

Article

The Positive Motivation of Shame: Moral Emotion in the Mencius

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Abstract: For Mencius, shame is the human way of existing in a virtuous disposition and concretely manifests not only as the self-affirming of the passion of shame in the action of stopping something bad from happening, but also as a way of handling affairs and processing things. This paper explains how shame functions as moral motivation by analyzing the affective mindset of shame and aversion (*xiu e zhi xin* 羞恶之心) and its relation to honoring decorum (*yi* 义) in the Mencius. Furthermore, I clarify that shame not only refers to cases of shameful self-concern but also to cases of morally detesting others and that the object of both is honoring decorum (*yi* 义). This unique psychological affect that we call shame develops from the dissonance or misalignment between one's own moral conduct and the criteria of socially beneficial interaction; however, for this reason, it is commonly misinterpreted as negative. In order to demonstrate the positivity of shame and lay out the moral groundwork for an ethics of shame, this paper unfolds the complex interrelation between honoring decorum (*yi* 义) and shame. Lastly, this paper argues that shame is a deeply-rooted natural disposition that grows and expands in connection with self-approved norms during interactions with other people; therefore, it is the unfolding of a coherence between affect and norm and a relational moral emotion that takes us beyond the symmetry and asymmetry of utilitarian and deontological ethics, respectively.

Keywords: shame; interrelation; moral emotion; positive motivation; Mencius



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1. Introduction

Moral shame is here construed as a self-degrading emotional affect that is accompanied by injury-inflicting self-respect and worries about being disdained by others. Shame, however, also implies a particularly close relationship between the self and the others whom we hope will confirm our sense of self-worth. At times, shame is also a moral feeling that must be explained with legitimate principles.

In the debate about whether shame is morally good or morally bad, Teroni and Bruun argue that compared to guilt, shame is morally bad for pro-social behavior and social well-being as well as for autonomy and responsibility; however, the problem is shame is still morally relevant (Teroni and Bruun 2011). Teroni and Bruun's misunderstanding here is firstly due to their failure to distinguish shame from other negative emotions such as humiliation and envy.

Mencius emphasizes that shame is a positive human disposition. "A man must not be without shame, for the shame of being without shame is shamelessness indeed." (*Mencius* VII A6). "Great is the use of shame to man. He who indulges in craftiness has no use for shame. If a man is not ashamed of being inferior to other men, how will being their equal have anything to do with him?" (*Mencius* VII A7). Mencius claims that with shame, the human being is enabled to reflectively think over some insufficiency within him or herself. Next, Bongrae Seok argues that shame is an important moral capacity that refers to a positive moral motivation (Seok 2015). Furthermore, Mark Berkson claims, from a comparative perspective, that shamelessness is far more devastating within the tradition of Confucianism (Berkson 2021). In the *Mencius*, for instance, shame as a positive moral

capacity is more than just self-respect. For those with “shame,” shame will even emerge when the self knows what would have been better and especially when the self knows what would have been best, that is, shame arises when someone knows that they could have done better or could have done the best, but did not fully actualize all their strength to do it, such that even though the self had avoided both breaking the law and violating clearly stipulated norms, since the self could not fully actualize mental and physical strengths, a better situation failed to actualize, and the lingering image of a best case scenario only adds to the sense of self-depreciation. In other words, shame arises from the possibility that self-worth and self-respect have fallen to a new low. Shame arises from self-worry about self-depreciation. Those with “shame” “fear shame,” that is, they worry of “being ashamed” of themselves; the object of such fear is usually just a possible occurrence that may not necessarily take place. Once what is feared to occur is indeed taking place, they will immediately feel shy (*hai xiu* 害羞), which, in Chinese, literally means “suffer from shame,” that is, the feeling of shame comes over them. Fearing shame makes one vigilantly dread something and makes one averse to something and unwilling to do it. One can suffer from shame for violating norms, for example, or for falling short of accomplishing something that others deem manageable and expect one to do. On the one hand, shame demonstrates that those who feel shame have self-respect, are acutely sensitive to what norms prescribe, have a distinct sense of what other people expect of themselves and know where others tend to concentrate attention. On the other hand, shame is primarily a concern about self-respect, so the feeling of shame manifests as worries about impending disgrace or an immanent loss of dignity, worries which beset the mind and make one deep down averse to mistakes and wrongdoing.

I choose the alternative of not falling for these dichotomizations by situating shame in between these dichotomies, so that it becomes possible to claim that shame is both an innate, internal disposition¹ and can additionally be triggered by learning the observance of ritual propriety (*li* 礼) from the external world. In this context, I claim that shame comes from the (innate) affective mindset of compassion consistently bonding with the (learned) set of social norms that manifest as observances of ritual propriety.² In the context of Mencius, one does not observe ritual propriety as the result of external coercion, but rather through a process of choosing and autonomously approving of this set of social standards. A moral norm can only transform into real will through the self’s acceptance and approval of it, and “ridding oneself of shame” becomes through this same process of internalization a need that is internal to the self. Since morals do not contradict free will, shame does not need to be strictly innate, and there is no need to examine the relationship between shame and autonomy for us to determine the moral nature of shame itself. The aim of this article is to characterize how shame operates within the overall system of Mencius’s thought—especially its role in the self-regulation of the moral agent acting within a community shaped by moral norms—and how shame so characterized can provide an alternative perspective on the issue of moral symmetry vs. asymmetry. In the first part, I examine the origin and starting point of shame, then demonstrate that shame also contains an aspect of detesting the shameless behavior of others. The moral aim of relational shame is what the Chinese call *yi* 义, whose intrinsic connection to shame is also unpacked in this paper. Shame in the *Mencius* is always concrete and unfolds with the self’s growing willingness to accept the norms of society without being forced to do so.

2. Moral Motivation: The Origin and Starting Point of the Affective Mindset of Shame and Aversion

In Mencius’s view, the affective mindset of shame and aversion (*xiu e zhi xin* 羞恶之心)³ is the source of moral judgment as well as the social ground in the human mind that sub-tends the principle of decorum (*yi* 义)⁴. Mencius, first, advocates that human beings should resolutely preserve the affective mindset of shame and aversion by safeguarding the standards to which it bonds and then insists that we should expand and recharge our affective mindset of shame and aversion so that it covers the ever-renewing sphere of human actions.

