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Playing with Intoxication: On the Cultivation of Shame and Virtue in Plato’s *Laws*

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Abstract: This paper examines Plato’s conception of shame and the role intoxication plays in cultivating it in the *Laws*. Ultimately, this paper argues that there are two accounts of shame in the *Laws*. There is a public sense of shame that is more closely tied to the rational faculties and a private sense of shame that is more closely tied to the non-rational faculties. Understanding this division between public and private shame not only informs our understanding of Plato’s moral psychology, but his political and ethical theory as well.

Keywords: Plato, Laws, shame, moral psychology

According to Herodotus, when making important decisions the Persians would deliberate while drunk. Whatever they agreed to, they would consider again the next day while sober. If they still approved of the decision, they would act on it, but if not, they would drop it. Similarly, if the Persians deliberated while sober, they would not come to a final decision until they considered the matter while drunk (*Histories* 1.133.3–4). The idea seems to be that both drunkenness and soberness provide unique insight and that the best decisions are made only after they have been considered in both states. In other words, drunkenness reveals something to us that we would not recognize while sober, and vice versa. Unfortunately, Herodotus does not provide a detailed account of how drunken- ness and soberness can work together to improve our lives.

Nonetheless, Plato does provide such an account in the *Laws*.1 Here, the Athenian Stranger argues that intoxication (*methē*) can help citizens cultivate a proper sense of shame. This is a rather interesting claim, especially since it is made by a philosopher who believes that we should live a life governed by

1 Translations of Book 1 and 2 of the *Laws* are from Meyer (2015) with minor modifications, while translations of all other Books of the *Laws* are my own, but I have referenced Pangle (1988) and Saunders (1970). References to Plato’s other works follow the translations in Cooper and Hutchinson (1997) with some alterations. The Greek follows Burnet (1900–1907). Translations of the *Rhetoric* follow Roberts (1985) with modifications.

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reason. However, Plato’s discussion of intoxication and its relationship to shame have received little philosophical attention. The goal of this paper is to fill this gap. In doing so, I will argue that Plato has two conceptions of shame. There is a public sense of shame that is more closely tied to the rational faculties and a private sense of shame that is more closely tied to the non-rational faculties.2 Understanding this division between public and private shame not only informs our understanding of Plato’s moral psychology, but his political and ethical theory as well.

Before we begin, I need to make three points about my methodology. First, I will be focusing on Plato’s *Laws* and will only discuss other dialogues when necessary.3 Second, I will translate the Greek words *aidōs* and *aischunē* as shame. These words do not mean exactly the same thing as the English word “shame,” but the connection is often close enough to justify this translation. Additionally, these Greek terms do not always mean the same thing, but the association is close enough.4 Third, I will stay neutral, as far as possible, on the contentious issue of whether the soul in the *Laws* mirrors the tripartite theory of the *Republic*, is a bipartite theory of rational and non-rational parts, or is without parts altogether.5 If anything, the conclusions of this paper demonstrate that the Athenian’s account of moral psychology is quite complicated and nuanced.

1. This, roughly, maps on to the division between external and internal shame that is made by contemporary psychologists, see Gilbert (1998). Public shaming and honoring play a major role in the *Laws*, see especially, 1.631e-632c, 1.634a, 2.663c, 2.671e, 4.711c, 4.721d, 5.730b-731a, 5.738e, 5.742b, 6.755a, 6.762a, 6.762c, 6.773e, 6.774c, 7.784d, 7.808e, 8.841e, 9.879e, 10.881bc,

11.921d-922a, 11.926d, 12.944d-e, 12.952bc; see Cairns (1993, 376n98).

1. North (1966, 190–1) draws an interesting parallel between *erōs* in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* and drunkenness in the *Laws*. Because the focus of this paper is primarily on the *Laws*, I will not be addressing this issue. Also, Belfiore (1986; see also Grote 2010; 327–8) argues that Plato’s attitude towards drunkenness and poetry in the *Laws* is different from his attitude in the *Republic*. For my view on this issue, see Baima 2017.
2. In Pangle’s translation of the *Laws*, he chooses to translate *aidōs* as “awe” and *aischunē* as “shame” (see especially 1980, 518n55). But this forces a difference in meaning where often the context does not suggest one. For the most complete discussion of these words see Cairns (1993); see also Williams (1993, chap. 4).
3. Bobonich (2002, 261–4) argues that the puppet metaphor does not invoke parts of the soul, but, rather, emphasizes different forces in a unitary agent; for responses, see Gerson (2003, 265– 75); Kahn (2004); Laks (2005, 85–92); Lorenz (2006, 26n18); Sassi (2008, 132); and Kamtekar (2010, 141–3). Most scholars hold that the Athenian is partitioning the soul between the rational and non-rational, see Rees 1957, 112–6; Fortenbaugh (1975, 24); Bobonich (2002, 263–4); Sassi

(2008, 133–8); and Frede (2010, 118). For a response see Saunders (1962, 37–8) and with

qualification Meyer (2012); Wilburn (2012), (2013); and Renaut (2014).

