

On the Value of Drunkenness in the *Laws*

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Abstract

Plato's attitude towards drunkenness (μέθη) is surprisingly positive in the *Laws*, especially as compared to his negative treatment of intoxication in the *Republic*.¹ In the *Republic*, Plato maintains that intoxication causes cowardice and intemperance (3.398e–399e, 3.403e, and 9.571c–573b), while in the *Laws*, Plato holds that it can produce courage and temperance (1.635b, 1.645d–650a, and 2.665c–672d). This raises the question: Did Plato change his mind, and if he did, why?² Ultimately, this paper answers affirmatively and argues that this marks a substantive shift in Plato's attitude towards anti-rational desires.³ More precisely, this paper argues that in the *Republic*, Plato holds that anti-rational desires are always detrimental to health and virtue, while in the *Laws*, Plato maintains that anti-rational desires can be instrumental to health and virtue.

1. Intoxication in the *Republic*

There are three passages in the *Republic* in which Plato describes the ethical quality of drunkenness. The first passage occurs in Book 3 when Socrates is discussing the education of the guardians. At 398e6–7, Socrates says, 'Now, drunkenness (μέθη) is inappropriate for the guardians, as is softness (μαλακία) and idleness (ἀργία).' Following this, Socrates objects to the use of the Lydian and Ionic musical harmonies⁴ in the education of the guardians because they are soft (μαλακαί), lax (χαλαραί), and suitable for symposium (3.398e–399a; see also 3.395e–396a). Hence, because these harmonies develop vicious

¹ All translations are my own; however, for the *Laws*, I have relied on Pangle (1988) and Meyer (2015), and for Plato's other work, Cooper and Hutchinson (1997). The Greek for Plato's work follows Burnet (1900–1907), but with respect to the *Laws*, I have consulted des Places and Diès (1951–6). Translations of Aristotle's *Politics* are slightly modified from Jowett (1985), with the Greek from Ross (1957). My discussion of drunkenness will be restricted to the *Laws* and the *Republic*. The obvious text that I am excluding from my discussion is the *Symposium*. I am excluding this text for two reasons: (1) with some minor exceptions (see 176c–d), the *Symposium* does not explicitly discuss the dangers and benefits of intoxication; (2) the *Symposium* does not involve the construction of a city, and thus the norms concerning intoxication discussed in the *Symposium* are taking place under a different context from the *Laws* and the *Republic*.

² The role of drunkenness in the *Laws* has been mostly neglected by scholars. For instance, Stalley (1983, 5) remarks that 'many readers have found this section tedious,' while Post (1929, 16) holds that it is simply a device to 'entice the unsuspecting drunkard into hearing a sermon on temperance.' The exceptions are Belfiore (1986), North (1966, 191–2) and Wildberg (2011, 221–4). Belfiore offers the most thoughtful and interesting discussion of drunkenness. However, I disagree with her analysis in many important respects which I will discuss in section five. North's and Wildberg's discussion is useful, but brief.

³ By 'anti-rational desires,' I do not mean non-rational. Instead, I mean opposed to reason; that is, desires that reason does not sanction. I will discuss this in more detail in section five.

⁴ The usual translation is 'mode,' however, I am convinced by Woerther (2008, 91n11) that 'harmony' is a better translation.

constitutions, they will be forbidden from the guardians' education. Instead, the guardians will only hear musical harmonies that encourage courage and temperance (3.399a–e).⁵ This passage demonstrates that Plato associates intoxication with harmful dispositions, such as cowardice, laziness, and intemperance.

The second passage occurs in Book 3 when Socrates and Glaucon discuss the physical training of the young guardians:

Soc.: We said that our prospective guardians must avoid drunkenness, for it is less appropriate for a guardian to be drunk and not to know where on earth he is than it is for anyone else.

Glau.: It would be absurd for a guardian to need a guardian (3.403e4-7).

Although this passage is making reference back to the discussion of intoxication at 3.398e, the reasons raised against drunkenness are different. At 3.398e, Plato objects to drunkenness on the grounds that it will hinder the development of a virtuous soul, while at 3.403e, the reasons against intoxication have to do with responsibility. The guardians are supposed to protect the city and they will not be able to fulfill this duty if they are drunk.

The third passage occurs in Book 9 when Socrates discusses the nature of the tyrannical soul. Socrates compares the soul of a tyrant to that of a soul during drunken sleep. Socrates warns that 'drunken sleep awakens the bestial and savage part in us,' which seeks to 'satisfy its own instincts' (9.571c4-7). In such a condition, 'nothing is too outrageous, being unfastened and delivered from all sense of shame (*ἀναίσχυντίας*) and prudence' (9.571c7-d2). During drunken sleep one's erotic desires run wild – seeking anyone, be it one's own mother, man, beast, or god; additionally, one is prone to violent outbursts, gluttony, and all sorts of foolish behavior (9.571c–d). In contrast, during sober and healthy sleep, reason is in control, and as a result one's sleep will likely be peaceful and lawful (9.571d–572b).

This passage continues with Socrates explaining how the tyrant's soul is similar to the soul of a drunk. The tyrannical soul develops when erotic desires, 'like a great winged drone,' become the leader of the soul's desires (9.573a1-2; see also 5.475a). Then, 'other desires – filled with incense, myrrh, wreaths, wine, and the other pleasures found in their company – buzz around the drone,' they nurture it and make it grow as large as possible (9.573a4-8). Following this, the drone adopts 'madness as its bodyguard' and if it finds any reasonable beliefs or desires, 'it destroys them and throws them out, until it has purged him of moderation and filled him with imported madness' (9.573a8-b4). This leads Socrates to conclude that one becomes a tyrant to the fullest extent when one combines the characteristics of 'drunkenness (*μεθυστικός*), lust (*ἐρωτικός*), and madness (*μελαγχολικός*)' (9.573c9; see also *Phaedrus* 238b, 256c).

These three passages make it clear that Plato's attitude towards intoxication in the *Republic* is negative.⁶ Let us now turn to Plato's attitude towards drunkenness in the *Laws*. In the next section I examine Plato's discussion of drunkenness in *Laws* 1; following this I examine it in *Laws* 2.

⁵ At 3.399a, Socrates says that he does not know what musical harmonies have this quality, but 3.399c suggests that Plato believes the Dorian and Phrygian harmonies have these qualities; see Aristotle *Politics* 8.7.1342a30-1342b15.

