider the complex fabric of reciprocal expectations to which, by contrast, an emotion such as shame invites us to respond.

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