# 1 Context

Clinias (the Cretan) and Megillus (the Spartan) believe that the purpose of government is to win wars; because of this, they hold that the primary virtue is courage (1.625c-632d, 1.638a). In fact, in Clinias’ own mind every human is in a perpetual state of conflict, even with himself (1.626e-627a). The Athenian attempts to convince his war-loving interlocutors that we fight wars not for the sake of war itself, but for the sake of peace and the goods that come from peace (1.628c-e). Because the fundamental goal of society is not simply to win wars, the government should not focus only on developing courageous citizens, but, rather, should develop wisdom, moderation, and justice in addition to courage in the citizens (1.630d-631b).

This leads to an examination of the Dorians’ educational system (1.632d- 633a). Megillus discusses the various means by which the Spartans are trained to cultivate courage. The Spartan’s educational method primarily takes the form of exposing citizens to what they fear and consider painful, so that they can develop a resistance to pain and overcome fear (1.633b-c). For example, during the *agōgē*, a rigorous training regimen, boys were beaten and made to sleep without bedding in winter so that they might learn to endure difficult and painful situations (1.633b-c). As far as the Athenian is concerned, however, these practices will never develop complete courage, because courage is not simply a matter of battling against fears and pains, but also opposes “yearnings [*pothous*] and pleasures, and certain terrible seductive flatteries that can melt the spiritedness [*thumous*] of those who consider themselves highly dignified [*semnōn*]” (1.633c8-d3).

Now that we see that courage (*andreia*) involves resisting both pains and pleasures, the Spartan’s educational system appears inconsistent. On the one hand, the Spartans believe that citizens learn to overcome pain and fear through exposure; but, on the other hand, they believe that citizens learn to resist pleasure though abstinence. The Athenian asserts that the Spartan lawgiver should have thought the same thing about pleasure and pain; he should have said:

If our citizens grow up without experience of the greatest pleasures, they will have no practice at enduring in the face of pleasures and refusing to be compelled into shameful [*aischrōn*] conduct.6 Their softness of spirit [*glukuthumias*] in the face of pleasures will subject

6 *Aischros* and its cognates have an aesthetic component and these words can simply mean “ugly.” However, these words can also mean ugly in the sense of disgraceful or shameful. That is, they can refer to an activity or performance that one ought to feel ashamed of (see Cairns

them to the same fate as those who are defeated by fears [see 1.635a-b], only their enslave- ment will be different and more shameful [*aischiō*], since it will be to men who are both able to endure in the face of pleasures and also well versed in matters of pleasure—utterly bad people, some of them. Our citizen’s souls will be slave in one respect and free in another, unworthy of being called courageous and free without qualification. (1.635c5-d5)

Clinias and Megillus are skeptical, so the Athenian proposes that they examine moderation (*sōphrosunē*) and how it might be cultivated. Megillus is uncertain how Spartans train to cultivate moderation, but he suggests that it has to do with gymnastics and common meals (1.636a; see also *Politics* 2.9.1271a30-10.1272a20; Pangle 1988; 379; Morrow 1960; 389–98). The conversation quickly turns ugly. The Athenian says that these practices are the cause of the Dorians’ reputation for unnatural sexual activities (such as pederasty and homosexuality) and the vicious pursuit of pleasure (1.636b-e).7 Megillus defends Sparta, arguing that their practices “with regard to pleasures are the finest in all the world” (1.636e9-a2). He boasts that the Spartans do not hold drinking parties and they would beat any drunkard they encountered, even during the festival of Dionysus (1.637a-b; see *Minos* 320a; Morrow 1960, 371n255).

There are two insights that this context illuminates; one lesson being conceptual, the other being educational. The conceptual lesson is that courage amounts to resisting pain and fear, as well as pleasure and yearnings. Accordingly, the Dorians are making a mistake in their belief that courage only amounts to the former. However, the Dorians are not wrong about every- thing; they are right that by exposing citizens to pain and making them confront their fears, they will be able to overcome pain and fear. This allows citizens to pursue excellence even if they recognize that something might pain them or cause them death. However, the Dorians train incorrectly with respect

1993, 60). For example, in Book 2 of the *Iliad* it is *aischron* to be at war for a long time and to have nothing to show for it when one returns home (298) and failure in war is *aischros* even for future generations (119–22). Thus, even though the Athenian is not using *aidōs* or *aischunē*, the relation between *aischros* and these terms is close since it is one’s sense of shame or honor that allows one to recognize disgraceful and honorable things.