⁶ Plato, however, does maintain that there will be drinking wine in the so called 'city of pigs' (3.372a–b); nevertheless, Glaucon objects to the city of pigs on the grounds that it lacks the goods related to symposium (3.372e). Hence, it seems unlikely that drunkenness occurs in the city of pigs; see also 4.426a–b.

2. *Laws* 1: Wine as Testing and Training

Books 1 and 2 of the *Laws* are largely about ‘musical’ education.⁷ The Athenian Stranger is critical of the Cretan and Spartan educational systems. The Athenian argues that their method of education is ill-equipped to develop virtue in their citizens – including the virtue of courage, which Megillus and Clinias value over every other virtue.⁸ According to the Athenian, not only does courage ‘combat against fears and pains,’ but it also guards against ‘longings (πόθους) and pleasures, and certain terrible seductive flatteries (δεινὸς θωπείας κολακικᾶς) that can melt the spiritedness (τοὺς θυμούς) even of those who think themselves highly dignified’ (1.633c8-d3). This is problematic for the citizens of both Crete and Sparta because, according to Megillus and Clinias, they only train in resisting pain and fear, but do nothing to combat pleasure and longings (1.635b–d).

The Stranger remarks that there is something puzzling about the Cretans’ and Spartans’ educational system. On the one hand, the Spartans’ and Cretans’ lawgiver maintains that their citizens should ‘keep away from and not taste the greatest sorts of pleasure and play’ (1.635b5–6). On the other hand, ‘as to pains and fears’ the lawgiver maintains ‘that if someone flees them, from childhood until the end of life, the result will be that when he does encounter hardships, fears, and pains that are unavoidable, he will flee before those who have had training in such things and will be enslaved by them’ (1.635b6–c3). The Athenian wonders why the same lawgiver did not think the same thing about training in pleasure as he did about training in pain. The lawgiver should have said to himself:

If our citizens grow up from youth lacking experience in the greatest pleasures, if they aren’t practiced in enduring pleasures and in never being compelled to do anything shameful (ἀμελέτητοι γιγνόμενοι ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς καρτερεῖν καὶ μὴδὲν τῶν αἰσχροῶν ἀναγκάζεσθαι ποιεῖν), their softness of spirit (γλυκυθυμίας) before pleasures will lead them to suffer the same thing as those who are overcome by fears. They will be enslaved in another and more shameful fashion to those who are capable of enduring pleasures, who have experienced pleasures (τοῖς γε δυναμένοις καρτερεῖν ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς καὶ τοῖς κεκτημένοις τὰ περὶ τὰς ἡδονάς), and who are sometimes human beings vicious in every way. They’ll have souls that are part slave and part free, and will not be worthy of being called courageous and free men without qualification (1.635c5–d5).

Clinias and Megillus, however, are quite wary about the advantages of training in pleasure. Accordingly, the Athenian proposes that they look at the virtue of temperance (σωφροσύνη) and examine how training in pleasure can aid in cultivating temperance. This leads the Athenian to inquire into Sparta’s and Crete’s method for developing temperance. Unfortunately, Megillus does not know how Sparta trains their citizens to develop temperance, but he suggests that it is likely developed in their practice of gymnastics and common meals (1.636a).⁹ Awkwardly, the Athenian condemns this practice, arguing that it is the cause of unnatural sexual behaviors in Sparta and Crete (1.636b–e).¹⁰ Although

⁷ Μουσική was a broad category for the Ancient Greeks, which included rhythm, harmony, and discourses (λόγοι).

⁸ For instance, in Book 1 Clinias and Megillus argue that governments exist to win wars and thus the primary virtue that governments should develop is courage (1.625c ff.).

⁹ The common meals were essentially an all-male club with a military emphasis; see Morrow (1960, 389–98). In the *Politics* 2.9.1271a30–10.1272a20, Aristotle notes that the Spartans developed their practice from the Cretans. For a discussion of the connection of common meals and gymnastics with pederasty see Percy (1996).

¹⁰ The Athenian points out that all Greeks accuse the Cretans of being the originators of the myth of Ganymede, which is the model for the Greek practice of pederasty (1.636d; see also 8.836c–839d). Plato’s attitude towards

Megillus is uncertain of how to respond, he ultimately defends the Spartan practice of evading pleasure (I.636e) – boasting that in his opinion ‘the ways of Sparta with regard to pleasures are the finest in all the world’ (I.636e8-a2). Megillus explains that Spartans do not host any drinking parties and that drunkenness is so disparaged that Spartans would beat any drunkard they came across, even during the festival of Dionysus (I.637a–b).¹¹

The Athenian, however, is not impressed with these Spartan practices. He argues that under the appropriate conditions intoxication is beneficial.¹² The Athenian explains that drinking wine intensifies ‘pleasures and pains and the spirited (θυμους) and erotic emotions (ἔρωτας)’ (I.645d6-8), while dulling ‘sense perceptions (αἰσθήσεις), memories, beliefs, and prudent thoughts (φρονήσεις)’ (I.645e1-2). Intoxication thus renders you in a child-like condition in which you have little self-control (I.645e–646a); as a result you are bolder, more talkative, more confident, more hopeful, more joyful, more fearless, and more shameless (I.649a–d, 2.666c–d, 2.671b–c; cf. *Cratylus* 406-c).¹³ If this condition were permanent it would be awful, but because it is only temporary, it can be used medicinally to strengthen the soul. This is similar to taking purgative medicine or engaging in vigorous exercise; both practices strengthen the body by first temporarily weakening it (I.646c; cf. *Republic* 2.382a–e, 3.389a–e). Drunkenness works in a similar manner: the wine temporarily weakens the soul by putting it in a base condition; nevertheless, this experience can ultimately strengthen the soul by producing ‘shame’ (αἰδώς) in it, which is a precondition for virtue (I.647a–b).¹⁴

pederasty in the *Laws* seems to differ from his attitude in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* (cf. *Republic* 5.458c–d). It should also be noted that part of the Athenian’s criticism of common meals is that the Spartans and the Cretans are only concerned with making their citizens good at war and are not concerned with the virtues that come about during peace and leisure (see I.625e, 2.633a, and 6.780b). Plato wants to extend the practice of common meals to women (6.780e–781d) and for the focus to be not only on the preparation for war, but communion with fellow citizens; see Pangle 1988, 379; Aristotle, *Politics* 2.12.1274b10-15.

¹¹ Both the Spartans and Cretans were notoriously abstemious and restrained wine drinkers (see *Minos* 320a). For instance, the Helots were the only people allowed to get drunk in Sparta. The adult Spartans forced the Helots to get incapacitatingly drunk to show the Spartan youth how not to behave; see Cartledge 2004, 98.