The analysis of moral shame should be structured, and this is accomplished by focusing the analysis on moral motivation as affected by shame. First, let us start with Mencius, who structures it quite distinctly himself:

Suppose a man were, all of a sudden, to see a young child on the verge of falling into a well. He would certainly be moved to compassion, not because he wanted to get in the good graces of the parents, nor because he wished to win the praise of his fellow villagers or friends, nor yet because he disliked the cry of the child. From this it can be seen that whoever is devoid of the heart of compassion is not human, whoever is devoid of the heart of shame is not human, whoever is devoid of the heart of courtesy and modesty is not human, and whoever is devoid of the heart of right and wrong is not human. The heart of compassion is the germ of benevolence; the heart of shame, of dutifulness; the heart of courtesy and modesty, of observance of the rites; the heart of right and wrong, of wisdom. Man has these four germs just as he has four limbs. For a man possessing these four germs to deny his own potentialities is for him to cripple himself; for him to deny the potentialities of his prince is for him to cripple his prince. (*Mencius* II A6)

In Mencius's thought experiment here, he distinguishes moral motivation from the profit motive; Mencius demonstrates the affective mindset of compassion and sympathy through the case of a suddenly arising circumstance; nevertheless, he does not continue to demonstrate the affective mindset of shame and aversion here; however, this is not because the affective mindset of shame and aversion is not important. Zhu Xi notices this problem and explains it logically: "So the affective mindset of compassion must first activate for there to be the affective mindset of shame and aversion. Like the feeling of solemn reverence in which one acts out of necessity, the affective mindsets of shame and aversion, of respect and deference, of right and wrong, all grow out of being humane." (Zhu 1986). Zhu Xi considers the affective mindset of compassion and sympathy as the premise of the affective mindset of shame and aversion, which makes sense for Mencius's example. In light of Zhu Xi's interpretation, which claims that the inwardly self-reflective mindset of shame and aversion emerges from the affective mindset of compassion and sympathy, shame, standing among the four original settings of the mind, is no different from the affective mindset of not bearing to see others suffer; however, it is not the self-conscious desire of the self to become the rescuer of the other, which is tinged with the profit motive. Shame is an internal, affective state that naturally and spontaneously arises. Considering the moral effect, shame as moral motivation internally prevents the occurrence of bad or improper actions that have yet to occur, and therefore, the feeling of shame, which stops bad actions from occurring, is fully necessary for the moral behavior that regulates us.

"A child is about to fall down a well" depicts the object of an emotional affect that Mencius terms *bu ren* 不忍, which literally means "finding x or y unbearable" or "finding x or y intolerable." If anyone were to see a child about to fall down a well, they would immediately desire to rescue the child and only later judge it to be a good deed after the fact. No one would first judge it as good conduct, then gain motivation to act in such a manner on the pretext of this initial judgment made beforehand. In the hypothetical case where one's own child is horsing around with a stranger's child and both of them are about to fall down a well simultaneously, and where one cannot save both, there is only one option which is to save one's own child, because taking the time to judge whom to rescue and struggling with the decision beforehand in order to uphold some principle of impartial care would prove absurd. Everyone would prefer to act immediately, rescue the loved one without contemplation and suffer the unbearable shame of dishonor afterward for failing to help the stranger's child.

The perspective of the affective mind combines emotional motivation with rational judgment, because the affective mind that germinates (sprouts) from the four original settings of the mind does not culminate in four different affective minds, but rather singularly in one affective mind, to which Mencius gives the overarching designation *bu ren zhi xin*

不忍之心 or “the affective mindset of finding it unbearable.” Mencius’s argument is composed of three moments: He first demonstrates that all human beings have the affective mindset of compassion (vigilantly looking after others) by illustrating the example of the child about to fall down a well; in this case, the affective mindset of compassion that all human beings have develops from the affective mindset of finding something intolerable. In Confucian thought, there is only one source of moral passions, which Mencius terms the affective mindset of finding something unbearable. For Mencius, with this caring mindset of finding the other’s suffering unbearable, everyone has the potential to do good and feel shame for the improper behavior that society universally condemns, thereby stopping the moral individual from following through with such improper behavior. Since the regenerative source that nourishes the four original settings of the mind is the affective mindset of finding the suffering of others unbearable and intolerable, Mencius therefore calls it *ben xin* 本心, “the original sensitivity.”⁵

In the case that Mencius demonstrates, the affective mindset of compassion is sympathy for the child’s misfortunate circumstance. The causal element and blameworthy fault-bearer for the child falling down the well is not the moral agent. Stemming from the natural, spontaneously-arising mindset of finding the other’s suffering unbearable, the moral agent does positive deeds because she feels herself in the other’s shoes. Cases of shame are rooted in the affective mindset of finding the other’s suffering unbearable; however, there is one difference worth noting:

The king could not bear to see it shrink with fear, like an innocent man going to the place of execution, then used a lamb instead. ‘It is the way of a benevolent man’. You saw the ox but not the lamb. The attitude of a gentleman towards animals is this: once having seen them alive, he cannot bear to see them die, and once having heard their cry, he cannot bear to eat their flesh. (*Mencius* 1A7)

In this example, it is, similarly, a case of the affective mindset of finding some suffering unbearable (*buren* 不忍); however, King Xuan of Qi as a moral agent is at fault in one regard, that is, while he could not bear to look directly at the pitiful sight of the ox, which affected him with the feeling of shame that what he was doing was improper and which allowed him to stop the action of killing the ox from proceeding, he fell short of extending this feeling of shame to reach the people. In summary, Mencius affirmed what was in the king’s heart: his affective mindset not bearing to go through with the action, because not bearing it triggered the king’s sense of shame for harming the innocent, for which reason he chose to replace the ox with the lamb, in order to reflect over his wrongdoing; however, Mencius insists the king’s mistake consisted in the king failing to extend this affective mindset of finding suffering unbearable into reflection over dishonorable actions toward the people. King Xuan of Qi selected an innocent ox to sacrifice for his sacred ritual, which involved self-reflection about the wrong of what he was doing. Applying the method of inductive analogy proves seriously limited here insofar as the task is to demonstrate that the king’s desire (to replace the ox with the sheep) is motivated by the affective mindset of compassion ([Chandler 2003](#)).

The case of King Xuan of Qi is not directly related to shame; however, throughout this case, Mencius is trying to explain the process of expanding the feeling of finding something unbearable that is done to others, which is crucial for any demonstration of the moral feeling of shame, because shame cannot only come from that feeling of finding something unbearable but also needs to be expanded into a broader sense of shame, so that all people have the feeling of shame when they are going to do something wrong. All in all, shame can prevent bad things from happening through restraining their actions while the sense of shame is expanding. If shame is not expanding into a broader sense, then shame just remains an inward thing that is effectively of little or no value with respect to bringing about that type of social-relational activity that is moral in the understanding of the *Mencius*. When someone finds something intolerable (*buren* 不忍) and feels compassion, it will trigger the affective mind into the mindset of feeling shame for the dishonor of harming the innocent. In the king’s case, he felt shame for the dishonor of killing an innocent ox. In

addition, finding some deed intolerable and feeling compassion for someone will also trigger the affective mindset of detesting the dishonorable deed of another who harmed the innocent, and this feeling of moral disgust will furthermore incite actions of resistance (to avert dishonor). This is why the king wished to replace the shaking ox with a lamb. When we judge and believe doing something is dishonorable, we will resist the motivation to act in such a way and stop it, then motivate ourselves to act in whichever way we believe is the honorable way. Mencius's concept of honoring decorum (*yi* 义) contains two layers of meaning: one is shame (*xiu* 羞), and the other is aversion (*wu* 恶);⁶ the origin of both is compassion for the innocent and for those suffering hardship; shame is being compelled by compassion to think over regretful mistakes; aversion is being compelled by sympathy to resist and rise up against dishonorable and disgraceful conduct; together, the two of them make up Confucianism's complete attitude toward dishonoring decorum or events of negative moral action. Shame and aversion are, therefore, internally related sides of our compassionate response within conscious experience. Honoring decorum and being humane are therefore not to be conceptualized as externally-related terms, but as two sides of one internal constitution.