7 The Greeks accused the Cretans of being the creators of the myth of Ganymede, which is a story about pederasty (see 1.636d). The Athenian is suggesting that the all-male common meals actually lends itself to these activities (see Percy 1996). Note also, that in the *Republic*, timocratic constitutions and character-types (i. e., Spartans and Cretans 8.544c, 8.545a) act honor- ably in public, but privately seek pleasure and wealth (see especially 8.547e-858c and 8.551a). This is largely a result of timocracies only focusing on war and not on musical education (8.546d ff.) which is the same lesson the Athenian is trying to teach his friends in the *Laws*; see also Plutarch *Lycurgus* 15.8.

to pleasure. Instead of exposing citizens to pleasure, as they do with pain, they abstain from pleasure completely. This, nonetheless, has the opposite of the intended effect. Abstaining from pleasure causes citizens to engage in unnatural and excessive sexual behavior in private. The Athenian wants the Dorians to expose their citizens to pleasure as they do with pain—and this is where intoxication comes into play. However, before we examine how this is sup- posed to work, we need to detour through the Athenian’s account of moral psychology.

# 2 Moral Psychology and Shame

In order to grasp Plato’s account of moral psychology in the *Laws*, we need to examine two key passages in Book 1:

[Every person has] two opposite and witless advisors [*aphrone sumboulō*], which we call pleasure and pain … Besides these two, we have opinions about the future, whose general name is ‘anticipation’ [*elpis*] and whose specific names are ‘fear’ in anticipation of pain, and ‘daring’ [*tharros*] in anticipation of its opposite. And against all of these we have ‘calculation’ [*logismos*] as to which of them is better or worse. When this becomes the common view of a city, it is called ‘law.’ (1.644b–d3)

In this account, we find three types of inputs in the soul: (1) hedonic forces, (2) anticipations, and (3) calculation. Hedonic forces consist of pleasure and pain, which are “witless advisors” (*aphrone sumboulō*). Elsewhere in the *Laws* (1.630b, 5.733e, and 5.734c-d), Plato uses *aphrone* to mean “foolish.” Hence, Plato’s point is that pleasure and pain are not reliable guides to how we should behave. However, this does not exhaust what he means by this, since anticipations (*elpis*) can also be unreliable guides and the Athenian is distinguishing anticipations from hedonic forces. Allow me to explain.

Anticipations (*elpis*) involve beliefs about the future with some sort of attitudinal response. When one anticipates that *X* will be pleasurable, one believes that the future experience, *X*, will be pleasurable and has a particular pro-attitude with respect to *X*, this “anticipation” is called “daring” (*tharros*). In contrast, when one anticipates that *X* will be painful, one believes that the future experience, *X*, will be painful and has a particular con-attitude with respect to *X*, this “anticipation” is called “fear” (see *Laches* 191d). In other words, anticipations are emotions that involve propositional content relating to future experiences. It is clear from the *Laws* that some fears (such as the fear of death) and some daring (such as the fearless pursuit of bodily appetites) can misguide us.

Hence, these emotions can be unreliable in the same way as hedonic forces. This is further supported by a passage in the *Timaeus* that closely mirrors Plato’s discussion in the *Laws*:

… first of all pleasure, evil’s greatest lure, then pains that drive us away from the good, and further those witless advisors [*aphrone sumboulō*], daring [*tharros*] and fear [*phobon*], as well as anger [*thumon*], hard to assuage, and hope [*elpida*], easily led astray … (69d1- 4)

This passage suggests that daring and fear are both “witless advisors” because they are unreliable guides, which can lead us away from virtue and towards vice.

If both anticipations and hedonic forces are “witless advisors,” then it would seem that the key difference between them lies in the fact that anticipations are intentional states about the future and hedonic forces are not. Hedonic forces, instead, are raw feelings that propel or retract us. As suggested by the passage in the *Timaeus*, we are naturally drawn to pleasure and adverse to pain. Thus, these hedonic forces relate to fear and daring in that they are the ends which we fear and desire.

Even though fear and daring are anticipations of pain and pleasure, experi- encing these emotions *is* painful and pleasurable, respectfully. A passage from the *Philebus* illuminates this:

But now accept also the anticipation [*prosdokēma*] by the soul itself of these two kinds of experiences [i.e., pleasure and pain]; the anticipation [*to elpizomenon*] before the actual pleasure will be pleasant and comforting [*tharraleon*], while the anticipation of pain will be painful and frightening. (32b9-c2; see Meyer 2012, 361-2)

For example, if in the middle of surfing in San Diego, I see what appears to be a shark, I will experience great fear, anticipating terrible things, and this anticipa- tion *itself* will be painful.

The third input in the soul is calculation, which weighs the various hedonic forces and anticipations, and comes to a decision about which is better and worse. Calculation clearly has the greatest amount of cognitive abilities and rationality. In the city, the agreement that some pleasures, pains, fears, and daring are better and some are worse is the law.