Morrow (1960, 371n255) explains that during the festival of Dionysus, a cart carrying the god was followed by wagons with raucous riders shouting insults and obnoxious things at one another and the crowd. This is likely what Megillus is complaining about at I.637a–b.

¹² The Athenian is quite explicit that he is not merely talking about the value of drinking wine, but the value in getting drunk (I.637d; 2.671a; see Belfiore 1986, 430n29). Some scholars have argued that this is not the case. For instance, England (1921, *ad loc.* I.637d4) advises, ‘We must remember that the Greeks drank nothing stronger than wine, and nearly always drank that mixed with water, and hence the word μέθη had not the disgusting connotation that its equivalent has among us,’ while Stalley (1983, 124) writes that symposiasts are only ‘mildly intoxicated.’ However, these accounts cannot explain why the Athenian would describe drunkenness as causing the effects that it does (see especially I.645d–e).

¹³ There is a difficult interpretative question lingering here: How can exciting spirited emotions make one more shameless? This is puzzling because spirited emotions, such as anger, are associated with having a sense of shame. Accordingly, it would seem that exciting one’s spirit, would excite one’s sense of shame and honor. I do not have the space to address this question in detail, but I suspect that Plato has in mind a situation in which one’s anger makes them lose sight of what is appropriate and inappropriate from an objective perspective. Consider Achilles whose anger does not appear to be responsive to a sense of shame, see especially, *Iliad* 24.30-50; cf. 24.503; see Hobbs 2000, chap. 7.

¹⁴ There is an interesting question as to whether this means that Plato is abandoning the principle that ‘like causes like,’ see *Phaedo* 68d, 68e, 100a–b; *Parmenides* 131c–d; *Republic* 1.335c–d; *Protagoras* 355d; and *Theaetetus* 199d.

The Athenian explains how drunkenness develops a sense of shame (*αἰδώς*) by distinguishing between two types of fear. On the one hand, there is the fear of expecting an evil, such as pain or death (1.646e). The fear of pain or death is dangerous because it can prevent individuals from acting courageously in battle (1.647b–c). Because of this, it is vital that individuals are trained to develop immunity to this kind of fear. This takes the form of exposing citizens to the things that they should be fearless of; the idea being that with practice, citizens will learn to endure the ‘evils’ that they find fearful. The Spartan and Cretan educational system focuses on this kind of fear (1.633b–d).

On the other hand, there is the fear of doing something dishonorable, especially in the presence of someone noble; this kind of fear is called ‘shame’ (*αἰδώς*) (1.646e–647b). Shame is a good type of fear because when individuals have shame they are not only able to resist suffering and pain, but they are able to endure the greatest pleasures as well (1.647a).¹⁵ The idea is that when you confront something that frightens you, or an extreme amount of pleasure, out of fear of being viewed a disgrace by someone noble, you will not flee from pursuing excellence. Therefore, it might be appropriate to call shame a precondition for virtue because its existence aids in producing courage, temperance, and justice (1.647a–b). Now, just as citizens develop fearlessness of expecting pain by being exposed to and overcoming that which they think is painful, citizens develop the fear that is shame (*αἰδώς*) by being exposed to and overcoming pleasures that seduce them into acting shamelessly and unjustly (1.647c–e).¹⁶

Properly supervised drinking parties provide an inexpensive and safe way to cultivate and test shame (1.649c–650a). In a state of drunkenness, you become more cheerful, more fearless, and less controlled (1.649b). As a result, you will become more tempted to shamelessly pursue pleasure. Putting individuals in this condition provides them with an opportunity to develop shame in much the same way that being exposed to pain and fear develops courage and fearlessness: just as one learns to overcome pain and fear by being exposed to it, one will learn to overcome the temptation of pleasure and shamelessness by being exposed to them as well (1.649c). Additionally, if a symposiast acts inappropriately there is no great danger (1.649d–650b) because a wise, sober, and elderly symposiarch is leading the symposium (1.640d, 2.671d, and 2.672a).¹⁷

Furthermore, this practice provides the city with the knowledge of who has a sense of shame and thus can resist pleasure, and who is shameless and thus cannot resist pleasure, which is some of the most useful knowledge that the city can acquire (1.650b). In other

¹⁵ This is why at 1.647b–c the Athenian says that ‘each of us must be at the same time fearless and fearful.’

¹⁶ Pangle (1988, 518n55) points out that in Plutarch’s *Cleomenes IX* it is noted that the Spartans have a positive attitude towards fear; they hold that it is not something that should always be avoided, but rather should be cultivated in certain ways. For instance, the Spartans believed that fear had the power to hold a regime together; cf. *Euthyphro* 12b. This is why the Spartans constructed temples to Phobos (Fear) and his twin brother Deimos (Terror). This suggests that the Athenian might be trying to persuade Megillus that drunkenness is valuable by showing him how it can cultivate something that his own culture values. One should also keep in mind that Dionysus is the god of battle panic; see Euripides’ *Bacchae* 302–5 cited by Belfiore 1986, 436.

¹⁷ At 1.648d the Athenian suggests that people might practice drunkenness while alone. However, as Belfiore (1983, 424n13) explains there is no contradiction for Plato ‘to allow solitary, unsupervised drinking but to require a symposiarch to rule groups of drinkers.’ Drinking parties are also restricted to certain individuals (2.666a–b) and to the festival of Dionysus (6.775b). This shall be discussed in more detail in the next section.

words, there is a kind of honesty that comes from intoxication, in this state, you reveal your true character (see also *Symposium* 217e; *Protagoras* 347c–e).

From the Athenian’s discussion in Book 1, we can identify two benefits of drunkenness: (1) it is a safe and inexpensive device for testing one’s sense of shame, and (2) it provides a means by which one can train in the resistance of pleasure and thereby develop a sense of shame. Let us turn to the Stranger’s discussion of intoxication in Book 2.

3. *Laws* 2: Pleasure, Motivation, and Evaluative Judgements

The Athenian insists that drinking parties are only beneficial under certain conditions. There are four conditions that matter most: (1) there needs to be a wise, sober, and elderly symposiarch (2.672a), (2) there are strict age restrictions on the symposium (2.666a–b), (3) those who engage in a symposium are not on duty (2.647a–b),¹⁸ and (4) the symposium is restricted to the festival of Dionysus (6.775b).¹⁹ For the purposes of this section, it is only necessary to focus on the age restrictions of the symposium.