3. The Two Dimensions of the Affective Mindset of Shame and Aversion

There are not so many parts in the *Mencius* where shame is directly discussed; however, the affective mindset of shame and aversion in connection with honoring decorum is the key to understanding Mencius's concept of shame. The affective mindset of shame and aversion sheds clarity on the origin of shame, whereas honoring decorum demonstrates the development and necessary expansion of shame. The first dimension of shame is the shame felt for one's own possibly inappropriate actions (that have not taken place yet) triggered by the affective mindset of finding something unbearable, which is a variety of self-reflective thinking or introspective examination. Mencius states,

Presumably there must have been cases in ancient times of people not burying their parents. When the parents died, they were thrown in the gullies. Then one day the sons passed the place and there lay the bodies, eaten by foxes and sucked by flies. A sweat broke out on their brows, and they could not bear to look. The sweating was not put on for others to see. It was an outward expression of their innermost heart. They went home for baskets and spades. If it was truly right for them to bury the remains of their parents, then it must also be right for all dutiful sons and benevolent men to do likewise. (*Mencius* IIIA5)

In this hypothetical case, Mencius demonstrates the shame triggered by the internal affective mindset of finding something unbearable while processing the moral confliction about whether to bury one's kin or not to bury one's kin. He insists that through the self-reflective examination of shame, people chose to bury their parents instead of directly throwing them into the gorges.

The second dimension of shame is social; it is disgust toward the inappropriate behavior of others. Mencius insists that merely caring about one's own internal state is still insufficient to explain the dimensions of shame. Mencius states,

Fish is what I want [*yu* 欲]⁷; bear's palm is also what I want. If I cannot have both, I would rather take bear's palm than fish. Life is what I want; dutifulness [*yi* 义] is also what I want. If I cannot have both, I would choose dutifulness rather than life. On the one hand, though life is what I want, there is something I want more than life. That is why I do not cling to life at all costs. On the other hand, though death is what I loathe, there is something I loathe more than death. That is why there are troubles I do not avoid. If there is nothing a man wants more than life, then why should he have scruples about any means, so long as it will serve to keep him alive? If there is nothing a man loathes more than death, then why should he have scruples about any means, so long as it shows him the way to avoid trouble? Yet there are ways of remaining alive and ways of avoiding death

to which a man will not resort. In other words, there are things a man wants more than life and there are also things he loathes more than death. This is an attitude not confined to the moral man but common to all men. The moral man simply never loses it.

Here is a basketful of rice and a bowlful of soup. Getting them will mean life; not getting them will mean death. When these are given with abuse, even a wayfarer would not accept them; when these are given after being trampled upon, even a beggar would not accept them. Yet when it comes to ten thousand bushels of grain one is supposed to accept without asking if it is in accordance with the rites or if it is right to do so. What benefit are ten thousand bushels of grain to me? [Do I accept them] for the sake of beautiful houses, the enjoyment of wives and concubines, or for the sake of the gratitude my needy acquaintances will show me? What I would not accept in the first instance when it was a matter of life and death I now accept for the sake of beautiful houses; what I would not accept when it was a matter of life and death I now accept for the enjoyment of wives and concubines; what I would not accept when it was a matter of life and death I now accept for the sake of the gratitude my needy acquaintances will show me. Is there no way of putting a stop to this? This way of thinking is known as losing one's original heart [*benxin* 本心]. (*Mencius* VI A10)

Zhu Xi comments, adding, "the original sensitivity (*benxin* 本心) refers to the affective mindset of shame and aversion. This section claims the affective mindset of shame and aversion is what everyone inherently possesses." (Zhu 1983). Zhu Xi's interpretation fits Mencius's intended meaning. For the moral agent, "the affective mindset of shame and aversion" is clearly emotional as the immediate expression of the original sensitivity in the present moment, and moreover, it presents itself as the moral sentiment of a free-willed autonomous choice, the internal moral motivation behind the moral agent's proactive taking of moral responsibility. Zhu Xi states, "Shame is to be ashamed of one's own disgraceful conduct. Aversion is detesting the disgraceful conduct of another." (Zhu 1983). Here, there are many desires, each of which is different depending on everyone's particular case; however, there are also desires that we share in common, namely our desire to live and our aversion to death. Mencius would admit that desires are only a part of our nature: "[s]light is the difference between man and the brutes. The common man loses this distinguishing feature, while the gentleman retains it" (*Mencius* IVB19). Here, Mencius is insisting that while all humans have desires, the gentleman (*junzi* 君子) never finds himself capable of losing one thing, which, in referring to what that thing is, Mencius says, "A gentleman differs from other men in that he retains his heart." (*Mencius* IVB28). Here, Mencius means the gentleman insists on having the heart to know shame. Here, Mencius advances the explanation with the case of a beggar feeling shame and aversion to another's breach of decorum, by which he demonstrates that the affective mindset of shame and aversion is universally found within all human beings. Zhu Xi's interpretation is right on target insofar as Mencius is not indicating there is anything shameful about begging, but is, on the contrary, showing how the other's shameless manner of handing out food to the beggar is universally seen as worthy of aversion. Even though the example is about begging, the viewpoint is still that of the beggar who refuses to take the offering; therefore, Mencius is clearly explaining the affective mindset of shame and aversion from the internal, subjective perspective of the beggar here.

Explaining the role of *yu* 欲⁸ does offer us a way of approaching moral motivation in the *Mencius*; however, *yu* is insufficient by itself when it comes to filling the role of moral motivation, that is, *yu* proves insufficient by itself as the fundamental motivation propelling moral action. If impropriety involves some factor that is moral in quality, it is the conscious sense of impropriety, whose germ or seed is the affective mindset of shame. When someone finds something intolerable (*buren* 不忍) and feels compassion, it will trigger the affective mind into the mindset of feeling shame for the dishonor of harming the innocent. In the king's case, he felt shame for the dishonor of killing an innocent ox. Find-

ing some deed intolerable and feeling compassion for someone will incite the affective mindset of detesting the dishonorable deed of another who harmed the innocent, and this feeling of moral disgust will furthermore incite actions of resistance (to avert dishonor). This is why the king wished to replace the shaking ox with the unknowing sheep. When we judge and believe doing something is dishonorable, we will resist the motivation to act in such a way and stop it, then motivate ourselves to act in whichever way we believe is the honorable way. Mencius's concept of honoring decorum (*yi* 义) contains two layers of meaning: one is shame (*xiu* 羞), and the other is aversion (*wu* 恶); the origin of both is compassion for the innocent and for those suffering hardship; shame is being compelled by compassion to think over regretful mistakes; aversion is being compelled by sympathy to resist and rise up against dishonor and disgrace; together, the two of them make up Confucianism's complete attitude toward dishonoring decorum or negative moral events. Shame and aversion are, therefore, internally-related sides of the compassionate response within conscious experience. Honoring decorum and being humane are, therefore, not to be conceptualized as externally-related terms, but as two sides of one internal constitution.