The Athenian elucidates what he has in mind with a puppet metaphor:

Consider each of us, living beings that we are, to be a puppet of the gods [*thauma theion*]—whether contrived as a plaything of theirs or for some serious purpose, we do not know. What we do know is that these forces [*ta pathē*] in us are 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, each person should always follow one of these cords, never letting go of it and pull against the other cords: this is the golden and sacred pull of calculation [*logismou*], called the common law of the city. The other cords are hard [*sklēras*] and iron [*sidēras*] and resemble a variety of things, while this one is soft [*malakēn*] since it is of gold. With the finest pull of the law we should always cooperate; for since calculation [*logismou*] is noble [*kalou*], but gentle [*praiou*] rather than forceful [*biaiou*], its pull needs helpers to assure that the golden kind [*genos*] within us may always conquer the other kinds. (1.644d7-645b1)

In this metaphor, we see that hedonic forces and anticipations are made of iron and resemble a variety of things. Being iron, they are hard and pull violently. This should be understood as meaning that they are a strong source of motivation and influence on an agent (see Bobonich 2002, 264).8 The myth also informs our account of “calculation.” We are told that calculation is golden, sacred, and noble (*kalos*), and that we should always follow it. This tells us that calculation does not simply amount to means-end reasoning, since instrumental rationality is compatible with vicious goals which are in no way sacred, golden, and noble. Hence, the golden cord in us aims at things that are good; in the city, the adoption of these principles is called “law.” However, because calculation is soft, it is a weak source of motivation. If it is not in harmony with the iron cords, it can be easily defeated by the more powerful drives of pain, pleasure, fear, and daring.

Later in Book 1, the Athenian elaborates on his account of fear and daring. He explains that there are “two roughly opposing kinds of fear” (1.646e3-5): “the fear of bad things when we expect them to happen to us” (1.646e7-8) and the “fear for our reputation, believing that people will think badly of us if we do or say something that is ignoble [*mē kalōn*]” (1.646e10- 11). The latter type of fear is called shame (*aischunē* 1.647a11; *aidōs* 1.647a10; cf. *Euthyphro* 12a-c). Shame can oppose both pain and fear (see *Iliad* 15.655– 8; *Apology* 28d) as well as pleasure and daring (1.647a); thus, it is the missing component in the Dorians’ educational system. In contrast, shamelessness (*anaideia*) is the daring (*tharros*) and fearlessness (*aphobia*) that opposes shame (*aischunē*) and it is the “greatest evil in private and public life” (1.647e10-647b1, 1.649a4-6). The Athenian explains the importance of shame as follows:

8 In Book 2, we learn that children are the most malleable and are also mostly driven by pleasure and pain. This points to a problem with interpreting the “hardness” of the iron stings as being rigid and not-malleable (see Saunders 1970; *ad loc.*; Frede 2010, 117). If children are the most ruled by the iron cords and children are the most malleable, then the iron cords must be malleable in some respect.

Not only does this fear safeguard us in many other and important respects, but nothing is more effective, man for man, at securing victory and safety in war itself. For there are two things that secure victory—daring [*tharros*] in the face of the enemy and fear of being disgraced in front of one’s friends … So each of us needs to become both fearless [*aphbon*] and afraid [*phoberon*]. (1.647b3-c1)

From this, it is clear that shame and shamelessness are instances of anticipations since shame is described as a fear and shamelessness is described as a state of daring and fearlessness. Additionally, we now have a broader notion of fear and daring than the earlier passages suggested. At 1.644c-d, fear was the anticipation of pain, but here, fear includes anticipating bad things, which is broader than pain.9 Hence, we should understand fear to be the anticipation of something we perceive as negative, while daring is the anticipation of something we perceive as positive.

Essentially, we can break down this account as follows: we can take a pro- or-con-attitude towards the future experience, *X*, and this attitude can be appro- priate or inappropriate.10 When we have a pro-attitude and this attitude is appropriate, it is a good type of daring, which is a good type of fearlessness. When we have a pro-attitude and this attitude is inappropriate, it is a bad type of daring, which is the bad type of fearlessness called shamelessness. When we have a con-attitude and this attitude is appropriate, it is a good type of fear called shame. When we have a con-attitude and this attitude is inappropriate, it is a bad type of fear called cowardice. Of course, much more needs to be said about these concepts, but this will do for now.

With this account of moral psychology, we can begin to understand how wine affects the soul. Wine intensifies “pleasures and pains and the spirited [*thumous*] and erotic emotions [*erōtas*]” (1.645d6-8), while completely ridding one of “sense perceptions [*aisthēseis*], memories, beliefs [*doxas*], and cognitions [*phronēseis*]” (1.645e1-2).11 Accordingly, the drunk person is reduced to a child- like condition in which he has very little self-control (*egkratēs*) (1.645e-646a). The Athenian explains that this makes one more cheerful, hopeful, and con-fident in his abilities, “he is brimming with unchecked speech and freedom, in conceit of his own wisdom [*sophos*], and full of every kind of fearlessness, so

1. Unless, of course, by “pain” the Athenian means something general like negative experience and by “pleasure” the Athenian means something like positive experience (see Frede 2010, 119). In which case, the difference between the positions is mostly semantic.
2. These pro-and-con-attitudes include a component of belief. I am leaving this out in the description for the sake of brevity.
3. As Meyer (2015, 188) points out, this is in “ascending order of cognitive activities.” However we are to understand “cognitions” (*phronēseis*) in this passage, it should be conceived as something more robust than sense-perceptions, memories, and beliefs.

that there is absolutely nothing that he would hold back from saying, and likewise from doing” (1.649b2-6).