The Athenian maintains that citizens are forbidden to drink wine until the age of eighteen (2.666a).²⁰ After the age of eighteen, citizens will be permitted to drink and taste wine in moderation (2.666a). However, only those nearing the age of forty and older will be allowed to engage in drunkenness (2.666a–b).²¹ These ages are not arbitrarily selected, but are grounded in the Athenian’s understanding of education and moral psychology.

According to the Stranger, all children are fiery (*διάπυρος*) by nature, which in turn, makes them eager to move and sing, and incapable of remaining calm (2.653d–e, 2.664e, 2.666a, 2.671b–c, and 2.672c). In contrast, adults are reluctant to sing and dance because they no longer find such activities pleasurable, but consider them shameful:

Everyone as he grows older becomes apprehensive about singing, and takes less pleasure in doing this, and when he is forced to sing, he feels ashamed (*αἰσχύνουτ’*). The more elderly and temperate (*σωφρονέστερος*) that he gets, the more this increases . . . Surely, then, he would feel even more ashamed (*αἰσχύνουτ’*) if he sang in the theater, before all kinds of people (2.665d9–e6).²²

¹⁸ For instance, the Athenian forbids the following from drinking: female and male slaves; magistrates during the year in which they serve; pilots, soldiers, and judges while performing their services; and anyone in an important council meeting (2.674a–b).

¹⁹ The Athenian is particularly concerned about individuals getting drunk during their wedding reception. He is concerned that this will ruin one’s ability to procreate or affect the development of the fetus (6.775b–775e). The text indicates that the symposium is not restricted to men, but women will be allowed their own symposium (see. 8.828c).

²⁰ One might worry that this suggests that drunkenness is not crucial to learning self-control, or that one cannot develop self-control until adulthood. However, as I explain below, this is not the case. The Athenian’s point is that how one trains in self-control differs for different ages. For the youth who already have a lot of spirit, they need calm activities to lower their spirit, and as a result they will be more controlled. Adults, on the other hand, have a dearth of spirit, and need something to excite them so that their resistance to pleasure is sharpened and does not wane, and drunkenness does this.

²¹ The Athenian is consistent in banning wine from the youth, however the particular age at which one is permitted to drink varies, see Meyer 2015, 287, 326.

²² In this passage the elderly’s sense of shame and temperate disposition prevents them from engaging in virtuous behavior. This is strange for two reasons: (1) drunkenness is supposed to help one cultivate a sense of shame and temperance, but the elderly already seem to possess it; (2) moderation and a sense of shame are supposed to

This is quite serious because musical education forms the basis for developing proper evaluative judgments and emotional responses (see 2.673e; *Timaeus* 47d–e). According to the Stranger, humans are distinct from other animals to the extent that only humans, with the help of the Muses, Apollo, and Dionysus, are capable of perceiving rhythm and harmony in song and dance (i. e., chorus) (2.653e–654b, 2.664e–665a). The idea is that through organized and systematic singing and dancing at festivals, the rambunctious movements of children become fine and harmonious, and from this, children learn to take pleasure in what is fine and good and to hate and be pained by what is ugly and bad (2.653b–654d; see also 3.689a–e).²³ In other words, musical education forms the basis for citizens' ethical development because it is through musical education that citizens develop correct opinions and feelings about what is good and bad (see also *Republic* 3.401d–402b; Baima 2017).

We have the beginning of explanation for why the Athenian believes that the elderly should engage in drunkenness and why the young should abstain from intoxication. Because the young already have fiery dispositions and are eager to participate in song and dance, they are already primed to be educated into what is fine and good through musical education. However, this is not the case for older adults since they find such activities shameful. Because adults no longer participate in chorus, their musical training tends 'to slacken' and become 'corrupted to a great extent' (2.653c7–9). Evidence of this is reflected in the fact that they no longer recognize good choral dances and songs as fine and pleasurable, but take them to be shameful (2.665d–e). Drunkenness can cure this ailment by putting adults in a childlike condition, a state in which they lack self-control, are more excitable, more eager to sing and dance, and able to be reeducated:

As a man approaches forty he is to share in the enjoyment of the common meals, invoking the presence of the other gods, and especially Dionysus, at this mystery-rite and play of older men, which he has bestowed on human beings as a drug that heals the austerity (*ἀστηρότητα*) of old age. Its effect is that we are rejuvenated (*ἀνιβᾶν*), and the soul, by forgetting its despondency of spirit (*δυσθυμία*), has its dispositions turned from harder to softer, so that it becomes more malleable, like iron when it is plunged into fire. First, then, if each man were so disposed, wouldn't he become more eager (*προθυμότερόν*) and less ashamed (*ἧττον αἰσχυνόμενος*) to sing chants (as we have often called them), in the presence, not of a large company of strangers, but of a small number of intimate friends? (2.666b2–c8).

Adults who are normally reluctant to sing and dance, will be more eager to participate in the chorus when intoxicated. Now, since a wise symposiarch will govern their drunken behavior, he will ensure that the songs and dances they perform are noble:

be beneficial dispositions (2.661d–662a; *Gorgias* 474c–475e), but here they seem to be hindrances (*Charmides* 157d–161a). One might respond that the elderly's temperance does not benefit them in this situation because they do not have full temperance – that is temperance with wisdom (see 3.689a–e, 4.709e–710a; cf. *Meno* 88a–b; *Phaedo* 82a ff.). But this only seems to lead to other questions: For instance, how is a lack of wisdom preventing the elderly from dancing? And, how will getting drunk make them wise? I do not have room in this paper to explore these interesting questions.

²³ The third chorus, which is called the Chorus of the Elders, and referred to as a Chorus of Dionysus, is responsible for selecting the songs and dances in the festivals (2.664b–665d, 2.670a–671a.). Morrow (1960, 315) notes that 'to call this chorus of elders a chorus of Dionysus is a paradox. Dionysus, the giver of wine and the leader in frenzied dances, was a powerful god among the multitude, but scarcely the god one would choose as patron of an Academy of taste and morals'; see Belfiore 1986, 425–7.

Anyone who participates in such a gathering loosens up and becomes merry ... Didn't we say that when this happens the souls of the drinkers are like iron in fire. They become softer and more youthful, so that they can easily be led – as they were when they were young – by someone who possesses the ability and the skill to educate and mold souls? The one who molds them, the same as before, is the good legislator. He must lay down symposium laws. These are laws that can take in hand that cheerful drinker – who is emboldened, more shameless than he should be (*ἀναισχυντότερον τοῦ δέοντος*), and unwilling to abide by the order of taking turns at listening, speaking, drinking, and singing – and make him do just the opposite. Against this shameful boldness (*εἰσιόντι τῷ μὴ καλῷ θάρρει*) that is filling him they can send in the finest opponent: fear with justice. This is the divine fear that we called “modesty” and “shame” (*αἰδῶ τε καὶ αἰσχύνῃν*) (2.671b2-d3; see Morrow 1960, 315; cf. *Republic* 3.411a–b).