To honor decorum (*yi* 义) is what people so desire that dishonoring decorum (*buyi* 不义) is what people would rather die than do; however, both motivations germinate and mature from the affective mindset of shame and aversion. Returning to Zhu Xi's elucidation, he states, "Shame pertains to being ashamed of one's own disgraceful conduct. Aversion pertains to detesting the disgraceful conduct of another." Kwong-loi Shun claims Zhu Xi is wrong to argue that *wu* is solely disliking others, arguing instead that one can also detest oneself (Shun 2000). The problem is not whether one can detest or feel aversion to (*wu* 恶) oneself or not. Zhu Xi's claim is that shame and aversion both arise from one original setting of the affective mind: the concern of shame is primarily oneself; however, one can also, of course, feel ashamed of others, and when someone detests something, it is primarily another's behavior that constitutes the subject matter of one's aversion; nevertheless, one can additionally feel so morally disgusted with one's own behavior as to detest oneself as well. In the context of Zhu Xi's work, however, *wu* and *xiu* are arguably interchangeable or the precise difference is not key to his argument (Van Norden 2002). Compassion and shame concretely express different cases of experiencing the affective mindset of finding something unbearable (*bu ren zhi xin* 不忍之心), and while the passional consistency between compassion and shame demonstrates the singular integrity of this affective mindset of finding something unbearable, the distinction between compassion and shame remains important. Shame and aversion arise from the same source as that of compassion and sympathy: compassion does indeed envelop within itself the passion of shame and aversion, while shame and aversion express actual developments of compassion; however, the source of all of these distinguishable affections is the affective mindset of finding some actions morally unbearable. In real life, the affective mind embodies different existential states that are distinguishable (relatively speaking) as feeling compassion (or sympathy) and feeling shame (or aversion); however, affirming this by no means requires attributing them to different sources.

The feeling of shame and the feeling of aversion seem to emerge simultaneously. For example, in the case of "detesting the handout," the beggar deeply detests the passerby for feigning ritual deference with such an insulting handout gesture. Mencius illustrates, via this example of an unsanctimonious handout, that the starving beggar has this affective mindset. Especially worth noting is that Mencius repeatedly underscores that both "what is desired" (*suo yu* 所欲) and "what is detested" (*suo wu* 所恶) by our affective minds immediately connect the affective mindset of shame and aversion (*xiu wu* 羞恶) to honoring decorum and dishonoring decorum. Shame and aversion can cause the subject to commend good deeds and condemn bad deeds (even though the affective mindset of shame and aversion primarily manifests as detesting the condemnable). In other words, it is the passion of shame that motivates the subject's moral judgment of how to self-behave. At the end of the passage, Mencius argues that if authority, power, resources and wealth were accepted outright by "superior officials" without caring to judge beforehand whether such

choices would agree or disagree with ritual propriety and appropriate decorum, such “superiors” would actually perform in a way so unbecoming of those positions as to become inferior to beggars who can, at least, still refuse life-sustaining aid on the grounds of preserving this affective mindset of shame. The beggar, because he is still averse to inappropriate transactions, is superior to the superior official in this case. A decadent official of this kind has already buried the original affective mindset and has thoroughly blunted his own moral sensitivity to impropriety (*Mencius* VIA10). Once this affective mindset of shame and aversion is buried deep down and effectively put to sleep, any detestable thing imaginable can be done.

In this case, a wife and concubine show their detestation directly based on shame:

His wife went home and said to the concubine, “A husband is someone on whom one’s whole future depends, and ours turns out like this.” Together they reviled their husband and wept in the courtyard. The husband, unaware of all this, came swaggering in to show off to his womenfolk. In the eyes of the gentleman, few of all those who seek wealth and position fail to give their wives and concubines cause to weep with shame. (*Mencius* IV B33)

The reason why tears of shame well up in this case is not because the man’s wife and concubine feel ashamed of their poor performance as his servants, but because they think their husband should feel ashamed of his own behavior. The case Mencius is citing here involves a wife and concubine who feel aversion to their husband out of shame. The shameful and detestable characteristics of the husband under question were of notable quantity as the story goes on; however, what the wife and concubine find so unbearable is their husband’s total lack of shame for and aversion to his own appalling behavior: his shameless behavior. He shamelessly drifts to wherever there is wine and meat, with absolutely no sense of how detestable and shamefully wrong his status-seeking way of securing a livelihood is. It is clear from Mencius’s commentary that his intention is to satirically criticize the all-too-common practice of men of his time, that is, the practice of betraying morality for wealth and status in society. It is worth pointing out that the husband would have felt too much shame to admit the truth and face up to the shame of his shameless behavior while standing before his wife and concubine, which illustrates that the husband is not totally lacking the affective mindset of shame and aversion within himself; rather, he simply fails to stop himself from doing even the bare minimum of intolerable deeds that everyone’s affective mindset of shame and aversion would find unbearable. In the autonomous case of not bearing to kill the ox, the consideration mainly starts from the subjective perspective of the self, where the affective mindset of shame and aversion is triggered by the affective mindset of compassion and sympathy and that of not bearing to do harm to others, whereas in the heteronomous cases of not eating food that is given out with a sigh and of the wife and concubine feeling shame for their husband, the affective mindset of shame and aversion, it seems, does not always start from the affective mindset of compassion and sympathy as Zhu Xi argues.

Since the affective mindset of shame and aversion merely involves self-reflecting over one’s own behavior and thinking over the other’s behavior from the perspective of what one should not do, in order to prevent oneself from doing something inappropriate (shame) and to stop the inappropriate behavior of others that one detests (aversion), this is but the germ or beginning from which honoring decorum grows. As Mencius repeatedly underscores, the decorousness (*yi* 义) or indecorousness (*buyi* 不义) of giving and taking property does not change owing to how much property there is or how valuable it is. Mencius often approaches the moral ideal of honoring decorum (*yi* 义) from the starting point of dishonoring decorum (*buyi* 不义) and puts it on the same level as that of the highest moral ideals such as humanely caring (*ren ai* 仁爱). Dishonoring decorum is a qualified trespass below the bottom line or absolute minimum demand of moral norms. The prescription against dishonoring decorum is directly connected to the affective mindset of shame and aversion, and cautions people from the basic perspective of their moral motivation not to arbitrarily do anything to harm another person.