At first glance, the Athenian’s account of wine does not fit with the puppet metaphor. This is awkward since the Athenian introduced the puppet metaphor to explain how wine affects the soul. Consider three ways the description does not fit the puppet metaphor. First, the Athenian and Clinias hold that wine rids one of cognitive states (such as sense perceptions, memories, beliefs, and cognitions), while intensifying hedonic states and emotions, but earlier some emotions (such as, fear, shame, and daring) were described as having beliefs (Fortenbaugh 1975, 24); moreover, these emotions certainly rely on sense perception and memory (see Meyer 2015, 188). Furthermore, it is unclear how a drunk can think that he is wise, without having a belief. Second, there are faculties (such as memory and sense perception) and emotions (such as erotic desire and spirit/anger) that are not described in the puppet metaphor, nor do they seem to neatly fit the three-fold distinction between hedonic states, anticipations, and calculations. Third, to make matters worse, the Athenian’s account of wine also appears inconsistent in the states that it brings about. When it is first introduced at 1.645d it increases both pro-attitudes and con-attitudes, as well as happy states (pleasure) and unhappy states (anger, shame, and pain), but at 1.648b it is only described as producing pro-attitudes and happy states (such as cheerfulness).

I will address the first two problems together since they are closely related. With respect to the three-fold distinction put forth in the puppet metaphor, erotic emotions and spirited emotions are closest to anticipations (fear, daring, and shame). These experiences are all standardly grouped together as emotions with intentional content. For example, earlier I explained that fear is the emotion that emerges from the belief and attitude that a future experience is bad. Similarly, anger is often understood as the emotion that emerges from the belief and attitude that someone did something wrong (see *Rhetoric* 2.2.1378a30-2). For instance, if I believe that Cleon stole my laptop, the pain and longing for revenge that arises is anger. Likewise, we can think of erotic desire as the emotion that emerges from the belief and attitude that something is beautiful and desirable.

Because wine intensifies emotions and emotions involve belief, sense per- ception, and memory, we cannot take Clinias and the Stranger at their word that getting drunk completely rids one of these cognitive processes and states. After all, intoxication puts one in a childlike state, but surely the Athenian and Clinias think that children are capable of sense perception (see 2.653a-654a). If intox- ication makes one a child again, then it follows that the drunk still has some cognitive processes and states. The difference between children and adults is

that adults are better at complex forms of reasoning.12 Thus, intoxication does not remove all cognitive capacities, but, rather, it temporarily diminishes their abilities and thereby diminishes the role they play in motivating an agent. The golden cord is thus no longer able to direct the iron cords, which explains why the Athenian describes the drunk as both lacking self-control and having intense hedonic and emotional experiences (cf. Meyer 2015, 182).

If wine diminishes one’s cognitive abilities, then it must affect one’s emo- tions in some way since these rely on cognitions such as sense perception and belief formation. However, because one of the benefits of using intoxication is that it reveals one’s non-rational states (1.649a-650b), it cannot be the case that wine significantly alters the evaluative content of one’s non-rational states since this would involve changing one’s state as opposed to exposing it. For example, if I am truly afraid of dogs, getting drunk cannot erase my fear of dogs (unless that fear is somehow tied to my self-control), since this would violate the Athenian’s claim that wine reveals one’s non-rational states.13 However, drunkenness can make me unable to pick out instances of dogs reliably; so, I might fear a trash can, thinking that it is a dog.

Let us turn towards the third problem: at 1.645d intoxication appears to increase both pro-attitudes and con-attitudes, as well as happy states (pleasure) and unhappy states (anger, shame, and pain), but at 1.648b it is only described as giving one pro-attitudes and happy states (such as cheerfulness). We can reconcile these ideas by thinking of wine as exaggerating one’s non-rational states by releasing them from the influence of the golden cord. Hence, if one is sad, this feeling of sadness will be intensified; furthermore, because one’s self-control is limited, these feelings will be displayed in public. Moreover, because the drunk’s cognitive abilities are limited, it is easier for one to manipulate the situation so as to test one’s non-rational states. For example, if I want to test whether you are afraid of dogs, I can get you drunk and expose you to sounds and sights that are dog-like and see how you react.

1. We can infer this from a number of things. First, the elders are in charge of governmental policies and the young are not. Presumably, this has to do with the rational abilities that the elderly have and that the young lack. Second, at 2.653a-c (see also *Republic* 3.401e-402a), Plato tells us that the young are incapable of understanding why certain behaviors are correct or incorrect and that some older individuals are lucky to have wisdom and stable true opinions. We can infer from this that the elderly have a greater capacity to reason than the young.
2. My point is that wine cannot simultaneously reveal one’s values, while radically changing them. Wine can only be said to reveal my character, if the behavior I display while drunk is a true expression of my values. Of course, there is nothing inconsistent with wine changing my values over time.