Thus, a properly supervised symposium can redevelop the elderly's evaluative judgments and affective states by getting them to engage in chorus – an activity, which when sober, they find embarrassing.

Now that the general idea is clear, let us look at the causal process in more detail. Let us start by reviewing the difficulties associated with aging. Old age, according to Plato, tends to make one crabby and despondent (2.666b–c). Because of this, the elderly do not find pleasure in participating in chorus; in fact, they find the activity to be shameful (2.665d–e). This is evidence that the elderly have a defective character to the extent that they no longer find pleasure in something good (see 2.653b–654d; 2.656a). The fact that they take a good activity to be shameful shows that their sense of shame is off-kilter.²⁴ Furthermore, this is predictive of a future bad character state: because musical education is the foundation for one's ethical development, if one no longer practices musical training, one's character will worsen (2.653b–654d).

Wine can help the elderly overcome the difficulties associated with austerity and dependency because it makes experiences more pleasurable, it intensifies the erotic and spirited passions, and it lowers one's self-control (1.645d–e, 2.671b–d). This is why the Athenian describes wine as putting fire in the soul (2.666b–c, 2.671b–d; see also *Timaeus* 60a). This state has two important effects: (1) it makes one more eager to sing and dance and (2) it makes one's character more malleable, such that musical training can improve it. The connection between (1) and (2) is clear from 2.671b–c. As Susan Meyer (2015, 327; see also 214–5) points out, earlier passages of the *Laws* describe the youthful soul as being pliable (2.664b) and fiery (2.666a), but 2.671b–c connects the two, such that ‘the condition of juvenile volatility is also a condition of plasticity, and hence of educability.’

In other words, wine cures the austerity of old age through allopathic catharsis (cf. *Sophist* 230b–e; *Phaedo* 69a–d).²⁵ Allopathic treatment consists in restoring health through medicine that contains ingredients that are opposite in nature to those that have caused the

²⁴ It seems that there are actually three different ways to understand this: (1) the elderly have too much shame, (2) the elderly do not have a sense of shame since a sense of shame involves taking pride in things that are good and being embarrassed by things that are bad, (3) the elderly have misplaced shame. This is an interesting and important issue, but for the sake of brevity I have assumed the third reading.

²⁵ For a discussion of how Plato's account of catharsis fits with Ancient medical practice see Belfiore 1986, 431–7. Belfiore argues that Plato's discussion of catharsis in the *Laws* greatly influenced Aristotle's conception of catharsis. Nonetheless, catharsis in the *Laws* is primarily allopathic (cf. *Laws* 7.790d–e; see also Linforth 1950, 158; Dodds 1951, 231n59), while Aristotle's conception of catharsis is not obviously allopathic, but might be homeopathic (*Poetics* 6.1149b24–8; *Politics* 8.6.1341b35–7.1342a15; see also Munteanu 2012, app.).

illness initially. For example, the elderly, who are plagued by a lack of passion, are given wine to excite their emotions, while the young should not be given wine because they are already excitable (2.653d–e, 2.664e, 2.666a, 2.671b–c, and 2.672b–d); instead, the young should be given something that can calm their manic movements.

To summarize, in *Laws* 2, drunkenness aids the elderly in redeveloping their evaluative judgments and affective states. Intoxication is able to do this through a complicated causal process: wine arouses the emotions and lowers inhibition; in turn, this makes individuals more eager to participate in chorus and more malleable, so that when they do participate in chorus it can reshape their character.

4. The Effects of Wine

Having explored Plato's attitude towards intoxication in both the *Republic* and the *Laws* we are now in a position to assess the similarities and differences. Both texts agree that one should not be drunk while in a position of responsibility and that it is terrible to be in a state of permanent intoxication.

There are, however, two main differences. First, in the *Republic*, intoxication is associated with softness, laziness, and looseness, while in the *Laws* it is associated with vigor, spirit, and energy. Second, intoxication in the *Republic* negatively affects the soul by promoting cowardice and intemperance, while in the *Laws* it can promote the virtues of courage and temperance. This raises the question: Did Plato change his mind about intoxication, or, are these differences merely the result of the *Laws* and the *Republic* having different focuses?

There are some obvious differences in focus between the *Laws* and the *Republic*. The *Laws* is concerned with practical matters and deals with ordinary citizens, while the *Republic* is more theoretical and deals with more idealized citizens (see Stalley 1983, chap. 2; cf. Bobonich 2002). Scholars generally cite two pieces of evidence to support this reading. First, in the *Laws*, unlike in the *Republic*, one finds detailed discussions of practical issues. Second, the Stranger refers to the polity of Magnesia as second best (*Laws* 5.739e4, 9.875d3–4), while in the *Republic* Socrates makes it clear that he is not concerned about practical limitations, but is concerned with ideals (*Republic* 5.472c4–d2). Hence, one might argue that had Plato been interested in discussing practical matters concerning ordinary people in the *Republic*, such as how to deal with old age, his account of drunkenness in the *Republic* would be very similar to his account in the *Laws*.

Nevertheless, this cannot explain why Plato's description of drunkenness is different. As I explained above, intoxication in the *Laws* is associated with youthful energy and intense passions, while in the *Republic* it is associated with the languid.²⁶ This difference cannot

²⁶ One might object that this is an exaggeration of the difference between the *Laws* and the *Republic*. One might point to *Republic* 3.411a–b in which Socrates says that music softens the soul and makes it malleable in the way that iron is softened and made malleable. One might argue that the repetition of the 'iron metaphor' at *Laws* 2.666b–c and 2.671b–d suggests that Plato has not changed his mind about the effects of intoxication. I have three responses. First, in the *Republic* passage it is music that softens the soul, whereas in the *Laws* it is wine that softens the soul (see especially 2.671b–c). Second, at *Laws* 1.645d, Plato describes wine as intensifying the spirited emotions (τοῦς θυμῶδες), while the *Republic* describes it as having the opposite effect. Third, as I explain below, Aristotle describes Socrates' view of intoxication as causing weakness.

be the result of the texts focusing on different citizens because it has to do with the nature of intoxication itself. Additionally, even though the guardians differ from the citizens of Magnesia, Plato wants both sets of citizens to be courageous and temperate; thus, it is telling that the guardians and the citizens of Magnesia train in pleasure in very different ways. In the *Republic*, the guardians train in pleasure by not being exposed to gluttony, lust, and drunkenness. After all, this is why in Books 2, 3, and 10, Socrates bans many of the traditional stories about gods, heroes, and men. In contrast, the citizens of Magnesia learn about pleasure by being exposed to vicious behaviors so that they might develop a resistance to them. For these reasons we must conclude that Plato did in fact change his mind about intoxication.