Now, the affective mindset of shame and aversion cautions against dishonoring decorum; however, actualizing the ideal of honoring decorum still requires a distinctly positive way of heeding this caution. Mencius therefore repeatedly insists on “nurturing the affective mind” (*yang xin* 养心) and “expanding and replenishing it” (*kuo er chong zhi* 扩而充之); nevertheless, just as we have shown the inseparability of compassion and shame, nurturing and strengthening the affective mind involves the tending to the growth of all four germs, since the growth of each supports the growth of all the others. The four germs of the affective mind each, respectively, develop into virtuous dispositions, which are being humane (*ren* 仁), honoring decorum (*yi* 义), observing ritual propriety (*li* 礼) and recognizing wisdom (*zhi* 智), respectively. Being humane takes on the commanding role of guiding the other three virtuous dispositions while determining the direction of morally worthwhile action overall. Honoring decorum means executing the action that is appropriate, based on internal norms. Observing ritual propriety, in turn, hinges more so on conducting social interaction in harmony with the external code of ritual conduct. Recognizing wisdom, lastly, presents the fulfillment of reasoning. Compared to being humane, which determines the direction of moral valuation (what to do), recognizing wisdom hinges more so on the right way to accomplish the valued objective (how to do it). When being humane is thus linked to recognizing wisdom, honoring decorum always follows in agreement with observing ritual propriety, which accounts for all four basic dispositions of pro-social interaction in the Confucian understanding, such that separating any one virtue from any of the other three would amount to crucially disagreeing with the Confucian idea. To put all four on parallel tracks would be to misconstrue them as well. Overall, being humane is the warm ground gently guiding the growth and expansion of the other three, while the affective mindset of right and wrong is the beacon of light signaling how to get there from afar; yet, all of them are normative, though each in a different sense. Shame is the primary moral self-reflection that is so disruptive to the affective mind that it frequently prefers to bury its moral sensitivity underneath a thickening tolerance to all pangs of compassionate dread. The morally sick mentality, which plots immoral courses of action with the aim of fulfilling selfish objectives such as self-enrichment and self-empowerment, is effectively warded off when the affective mind, because it naturally extends compassion to others, wills to compassionately act against the morally unbearable suffering of others. Therefore, while the affective mindset of compassion can only germinate into the affective disposition of being humane by experiencing painful and pleasant social interactions, the cognitive actualization of being humane, which develops in tandem with honoring decorum, can only bring about the mature cognitive disposition of recognizing wisdom by developing into the rational judgment of right and wrong. Therefore, the affective mindset of compassion, although necessary throughout the entirety of moral development, grows inwardly as knowing shame by honoring decorum and grows outwardly as knowing deference by observing ritual propriety; however, it can only reach maturity through the cognitive development of rational judgment as to right and wrong; therefore, the affective mindset of compassion only grows to complete maturity when the human being develops the affective–cognitive mindset of knowing right and wrong, or in other words, when the cognitive virtue of recognizing wisdom develops within the affective mind.

4. The Moral Aim of the Affective Mindset of Shame and Aversion: Honoring Decorum

The moral agent incited by the affective mindset of shame and aversion is unwilling to do something, and as the seed from which morality begins to grow, it ultimately points us in the direction of honoring decorum. Mencius states,

Mencius said, “For every man there are things he cannot bear. To extend this to what he can bear is benevolence. For every man there are things he is not willing to do. To extend this to what he is willing to do is rightness [*yi* 义]. If a man can extend to the full his natural aversion to harming others, then there will be an over-abundance of benevolence. If a man can extend his dislike for boring

holes and climbing over walls, then there will be an over-abundance of rightness. If a man can extend his unwillingness to suffer the actual humiliation of being addressed as 'thou' and 'thee', then wherever he goes he will not do anything that is not right." (*Mencius* VII B31)

The affective mindset of shame and aversion sheds clarity on the origin of shame, while honoring decorum demonstrates the development and necessary expansion of shame. Aversion in the affective mindset of shame and aversion shows the restraining side of shame: when you do something that goes against moral principles, other people will feel an aversion to you, and at the same time it warns you to do this something with shame (and therefore, you do not do it). This amounts to a process of self-reflection over self-behavior that is not yet unfolding, but might possibly unfold. The affective mindset of shame and aversion is tied to honoring decorum (translated here as rightness), and mainly underscores the bottom line of not being willing to go through with actions that dishonor decorum (wrongs) and turning this unwillingness into a positive willingness to do what is right and honor decorum. In other words, Mencius is not only concerned with the being of shame, but is also extremely concentrated on demonstrating the becoming of shame, that is, on the nature of shame to become positive.

In comparison with the prior claim that the affective mindset of shame and aversion is the germ from which honoring decorum begins to grow, "[t]he heart of compassion pertains to benevolence, the heart of shame to dutifulness, the heart of respect to the observance of the rites, and the heart of right and wrong to wisdom." (*Mencius* VIA6). Here, Mencius is underscoring further that the affective mindset of shame and aversion is the germinal part of honoring decorum. For Mencius, *yi* 义 is intrinsic, as his dialogue with Gaozi demonstrates.

Mencius criticizes Gaozi for arguing that being humane is internal and honoring decorum external. Mencius claims that moral prescriptions are included within emotional feelings, whereas according to Gaozi's manner of demonstration, nearly the entirety of the human being's moral subjectivity is demonstrated out of consideration, and the human being's moral behavior is not seen to arise from the subjective, emotional feelings of the inner mind, but instead from external, objective facts. However, Gaozi does not speak in detail about the mechanism behind what incites moral behavior, that is, he does not illustratively speak of the reason why human beings naturally show respect upon seeing someone who is older than themselves. Mencius's critique gains strength precisely from this point. Using the method of analogy, he draws out Gaozi's allusion to the whiteness of the object by referencing the relationship between the old age of animals and the old age of human beings, where the difference is found: we naturally have the intention to show respect and deference when we see elder human beings; however, we remain unmoved in the inner mind when we see an old horse, that is, our intention to show respect and deference is not determined by the external expressions of old age by itself and is instead the effect of our inner mind making an emotional choice. Mencius then asks rhetorically, is it the elder himself who honors decorum or is the person who shows respect and deference to the elder the one who honors decorum? (*Mencius* VI A4). The answer is self-evident. Gaozi insists, to suppose there are two children, one who is one's own child and the other who is another's child: I love my own but not the others, and therefore, the expression of the affective mindset of humane love is determined by the one who expresses it, and not by the young age of the one outside the family. However, conversely, no matter what region the person hails from, as long as that person is older than oneself, everyone knows to show him respect; therefore, honoring decorum, which is showing respect in this case, is determined rather by external expressions of old age. Mencius's rebuttal of this is accomplished by using people's love of roast meat as an analogy for the internality of honoring decorum, that is to say, we all love to eat roast meat from all over the world, which can only suggest that people's loves are internal and not determined by the external thing that is loved. This method of demonstration reveals Mencius's general viewpoint that the virtuous dispositions of human beings are based on their desires; namely, the human being's

pursuit of virtue is also a *desire for virtue* just like people's desire for tasty foods and beautiful music, with the only difference being that the human being's desire for virtue is more noble than the others. The desire to conduct oneself virtuously needs to be triggered by the affective mindset of compassion and sympathy, and with the affective mindset of shame and aversion, we have to avert improper conduct before it occurs.