# 3 The Benefits of Wine

Now that we have a basic grasp of how wine affects the soul, we can discuss the benefits of wine in more detail. As I suggested above, one benefit of wine is that it reveals one’s non-rational states. The Athenian explains:

Suppose we wanted to put to the test an ill-tempered and savage soul, prone to all kinds of wrongdoing. Would it be more dangerous to do so by entering into a business deal with the man and exposing oneself to the attendant risks, or by keeping company with him at a festival of Dionysus? The same goes for testing a soul in thrall to sexual passion by entrusting to its care our own daughters, sons, and wives. We would be endangering what is most precious to us in order to discern the soul’s character. (1.649e2-650a5; see also 1.650b)

The idea here is twofold. First, many people overestimate their character traits— they believe that they will not cheat on their spouse or their taxes, but when the opportunity presents itself, they do. That is, our emotions and desires are hidden from us (1.633c-d). Many of us think we are virtuous simply because we have never been tested; in other words, we appear virtuous because of luck (see *Meno* 89c-100a; Perin 2012).14 Now just as the Socratic elenchus can make us confront our ignorance and inspire us to search for knowledge (see Benson 2015, 31), drunkenness can make us confront our defective non-rational states and moti- vate us to improve them.15 Second, some people are aware that they are vicious, but they are good at concealing their viciousness. Hence, the Athenian’s use of intoxication is similar to a Milgram Experiment or a public display of giving someone the Ring of Gyges (1.649d-1.650b; see Stalley 1983, 124).16 It is often thought that in the *Laws* a person’s “true self is identified with his cognitive capacities (i. e. that part of him which knows and believes)” (Stalley 1983, 46). However, the Athenian’s account of drunkenness suggests that one’s non- rational states are an important part of who one is—they are an essential component of what defines one’s character and personality.

1. This is supported by a large amount of research in social-psychology, which suggests that our emotions, desires, and reasons for acting are oftentimes opaque. For a philosophical discussion of this research, see Doris (2015).
2. In *Beyond Good and Evil* section 295, Nietzsche comes very close to comparing Dionysus to Socrates. See Bobonich (2002, 349); Brickhouse and Smith (2015, 22–6) for an interesting connection between elenchus and shame; see also *Apology* 293-30a; *Republic* 1.350c.
3. Consider the sixth century BCE lyric poet Alcaeus who writes, “wine is a mirror for humankind” (104 Diehl = 333 Voigt). The basic idea beyond this phrase is common to the Greeks and other cultures, see, for example, Aeschylus fr. 393 TrGF vol.3; Herodotus *Histories* 1.133.3–4; Plato *Symposium* 217e; *Protagoras* 347c-e; Theocritus *Idylls* 29.1; see also Wilson 2003, chap. 4); Wildberg (2011, 221–4); Murray (2013, 113).

Not only does intoxication reveal our non-rational states, but it also aids us in cultivating shame and virtue. Now as I discussed previously, the Dorians developed a resistance to pain and fear by being exposed to it. Anyone who acted like a coward in such situations would be chastised, while those who performed bravely would be honored (1.648b-c). Intoxication provides the same opportunity with respect to pleasure and daring (1.648d, 1.649c-650b).17

The text leaves it to our imagination as to how exactly this is supposed to work, but there is enough content to flesh out a rough image of this practice. Let us start with Sparta’s training in the resistance to pain and fear, since we have actual examples of this in the text. Before training, a Spartan boy might be afraid to box, fearing the pain of getting punched and beaten. As a means to overcome this fear, the boy is compelled to box. In fighting, the boy will feel pain when he gets hit, but with experience, the pain will become less intense. Additionally, the fear of this pain will also diminish, since the boy has experienced it and has been shamed and encouraged into facing it properly (see Meyer 2015, 194).18

Let us now apply this same method of training to pleasure and daring. There are experiences and activities that we should not find pleasurable nor should we be eager to experience. By exposing citizens to these experiences and praising and blaming their behavior, they will no longer find these behaviors pleasurable and be eager to experience them; rather, they will find them painful and shameful. For example, according to the Athenian, we should not take pleasure in buffoonery, the accumulation of wealth, nor unnatural sexual activities (i. e., homosexuality and excessive sex). Instead of abstaining from these vicious activates completely, citizens need some exposure to them, so that they will cultivate the ability to resist these behaviors.

However, this is problematic because it suggests that the citizens should engage directly in vicious activities, which cannot be the Athenian’s point, for he says,

1. Grote (2010, 318) argues that the *Symposium* displays Socrates’ self-control and that this developed, “not because he keeps out of the way of temptation and seduction” but because “he is frequently exposed to situations of a tempting character, and is always found superior to them.”
2. One might think this is inconsistent with the claim in Book 7.789a ff. in which the Athenian recommends that infants should always be carried by their nurses so they avoid getting hurt and experiencing pain. Given the Athenian’s recommendation that we must face certain pains and pleasures to learn to endure them, we might expect him to recommend that infants should face pain. However, it is clear from the Athenian’s discussion that how one trains and develops virtue depends on one’s age. So, we should not expect the education of infants to be the same as toddlers and adults.