Now one might object that in Book 3 of the *Republic* Plato says that the guardians will be tested by being exposed to pleasures:

Like those who lead colts into noise and tumult to see if they're afraid, we must expose our young people to fears and pleasures, testing them more thoroughly than gold is tested by fire. If someone is hard to put under a spell . . . is a good guardian of himself and the music and poetry he has learned . . . then he is the best person both for himself and for the city. Anyone who is tested in this way as a child, youth, and adult, and always comes out of it untainted, is to be made a ruler as well as a guardian (3.413d8-414a2).

I have three responses to this objection. First, the main focus in the educative process discussed in Books 2 and 3 is mostly concerned with only exposing the guardians to virtuous examples – so that they imitate their excellence. Second, it is revealing that Plato does not include intoxication as a means by which the guardians will be tested in pleasure (see *Republic* 2.398e, 3.403e), since in the *Laws* intoxication is the true test to see if one is able to resist pleasure. Lastly, this passage demonstrates that the guardians who are candidates for being philosopher rulers will be exposed to pleasure as means of training. Nevertheless nothing in the *Republic* suggests that this training will extend to other members of the city. Hence, one reason that Socrates might not want to expose the other citizens to such pleasures is that he thinks it is obvious that it will harm them. However, in the *Laws*, all adult citizens will be exposed to pleasures as means of training, because the Athenian believes that it will help them develop virtue, which suggests that Plato has changed his mind about this issue.

If I am right about this, we are left with the following questions: Why did Plato change his mind about the effects of intoxication? And, why did he change his view about the role of drunkenness in education? I will first offer an answer to the former question, then I will consider and reject Elizabeth Belfiore's answer to the latter question.

Aristotle's *Politics* offers as clue as to why Plato might have changed his mind about the effects of intoxication. In the *Politics* Aristotle mentions that certain musical critics disapproved of Socrates' rejection of relaxed harmonies (cf. *Republic* 3.398e):

But even these [principles] are relative to age; the old, who have lost their powers, cannot very well sing the high-strung harmonies, and nature herself seems to suggest that their songs should be of the more relaxed kind. That is why the musicians too blame Socrates, and with justice, for rejecting the relaxed harmonies in education under the idea that they are intoxicating, not in the ordinary sense of intoxication (for wine rather tends to make men frenzied revelers (βααχλευτικόν)), but because they have no strength in them. (8.7.1342b19-27)

George Grote suggests that this criticism might be why Plato changed his perspective on the effects of intoxication in the *Laws*.

[The musical critics] affirmed that drunkenness was exciting and stimulating, – not relaxing nor favourable to languor and heaviness: that the effeminate musical modes were not congenial to drunkenness. When we read the Treatise De Legibus, we observe that Plato altered his opinion respecting μέθρη, and had come round to agree with these musical critics. He treats μέθρη as exciting and stimulating, not relaxing and indolent; he even applies it as a positive stimulus to wind up the Elders. (2010, 328n1)

I think Grote's suggestion might be the best answer that we can find.²⁷ Thus, let us turn towards the question: Why did Plato change his mind about the role of intoxication in education?

5. Virtue, Health, and Training

Elizabeth Belfiore (1986) argues that Plato's discussion of intoxication in the *Laws* reveals that Plato is offering a novel account of what constitutes a virtuous soul. In order to understand Belfiore's position, we must first consider her interpretation of the *Republic*.²⁸ At *Republic* 8.558d–559d and 9.571a–572b, Plato distinguishes between necessary and unnecessary appetites.²⁹ Necessary appetites are those that are beneficial; these include things like the desire for food and water. Reason sanctions the fulfillment and pursuit of these appetites because they are required for continuous flourishing while embodied. In contrast, unnecessary appetites are those that are not required for continuous flourishing, such as the desire for gluttony, erotic lust, or extreme wealth. The pursuit of these unnecessary appetites is harmful to both the soul and the body, and because of this, reason does not sanction the pursuit and satisfaction of unnecessary appetites; in other words, they are anti-rational. Let us turn towards two examples of this.

In Book 4, Plato warns that reason must control the appetitive elements in the soul. For if reason is lax, the appetitive elements will grow 'big and strong' and 'attempt to enslave and rule' reason (4.442a7-b2). The point is that we should pursue only those desires sanctioned by reason, because if we pursue anti-rational desires, these vicious elements will become more powerful and seek to rule our soul.

In Book 6, Plato illustrates what he has in mind with a 'channeled stream' metaphor. Plato explains that 'whenever someone's desires incline strongly towards some one thing, they are weakened for other things. It is as if the stream had been diverted into another channel' (6.485d6-8). For instance, if your desires are taught to flow into the channel of learning, your desires for bodily pleasure will weaken (6.485d). Or conversely, if your desires are trained to flow to the channel of bodily pleasure, your desires for learning

²⁷ Lord (1982, 215–19) has challenged the authenticity of this passage of Aristotle. Nevertheless, since there does not seem to be any other explanations available, we must, tentatively, accept Grote's suggestion.

²⁸ Belfiore (1986) notes that her account makes heavy use of Cooper 1999, Gosling and Taylor 1982, 97–128, and Annas 1981, 128–52.

²⁹ The distinction is actually between necessary appetites, unnecessary and lawful appetites, and unnecessary and lawless appetites. However, the division between lawful unnecessary appetites and lawless unnecessary appetites is not important for the purposes of this paper.

will weaken. Belfiore (1986, p. 423) suggests that the metaphor ‘implies that just as any diversion of water into one channel deepens that channel, and thus increases the tendency of a stream to flow in that direction, so even a temporary yielding to a particular kind of desire strengthens that desire permanently and weakens opposing desires.’

Within the channeled stream metaphor we find two broad commitments about psychic health.