The human's motivations to act morally are internal emotional affects that are triggered naturally, and these moral motivations are also united with the moral actions they motivate and require no external coercion; they are the effects of self-conscious choices. The reason why the actions of the moral subject accord with moral norms and prescriptive demands is not that the moral subject is forced to act in such ways by these norms and prescriptions, but is instead owing to the internal virtuous disposition of the moral subject fully expressing itself in such moral actions. Therefore, the internal virtuous disposition is the ultimate causal ground. The decorousness of the moral subject's behavior is grounded and caused by the internal virtuous disposition of the moral subject, which is to say, decorum is grounded by the internal good within the self, not the other way around. Being humane and honoring decorum as determinate moral norms or principles originates from the inner mind's moral beliefs, along with the moral cognition and moral sentiment pertaining to such beliefs. It is understandable from the empirical fact of "suddenly seeing a child about to fall down a well" that Mencius firmly believes the person's moral judgment is necessarily united with the person's moral motivation, and the person is not merely drawn to connect the two for the sake of securing external honors, fame or wealth, let alone for the sake of averting something feared in the external world. The moral judgement and moral motivation within the human being unite because of the internal ground that makes the human being human. In this way, Mencius still insists that the four virtuous dispositions of being humane, honoring decorum, observing ritual propriety and recognizing wisdom are all united in the everyday moral behavior of fulfilling filial and fraternal duties; they completely fuse together into the integral whole of the human being's moral life:

The content of benevolence is the serving of one's parents; the content of dutifulness is obedience to one's elder brothers; the content of wisdom is to understand these two and to hold fast to them; the content of the rites is the regulation and adornment of them. (*Mencius IV A27*)

The desire and the belief are moral motivations that follow the intention of the morally good mind. Mencius's contribution was to show that the content of the desire (in loving one's parents) and the content of the belief (in loving one's parents) are the same. The act of loving one's parents consists in following the belief that one's parents are right, along with the simultaneous affection and desire of loving one's parents, and these are all inseparably united components of the same process. According to the same principle, the moral act of obeying elders is also the act of uniting the belief (respecting elders is good) with the desire (wanting to respect elders).

5. The Essence of Shame: The Coherence of Affect and Norm

In the context of observing ritual propriety (*li* 礼) whose purpose is to harmonize superior and inferior members of society, shame is relational (Barrett 2014); however, the relation of self to other requires careful treatment which Barrett's account does not provide. Even though shame may be accompanied by physical changes of one sort or another (for instance, the typical image of the reddening face), shame as the psychological reflection over wrongdoing is not the same as the immoral action or wrongdoing itself, because on the one hand, shame more often than not concerns deeds that have not even taken place or may not even happen, and on the other hand, shame is found in moral dignity, which via reflection is extracted from the self-depiction of oneself as an ideal moral being.

For such reasons, when self-behavior falls short of turning this ideal image of oneself into reality, the feeling of shame inevitably attacks oneself through this self-image despite not having done anything morally wrong.

Since shame is relational and other-facing, while people are capable of feeling moral shame for actions that do not even occur, people can also feel moral aversion, which is the negative image of shame or shame in reverse, such that instead of shame which originates from people's need of self-approval in the moral sphere, moral aversion originates from people's social need for mutual moral approval or when people cannot but disapprove of another's standards of behavior on moral grounds. Human beings as concrete social beings can only live in a society with the copresence of other members of the same species. Human beings generally identify those morally unworthy of society's cooperation as detestable (worthy of aversion on moral grounds), which calling someone "vile" or "bad" underscores. Social cooperation between persons is moral cooperation in essence, because people mainly approve of each other and coordinate actions with one another on the moral ground of common purpose, which means everyone should choose to interact with others in ways that are morally acceptable by others; otherwise, they will be morally rejected by others. Moral aversion stems from such rejection, or moral disapproval. In the broad sphere of social interaction, moral aversion differs from hatred, in general, between people who detest each other on the personal level, because moral aversion is key to the proper functioning of social norms: without moral aversion and detesting others for violating social norms, the mutual approval of social group members weakens and breaks down over time, whereas hatred intensifies personal conflicts and unleashes anti-social forces that engulf the social group and threaten its integrity. While hatred exacerbates social dysfunction amidst one and the same society until it breaks down into separate warring individuals, moral aversion to moral wrongdoing and detesting norm-breakers can only strengthen the integrity of the ingroup over time.

The affective mindset of shame and aversion is responsible for "moral aversion to others" and "detesting others" at the social level of interaction, but additionally for "moral aversion to oneself" and "detesting oneself" out of shame when reflecting over poor self-behavior. This "moral self-disgust" is felt when self-performance (actually or potentially) falls shamefully below self-approved moral standards, because moral self-disgust hinges on the self-judgement of negative self-worth for the reason of having self-executed actions worthy of shaming as "sub-par" or "awful." All such negative judgments reflect different degrees of moral self-recognition and moral self-evaluation. As a moral being, the human being's subjective self-reflexivity is a critical dimension of humanity that enables the type of self-examination that is found in moral self-awareness: the self-discovery of any sort of immoral intention or sick motive within oneself will ordinarily trigger an emotional feeling of moral self-disgust along with some degree of passionate self-repulsion. Such moments of moral self-disgust express the "introversion" of that previously mentioned aversion-to-another; however, because of this inversion or introversion of moral aversion, the "other" facing rejection in such an episode of shame is no one other than oneself, or rather, the partial motive within oneself that inspires self-disgust. The moral possibility of understanding oneself, judging oneself and overcoming oneself hinges almost entirely on this self-reflexive introversion of moral aversion performed by the affective mindset of shame. Moral aversion is, therefore, approximately the same as moral judgment.

Shame by no means entails blind submission to norms. Instead, shame is for every self the experience of a primary social affect that differentially relates the self to a community of concrete others (and to imagined others as well). Shame presupposes the following: I hope (at the affective level of this singular life) that I am equal to whatever it is that others expect of me. Shame is the hope in me that a certain relationship prevails between myself and the other. Therefore, shame is not only a fundamental underlying modification of affect through which the self develops (through the medium of growing pains), because it is also for the self an important mode of interaction with the world; affecting and being affected by the world with enough shame can pull all other personalities and concrete matters to the forefront of my affective mind, where they appear in the first place as beings that matter to me, i.e., as beings that make a difference in my life. The nature of our experience and reasoning is grounded in this way of being, which is that of having shame. Therefore, the

affective mindset of shame and aversion, or colloquially, having shame in what we do, shapes the boundaries that we draw to differentiate ourselves from another person or a behavioral pattern, while modifying the self's every manner of interacting with others and the world.