So it is in the presence of things that naturally make us especially daring [*tharraleoi*] and bold [*thraseis*] that it seems we must practice at *not* being shameless [*anaischuntous*] and full of audacity [*thrasutētos*], but rather afraid of daring to say, undergo, or do anything shameful [*aischron*] at all. (1.649c7-d2, my emphasis; see also 1.648c)

This passages demonstrates that the primary intention of the exercise is not to have trainees engage in vicious activities directly. Rather, the intention is to put trainees near situations that tempt them to experience pleasure from such vicious activities. Other passages from the *Laws* confirm this. For example, in Book 2 we learn that certain songs, sounds, and dances reflect certain character types (see especially 2.654a ff.). The Athenian wants the citizens to learn to take pleasure in noble choral performances and be pained by vicious ones (1.653a ff., 2.654). Readers familiar with the *Republic* would expect that this would lead to the expulsion of all vicious forms of music and dance (see especially *Republic* 2–3 and 10), but this is not the case in the *Laws*. Although the Athenian comes very close to this position (see especially 2.656e-657a; 7.812a-813a), he holds that vicious forms of art play a special role:

Now anyone who is to become wise [*phronimos*] will find it impossible to understand the serious side of things in isolation from their ridiculous aspect, or indeed appreciate any- thing at all except in the light of its opposite. But if we intend to acquire virtue even on a small scale, we can’t be serious and comic too, and this is precisely why we must learn to recognize buffoonery, to avoid being trapped by our ignorance of it into doing or saying anything ridiculous when there’s no call for it. Such imitation must be left to slaves and hired foreigners … (7.816e1-6; cf. *Republic* 3.408d-e, 10.606c)

There are two important takeaways from this passage. First, this passage upholds the lesson from Book 1 that experiencing vicious activities is important in order to become virtuous. Second, we learn that citizens should not imitate these vicious activities directly (this should be left to slaves and hired foreigners). Instead, citizens should experience them indirectly as audience members with the hope that they not only will become familiar with these arts, but that they will also cultivate negative feelings towards them (see 2.654c-d).

Although I can only speculate on the specific details, this passage suggests that training and testing with intoxication might include things like being drunk and watching a slave or foreigner perform a comedy.19 If citizens laugh, the

1. Apparently, the Spartans actually practiced something similar. According to Paul Cartledge (2004, 98), the adult Spartans forced the helots, a class of state-owned serfs, to get extremely drunk in order to teach the Spartan youth how they should not behave; see also Murray (2013, 114). The Athenian’s method differs, however, in that by being drunk and witnessing others behave poorly, one trains one’s non-rational states, as opposed to one’s rational and cognitive states, which are developed when sober.

wise, sober, and experienced leader of the symposium will correct their behavior and if they do not laugh, the leader will praise their behavior (1.640a-641d; 1.649c-650b; see Benardete 2000, 38).20 To be clear, although the wine-induced battle against shamelessness involves observing vicious character types, the observer is also a performer. When she reacts appropriately to the vicious character types, she is performing nobly, when she fails (e. g., laughing at buffoonery), she performs ignobly. Another likely form of testing is to engage in conversation during the symposium, in which citizens are expressing their evaluative commitments honestly.

The account of shame put forth in Book 1 is fairly anemic, but we do have some resources to add substance to the description. As we have seen, shame is the fear of disgrace and we can develop shame by feeling disgrace in front of others. This makes it seem that shame is merely the fear of external sanctions, but as Daniel Cairns points out “the creation of a sense of *aidōs* which can withstand the influence of alcohol also suggests the acquisition of an instinctive disposition towards self-control” (1993, 347–8). This idea is supported by the fact that the Athenian wants people to start off training to resist fear and shamelessness in isolation (1.648c-e).21 Training in isolation can only be effective if the feelings of disgrace are in some sense internalized and not merely the fear of being caught acting inappropriately while in public.22 What this demonstrates is that shame is not a fear of punishment or reproach—although it can coincide with these fears—shame, instead, expresses deeper evaluative commitments.