Psychic Health in the *Republic*

- a) *Harmony Condition*: Health and virtue are a kind of harmony or lack of strife in the soul.
- b) *Rationality Condition*: Reason should always be in control of the soul and anti-rational elements are always harmful.³⁰

The harmony condition and the rationality condition explain why Plato condemns tragedy and comedy in the *Republic* (Belfiore 1986, 244). Plato worries that when you watch tragedy, the non-reasoning part of your soul takes pleasure in pitying and grieving with characters who suffer grave misfortunes (10.606a–b). This is dangerous because ‘after feeding fat the emotion of pity it is not easy to restrain it in our own sufferings’ (10.606b5–8). Comedy and other forms imitative poetry pose the same threat by arousing anti-rational desire, which ‘nourishes and waters the elements that should be dried up and makes them rule over us, when they should be ruled, in order that we may be better and happier men instead of worse and more miserable’ (10.606d4–7; see also 10.604a–d, 10.607d).

According to Belfiore (1986), in the *Laws*, Plato rejects both the harmony condition and the rationality condition insofar as both strife and anti-rational elements are constitutive to psychic health and virtue (cf. *Timaeus* 43a–44d). Belfiore holds that in the *Laws* a ‘deficiency of anti-rational emotion can be as harmful as excess’ (1986, 421). On Belfiore’s reading, virtue and psychic health involve there being two different elements – the rational and anti-rational – warring against each other, with the rational continuously overcoming and purging the anti-rational. Hence, on Belfiore’s reading of the *Laws* we find two broad commitments about psychic health:

Psychic Health in the *Laws*

- a) *Strife Condition*: Strife is intrinsic to health and virtue.
- b) *Anti-Rationality Condition*: Anti-Rational elements are intrinsic to health and virtue.

Belfiore supports this reading in three main ways. First, she notes that the Athenian describes the disordered and mad movements of children positively, describing them as fundamental to musical education:

No creature is born having as much intelligence as it is fitting for it to have when it is grown. In that time in which it has not yet acquired the good sense proper to it, every creature is mad

³⁰ Belfiore (1986) does not use these terms, but they are implicit in her discussion. This description of psychic health is not meant to provide a full account; rather, the intent is to highlight two features of it. Further support for this interpretation is found in two passages. First, in *Republic* 4, Plato holds that just actions create and sustain psychological health, while unjust actions produce and sustain psychological disharmony (444d–445b). Second, in *Republic* 9, Plato’s account of the tyrant’s soul suggests that vicious thoughts and desires destroy reasonable thoughts and desires (573a–c).

(μαίνεται) and makes disordered noises, and as soon as it becomes active, it also makes disordered leaps. Let us remember that we said these are the sources of music and gymnastics (2.672c1-7; cf. 2.653d–e, 2.664e).

Belfiore (1986, 427) explains, ‘These elements are *anti*-rational in that they are not in themselves amenable to reason, but always oppose it. In the *Laws*, paradoxically, they contribute to a well-ordered soul by means of their opposition to order and reason.’

Second, Belfiore (1986, 428) argues that in the *Laws* strife is fundamental to the virtues of temperance and courage, while in the *Republic* these virtues are defined as a harmony, or an absence of strife. To illustrate this, Belfiore points to Book 4 of the *Republic* in which Socrates describes the common view of temperance as ‘being stronger than oneself’ as laughable (4.430e11).³¹ Temperance, according to Socrates, is not battling and winning over your more primitive desires; rather, temperance involves ‘friendship and harmony of these parts of the soul, when the ruler and the ruled both agree that reason should rule and do not fight’ (4.442c10–d1; see also 4.432a).

Belfiore (1986, 428) argues that this is not the account of virtue in the *Laws*. She argues that in the *Laws* Plato describes temperance as ‘not only as a state of health after sickness has been cured, but also as a somewhat precarious condition in which there is constant need for rehabilitation’ (cf. Barker 1960, 343; North 1966, 186–96; and Stalley 1983, 54–8). Likewise, she points out that the Athenian defines courage as ‘combat against fears and pains and also against desires and pleasures’ (6.633c8–d3). Belfiore (1986, 428) argues that ‘only someone who has to struggle continually against pleasure and desire can become perfect in *sōphrosynē*, defined not as harmony and agreement but “victory over oneself.”’³²

Third, Belfiore (1986, 428) argues that this account of health is implicit in the hydraulic metaphor of Book 6 of the *Laws*, which differs greatly from the ‘channeled stream’ metaphor of the *Republic*. At 6.773c, the Athenian explains that citizens should not marry individuals with similar characteristics, but should seek to marry people with opposite dispositions. For instance, the rich should marry the poor, those from powerful families should marry those from weak families, and those with hasty dispositions (θάττους) should marry those with slower dispositions (βραδυτέρους) (6.773c). The Stranger illustrates his point with a metaphor: ‘a city should be impure, just like a wine bowl: the wine, when poured in, is throbbing with madness, but under the punishment of another, sober god [water], it forms a noble partnership that creates a good and measured drink (6.773c7–d4).’³³ Belfiore (1986, 429) argues that the madness of wine and the soberness of water do not coexist harmoniously in the mixing bowl; rather, they battle against each other – virtue and health is produced when the madness is successfully combated.

Belfiore offers an interesting explanation; however, there are five problems with her interpretation of the *Laws*. First and foremost, at 2.682d2–4, the Stranger explicitly states

³¹ Belfiore misstates why Socrates finds this laughable. It is laughable because the same thing is both stronger and weaker than itself. In order to redeem this idea the soul must be divided into parts.

³² Belfiore (1986, 428n26) points to 1.626e2–6, 1.636a6–b6, and 1.647c7–d8.

³³ Plato’s mixing bowl metaphor is closely tied to a traditional myth in which wine, represented by the child Dionysus, is corrected by water, represented by his nurses, the Nymphs. The best known account of this myth is Athen. 11.465a: Phanodemus 325 F 12, cited by Pickard-Cambridge 1968, 6. Similar accounts of mixing wine with water are given by Diodorus Siculus 4.3.4; Dio Chrysostom 32.58; and Rufus of Ephesus in *Oeuvres* ‘Fragments extraits D’Aétius’ 75.5–8, cited by Pigeaud 1981, 498–9; see Belfiore 1986, 430–1; Wilson 2003, chap. 4.

that it is a mistake to think that a sick body that is purged of disease is superior to a body that has no need of purgation (see also 2.627e–628d, 2.643b–644b). The Athenian’s point is clear: the person who exists in perfect harmony and does not require catharsis is superior to the person who is only healthy after medical purgation. From this, we can be confident that Plato still maintains the ‘harmony condition’ in the *Laws* (see Meyer 2015, 161–163).