The feeling of shame is a motivating force: a drive to become good-hearted. According to the standpoint of personalism, the person can pre-reflectively take over command of desiring and willing by virtue of having shame. To know shame is to marshal the forces necessary for the human will to refine and improve the character in oneself. Through experiences of everyday life, the person can develop behaviors and habits that are good for society owing to the seeds of pro-social action inside of oneself, all of which hinge on an innate sense of shame that is pre-reflective.⁹ In the *Mencius*, “the affective mindset of shame and aversion” is the condition of moral passions found universally in everyone, where shame is a human being's innermost determinacy growing innately from birth. Mencius states: “the affective mindset of shame and aversion is part and parcel of everyone.” Further, “An affective mind that is devoid of shame and aversion is inhuman.” In other words, a human being must have shame, for the shame of having no shame in oneself is the most shameful thing of all, and the most shameful deeds are directed by those who think and feel without any sense of shame at all.

Shame in the Mengzian sense is a motivation for moral growth and for the development of social virtues in the individual, and it should also be understood as the human capacity for moral judgment. The overwhelming psycho-affective experience of shame and the intense physiological effects of shame force the individual to cognitively make sense of what is shameful, which implies that the affective mindset of shame influences cognitive matters of moral judgment that emerge from considering practical matters of moral choice. The affective mindset of shame also develops in people by observing ritual propriety (*li* 礼). Even if people cannot rise to the standards of observing ritual propriety, they will at least develop a strong motivation to do the right thing (Tiwald 2017).

Mencius also insists that human beings develop dignity and a sense of moral duty, such as that which is upheld by good ministers in relation to their ruler, and it is for this reason that the noble masters feel ashamed of having exaggerated reputations, for whatever they actually accomplish in life, living up to the reputations that they receive on the outside should not become the inner motivation for their choices and actions. The petty, on the other hand, solely attend to the external images of themselves by which others recognize them in the outer world. They feel “flush of all glow in the face” the moment others fail to recognize them as noble or as deserving of honor, wealth and power as they wish to be recognized and displayed in the outside world. This is not true shame, but humiliation or losing face. The true noble, by contrast, attends to inner virtue alone, insofar as true nobility is not established by external mastery over others in the outside world or by the other's recognition of one's value, wealth and power, but is instead established by internal self-mastery, and accordingly, true nobles, rarer though they are, develop internal self-mastery by grounding their conception of the honorable and the disgraceful in their intimate self-understanding of the real (although not necessarily actualized) virtues germinating within themselves from “the four germs,” which they embrace as gifts from Nature. Such virtues are equivalent to norms in the affective mind of the true noble, because the virtues and virtuous actions are what set the standards or norms; therefore, this gives us the true definitions of honor and disgrace by listening to the affective mindset of shame and aversion. For true nobility, the shameful is any failure to actualize the virtues of being humane and honoring decorum. In the *Mencius*, the affective mindset of shame and aversion always refers to how people go about accepting or denying goods such as food, position, wealth and status, but do not refer to wealth and status as such. Accordingly, Confucius and Mencius never consider poverty shameful, which shows that Mencius's thought of honoring decorum (*yi* 义) concerns the normative requirements of showing appropriate decorum, in which case it could entail accepting goods as well as denying them,

depending on how appropriate or inappropriate the transaction is according to the affective mindset of shame and aversion.

6. Beyond Symmetry and Asymmetry: The Ethical Coherence of Interacting with Shame

Shame is the germ of honoring decorum. Honoring decorum or showing appropriate decorum (*yi* 义) refers to the ability to make appropriate decisions and motivate ethically suitable actions. Honoring decorum implies appreciation and deference (Cheng 1972). As one of the most important moral capacities, shame is applicable to determining how appropriate an interaction is.

The relationship between you and I as depicted by shame takes us beyond the symmetry of utilitarian ethics and the asymmetry of deontological ethics; it requires an ethics of interactivity. Concrete relationships—from that between parents and children to that between siblings older and younger, and even more broadly, to that between youth and the elderly—all differ from relationships of equality, and insofar as the related terms of the relation are mutually subjects for each other, our social relations are different from our relations to other material objects.

Mencius speaks of moral agents who all share pro-social (socially positive) affections, whereas Dan Zahavi speaks of shame as feeling merely negative either in relation to the other or to the self (Zahavi 2014). Shame as a synthetic combination of moral motivation and moral judgement can either activate (motivate) or deactivate (inhibit) the moral agent, and for Mencius, shame in precisely this affective sense is the positive seedling of moral improvement or of the good as such.

Slote grounds his virtue ethics on moral symmetry (Slote 1995), which applies well to Confucianism when processing its concern for the self and the person. Moral symmetry means that when I consider the moral, altruistic dimension of aiding another person, I also consider personal self-benefit. Moral symmetry involves the interconnection of self and other as terms of a symmetrical relation in general and different persons mutually cultivating moral qualities or social virtues in particular.

The social origin of shame is the reciprocal relationship of self and other, or the fundamental community of self and other. In other words, social community is structured reciprocity, because of which the one who causes shame can coincide with the one who feels it. For instance, some person or some group may feel shame because of something inappropriate that either I, myself or some other did, which demonstrates that shame is a self-affection that can only be felt when the self who feels shame personally lives within some community. This presents episodes of shame as complications of sharing affectivity and communicating rationality, with each emotional response of shame orienting the self (emotionally moving the self) toward reuniting with the affectively communicating community. When the self affectively identifies with a community that is formed by mutually communicating affectivity and reciprocally sharing rationality, this affective identification provides the self's consciousness of moral worth with varieties of social settings that generatively condition moral judgment and other moral passions such as shame.

In the two-way relationship of duties between children and parents, children feel ashamed of "being unfilial," "disrespecting" and "neglecting" parents, whereas parents feel shame for each failure in the broader task of nurturing and raising their children. The other members of the broader society may thereafter feel shame for their misconduct, that is, for betraying the norm of "being humane" (*ren* 仁) and for flouting the "observance of ritual propriety" (*li* 礼).

The "self" is interchangeable with the "other" as inverse perspectives on the designated subject matter of "shame." The self–other interaction connects the seemingly episodic moral feelings of "shame" with the ethical norm of "shame," which thereby brings about the coincidence and fusion of the two. This self-incorporates the affective episodes of shame with the prescriptive norm of shame in lived experience: shame as emotionally affective is endogenous moral motivation whereas shame as ethically normative—far from

some sort of coercive regulative force coming from outside the self—is closer to the emotional resolution that is reached when self-behavior exemplifies full compliance with the emotional sentiment of shame. Therefore, there is no “shame” without both the emotional affect of shame and the ethical norm of shame, insofar as these two dimensions of shame blend together as thoroughly as do water and milk. Therefore, whether it is the shame of not caring about the good of others or that of failing to overcome bad desires in oneself, both senses of shame organically unite the internal moral affect of shame with the external ethical norm. Overcoming bad desires in oneself and caring after the betterment of others make up two sides of one self–other interaction that fuses and unites the emotional affect of shame (moral motivation) with the ethical norm of shame (moral resolution) and thereby enables the two to coincide and unfold as one moral integrity.