Belfiore (1986, p. 428) dismisses this passage arguing that the *Laws* is concerned with the ‘second best’ and thus Plato is applying a different standard of health for these less ideal citizens (see *Laws* 5.739e4, 9.875d3–4; *Republic* 5.472.c4–d2). The problem with this response, however, is that even if Plato thinks that the *Laws* deals with less than ideal citizens, it seems strange to think Plato would apply a lower standard of health for these citizens than he would for ideal citizens. Rather, it seems more reasonable that Plato would maintain the same standard of health, but would adjust his expectations for whether or not certain citizens could reach it. After all, in the *Republic*, Plato does not apply one standard of health for the philosopher rulers and another standard for the producers. Instead, the same standard of health applies to both the producers and philosophers.

Second, although it is true that Plato thinks that the manic movements and cries of the youth are the origins of music and gymnastics (2.672c–d), this does not entail that these disordered movements are *intrinsic* to psychic health. The passage, instead, suggests that these manic feelings are merely *instrumental* to psychic health because they inspire one to participate in the city’s songs and dances.

Third, it is not clear that Plato defines the virtues in terms of strife in the *Laws*. Although it is true that the Athenian describes courage as ‘combat against fears and pains and also against desires and pleasures’ (1.633c8–d3), this description is misleading for two reasons. First, the primary purpose of this passage is to get Clinias and Megillus to recognize that courage is not only a matter of enduring pain, but also concerns resisting pleasures. The use of the term ‘combat’ is likely a rhetorical device to get the agreement of the Stranger’s war-loving friends (see Meyer 2015, 161–3). Second, after this passage the Athenian explains that courage is a matter of being both fearless of physical pain and death and being fearful of acting shamelessly (1.647b–c, 1.648b–c, and 1.649b–c). If courage is, in part, a matter of not fearing physical pain and death, then, strictly speaking, courage is not a matter of combating the fear of physical pain and death, because the courageous person will not fear physical pain and death. Likewise, if courage is a matter of not desiring shameful pleasures then the virtuous agent has nothing to combat against, because the courageous individual will not desire vicious pleasures – this is what it means to defeat pleasure and pain (2.647c–d, 2.655e–652a)

Fourth, Belfiore’s account does not fit with Plato’s puppet metaphor. This is damning because the Athenian introduces the puppet metaphor in Book 1 to explain how drunkenness affects the soul:

Consider each of us, living beings that we are, to be a divine puppet – whether contrived as a plaything of theirs or for some serious purpose, we do not know. But this we do know, (i) that these affections (τῶν παύθη) in us, like cords or strings, which tug at us and oppose each other towards opposite actions across the boundary where virtue is distinguished from vice. Now, as our account holds, (ii) each person should always follow one of these cords, never letting go of it and (iii) pull against the other cords: this is the golden and sacred pull of calculation, called the common law of the city. The other cords are hard and resemble a variety of things, while this one is soft since it is of gold. (iv) *With the finest pull of the law we should always cooperate*; for since

calculation is noble, but gentle rather than forceful, its pull needs helpers to assure that the golden kind within us may always (v) conquer the other kinds (1.644d7-645b1, my emphasis).

Although (i), (iii), and (v), make it clear that Plato thinks that the affections war against each other – pulling and pushing towards opposite actions – towards virtue and vice, nothing in this description suggests that this combat is fundamental to virtue. If anything, (ii) and (iv) suggest that strife is not intrinsic to virtue, but actually threatens it. Additionally, (ii), (iv), and (v), indicate that reason should always be ruling in the soul (see Meyer 2015, 161–163).

The fifth problem is that Belfiore's account neglects the role that the symposiarch plays in the symposium. Drunkenness arouses passions and temporally weakens self-control, but it does this under the supervision of a wise, sober, and self-controlled leader. It is true that from the internal perspective of the drunkard, the control of reason surrenders to the madness of wine; nonetheless, from the external perspective, reason still rules insofar as the wise symposiarch is governing the symposium. For these reasons, we must reject Belfiore's claim that the anti-rational elements and strife are intrinsic to health in the *Laws*. From this objection, we can infer that Plato maintains that from an external perspective, reason must always be in control.

Although Belfiore's account of the *Laws* is mistaken, I agree with her that in the *Republic* anti-rational desires are permanently damaging to the soul, while in the *Laws* they are not. However, it is a mistake to conclude from this that Plato changed his mind about what constitutes health and virtue. Instead, what we should conclude from this is that Plato altered his view about how to bring about and sustain health and virtue. In the *Laws*, anti-rational desires can aid the development of health and virtue, while in the *Republic*, they cannot.³⁴ More precisely, in the *Laws* we find the following account of psychic health:

Revised Account of Psychic Health in the *Laws*

- a) *Harmony Condition*: Health and virtue are a kind of harmony or lack of strife in the soul.
- b) *External Rationality Condition*: Externally, reason should always be in control of the soul.
- c) *Internal Anti-Rationality Condition*: Internally, anti-rational desires can be instrumental to health.

Plato's adoption of the 'internal anti-rational condition' in the *Laws* and his rejection of it in the *Republic* explains why Plato would permit intoxication in the *Laws*, but forbid it in the *Republic*.

³⁴ One might object to my interpretation of the *Republic* by pointing out that Plato maintains that when men and women are no longer capable of procreation, they are turned loose from the 'rigged sexual lottery' and can have as much sex as they want (5.461b–c). I have two responses: first, nothing in Socrates' discussion at 5.461b–c suggests that there is positive value in the elderly experiencing erotic lust or irrationality. Additionally, if we take Cephalus' description of old age as a release and escape from erotic lust – the 'savage beast of a master' (1.392c) – seriously, then it is unlikely that Plato anticipates that the elderly have strong sexual desires. After all, the whole purpose behind giving older adults wine in the *Laws* is that old age has diminished their erotic and mad desires. This indicates that the reason Plato turns the elderly loose in the *Republic* has more to do with Plato thinking that the elderly will not desire sex than it does with the idea that erotic desires are instrumental to health and virtue.

6. Conclusion

In sections one through three, I argued that in the *Laws* Plato has a more positive attitude towards intoxication than he does in the *Republic*. In section four, I argued that this is not merely the result of textual differences between the *Republic* and the *Laws*, but marks a substantive shift in Plato's view of intoxication and virtue. In section five, I considered and rejected Elizabeth Belfiore's explanation that strife and the anti-rational elements are *intrinsic* to health and virtue in the *Laws* but are always damning in the *Republic*. I argued that Belfiore's account of the *Republic* is correct, but her account of the *Laws* is mistaken – the passages on drunkenness in the *Laws* only support the weaker claim that the anti-rational elements are *instrumental* to health and virtue.³⁵

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