Shame is a profound affective experience for Mencius, one that is more fundamental than desire and belief, for it functions simultaneously as both moral motivation and moral judgment. To understand shame, we are necessarily led down the path of analyzing the root and aim of shame. Shame always presents the coherent bonding of the normative with the affective. Shame really occurs to us in our affective mind while rehearsing via imagination versions of self-performance in concrete situations; therefore, in our daily lives, shame affectively takes over us not only for doing things, but also for simply thinking about doing things. Shame is, therefore, also naturally involved in moral judgment about what we should do. We prove to be rational people if we can act with shame and thus avert dishonoring decorum. The ethical norm of shame unfolds as different though reciprocally-related norms, insofar as the active fulfillment of one norm by one party brings about positive reciprocation by the other party whose affective mind is so conditioned that active fulfillment of the other norm will proceed by matter of course, resulting in a back-and-forth interaction between not only parents and their children but also a king and his subjects. The converse is also true; parents can feel shame for insufficiently taking care of their children, and children for showing inadequate respect to their parents. In all of these relational social roles, shame plays a commanding role in maintaining harmony among people.

Shame is the unity of natural affect or innate emotion and social affect or learned emotion; however, as such, it is additionally the unity of pre-reflective affection and reflective cognition insofar as it innately promotes the reflective/cognitive learning that is required to partake better in proper social interactions. Shame, therefore, demonstrates the unity of individual morality and social morality by way of seeding the individual’s positive development of sociality, which this paper details in order to refute the common misinterpretation of shame as negative. It is critical to recognize that shame *xiu* 羞 cannot be analyzed from the transcendent perspective, for shame always involves a concrete relationship as well as interacting with others in the mundane world.

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Notes

- ¹ Shame is not appropriately analyzed through inward or outward as Lu does (Lu 2018b). Lu also claims that shame is either innate or socially learned (Lu 2018a). In the externalist model, by contrast, a person with second order desire is someone with the desire to do whatever is in fact right (Frankfurt 1971), and accordingly, there is no such conflict or fundamental dichotomy whatsoever between innate and learned.
- ² One of the key translation terms unfolded in this paper, “the affective mind,” is constructed in such a way as to philosophically resolve many problems with the standard translations of this term, which, when listed in a series, seem to show some attempt at a dialectical resolution of two opposite renderings: the first is the emotional/affective rendering “heart,” the second is the rational/cognitive rendering “mind,” and then finally, the hyphenated synthesis “heart-mind.” The term “affective mind” replaces the metaphorical “heart,” which is not an adjective, with the non-metaphorical adjective “affective,” so that it, in a grammatically acceptable way, conveys the singular concept of a mind that is at once both affective and cognitive, instead of a dialectical pairing of two substances, heart and mind. Moreover, the addition and subtraction of the convenient affix “set” allows our English to approximate the philosophical term *xin* 心, which flexibly forms compounds in Chinese in a way that the word “mind” alone cannot convey. For instance, the phrases “mind of shame,” “heart of shame,” or “heart-mind of shame” are all quite ambiguous

to those not steeped in the studies of *Mencius*. The grammatical pattern they seem to follow is the “heart of gold” pattern; however, *xiu e zhi xin* 羞恶之心 is not made of shame or worth its weight in it like gold; it is simply capable of being affected by the feeling of shame and acting accordingly with it as a mindset. Furthermore, the mind/mindset method of translating the flexible *xin* effectively resolves (or reveals as false) the one/many problem of whether there are many “heart-minds” or just one, since in our renderings, there is obviously only one substance, which is the “affective mind,” with many affections or modifications of this one substance, which we call the affective mindsets.

³ Mencius’s phrase 羞恶 *Xiu Wu* is translated as shame by D.C. Lau and “shame and aversion” by Irene (Bloom 2009). Both of these translations reflect philosophical interpretations of shame as one of the four original settings of the affective mind (commonly translated as “the four sprouts”).

⁴ D. C. Lau’s rendering is “dutifulness.”

⁵ D.C. Lau’s translation of *benxin* is “original heart.” While no one can deny the upsides of D.C. Lau’s rendering, it is a metaphorical one. The translation term “the original sensitivity” is meant to underline the philosophical dimension of Mencius’s term, insofar as Mencius is solving a philosophical problem about wrongdoing with his choice of words. “The original sensitivity” is better at showing one of the origins of wrongdoing in the *Mencius*, which is blunting the original sensitivity and becoming inhumane.

⁶ The Chinese term *yi* 义 is usually translated into the English terms “rightness,” “righteousness,” “dutifulness” and even “justness,” which although they do convey some senses of the original Chinese term ultimately fail at rendering some key nuances, especially in the contexts that Mencius and Xunzi were writing in. The most important nuances lost by the usual English renderings include the intrinsic connection of *yi* to an affective origin in the human mind that is having shame, and the other is the intrinsic connection of *yi* to the hierarchical division of society that Confucianism philosophically defended with this concept (see Xunzi 9.19). The slightly archaic English term “decorum” aims to show rather than hide the context of hierarchy that is so important to Confucian philosophy, while the verb “honoring” brings out *yi*’s nuance of a kind of social action that involves emotionally-invested moral valuation. Lastly, the intrinsic connection of *yi* to an affective origin in the mind (shame) is best captured by this phrasing that foregrounds honoring and dishonoring, insofar as honor and dishonor are precisely the underlying subject matters of shame and aversion.

⁷ Yu in Chinese means desires and wants.

⁸ Desire and belief are two concepts of core relevance for understanding moral motivation. In the *Mencius*, *yu* 欲 is translated as want by D.C. (Lau 2004) and as desire by Irene Bloom, two translations which reflect different understandings of *yu*. For Chan, *yu* is understood as contemplation (*si* 思). Sensuous organs, eyes and ears, for example, are subjects of *yu* that contemplate a physical pleasure; however, according to this understanding, *yu* cannot function as motivation for moral action. Not contemplating (*busi* 不思) in the sense of immediately desiring without contemplation can, however, motivate moral action (Chan 2016). Chan’s distinction here between two different kinds of *yu* draws inspiration from Frankfurt’s notion of second order desires, in accordance with which, not contemplating operates as a desiring that is not wanting or as desiring to have the right desire, and in this sense it has moral significance. Moreover, desire emerges on two levels. “The difference between the *de re* and *de dicto* readings of ‘a desire to do the right thing’ is that the first is an unmediated desire to perform some act that is also the right act to perform, while in the second I desire to do whatever will meet the description. Only endorsing *de dicto* desires can prove problematic for moral action” (Archer 2016).

⁹ To be more precise, shame becomes reflective; however, the seed of shame, that is, the affective mindset of shame and aversion from which having shame grows, is innate and inborn in the conception of Mencius, and as such, shame is better characterized as the original, pre-reflective affection from which developed, reflective social cognition grows. As such, shame is the unity of the pre-reflective/affective dimension of the mind and the reflective/cognitive dimension of the mind.

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