Consider an example. I might fear getting caught stealing because I will go to prison or be yelled at by a shop-owner. If these fears are the result of simply disliking the confines of prison or the loud noises of yelling, then these fears are not instances shame, since these fears are not bound up with a deep evaluative commitment. To be sure, these fears do express evaluations, such as the dislike of confinement and stress, but these are not character-defining commitments. Now, I might also fear getting caught stealing because I will not live up to the

1. There is an interesting connection here with so called “mixed” pleasures in the *Philebus*. For instance, Austin (2012) argues that the mixed pleasure of philosophically refuting fools is part of the best human life.
2. In this part of the text, the Stranger is explicitly drawing an analogy between training to resist fear and training to resist fearlessness; thus, we can safely assume that he also intends individuals to train in resisting shamelessness on their own.
3. Salem (2013), Benardete (2000, 50), and Pangle (1988, 403) argue that the Athenian’s argument has made Clinias and Megillus metaphorically drunk at the end of Book 1. This is an interesting suggestion, but it is difficult to reconcile with the fact that the Athenian is rather abrasive with his interlocutors and the symposium is supposed to be peaceful.

standards I have set for myself or the standards of people who I respect. This is shame. The value of wine is that it can lift the fear of external sanctions, which normally inhibit us from illicit behavior while sober, thereby leaving us exposed. If we have a proper sense of shame, we will behave properly, if not, we will behave improperly. The details of this account will become clearer in the sections that follow.

# 4 The Limits of Shame

If Book 1 emphasizes the importance of shame, Book 2 exposes its limits. We can isolate two general limitations of shame in Book 2: (1) it is possible to find something shameful and to still think the activity is beneficial and pleasant and (2) it is possible to consider good educational behaviors shameful.

We find (1) in a part of Book 2 that closely resembles Socrates’ discussion with Polus in the *Gorgias* (474c-475e; see also *Republic* 5.457b-4; Hobbs 2000, 221). In this part of the text, the Athenian asks whether injustice causes unhap- piness (2.661e1-4) to which Clinias (who is speaking for both himself and Megillus) responds, “No” (2.661e5). The Athenian adjusts his strategy by asking whether injustices cause one to live shamefully (*aischrōs*) (2.662a2-3) to which Clinias agrees (662a4). Now that the Athenian has Clinias’ agreement that the unjust life is shameful, he asks Clinias if this life causes one to live badly (*kakōs*) (2.662a5), which Clinias denies (2.662a6). The Athenian follows this up by asking if this life causes one to live unpleasantly (*aēdōs*) and not beneficially (*mē sumpherontōs*) (2.662a7). Clinias responds, “How could we possibly concede this further point?” (662a8). The Athenian replies, “How indeed, my friends? We are so badly out of tune with one another that it would take a god to bring us into agreement” (2.662b1-2).

Eventually, the Athenian gets Clinias to agree that “at least as far as the present argument goes” the “unjust life is not only more shameful [*aischiō*] and more depraved [*mochthēroteron*], but also in truth more unpleasant [*aēdesteron*] than the just and pious life” (2.663d2-5). This is hardly a vic- tory for the Athenian. Clinias and Megillus lack the philosophical aptitude to stand up to the Athenian’s rhetorical skills—getting their agreement was a foregone conclusion. However, their reluctant acceptance scarcely signals concord.

Indeed, this points to one of the main lessons of Book 2: virtue involves a harmony between one’s evaluative judgments and feelings:

When we are children, the first sensations we experience are pleasure and pain, and it is in our pleasures and pains that virtue and vice first develop in our souls. By the time we are old, we are lucky if we have also developed wisdom [*phronēsin*] and stable true opinions [*alētheis doxas bebaious*], for these goods and all that they involve complete a person, but it is the virtue that first develops in children that I am calling education. If pleasure and liking and pain and hatred develop correctly in our souls when we are not yet able to grasp the account [*logon*], and when we do grasp the account they agree with it because they have been correctly trained by appropriate habits [*ethōn*], this agreement [*sumphōnia*] is virtue in its entirety. (2.653a5-c4; see also *Republic* 3.401e-402a; *NE* 1.4.1095b)

In this passage we see that the Athenian is differentiating between feelings (pleasure, pain, liking, and hating) and evaluative judgments about those feel- ings and the objects of their relation.23 Complete virtue involves having these states agree with each other so that we have the appropriate feelings towards certain objects and we understand why these feelings are appropriate given the nature of the objects.24 However, the foundation of education merely involves sensing that what is ugly is ugly and being pained by it and sensing what is beautiful is beautiful and taking pleasure in it. In other words, the bedrock of moral education involves experiencing the appropriate feelings (2.654c-d).

Clinias’ and Megillus’ failing is largely a result of not receiving the proper “musical” education during their childhood (see Benardete 2000; 63; Pangle 1988; 406–414; Meyer 2015; 262), because it is through musical education that we cultivate appropriate feelings and correct evaluative judgments (see espe- cially 2.653c-654a). Children are particularly receptive to song and dance because they have a fiery (*diapuros*) nature, they lack intelligence, and they are incapable of remaining calm (2.653d-e, 2.664e, 2.666a, 2.671b-c, and 2.672c). With the help of the Muses, Apollo, and Dionysus, order can be brought to children’s manic movements and sounds (2.653d-654a). Through organized and systematic choral performances, the wild movements of children can become fine and they will not only learn to recognize that beautiful things are beautiful and that ugly things are ugly, but they will cultivate the appropriate feelings with respect to these things (2.653b-654d).

The Chorus of Dionysus, a group of elderly and esteemed citizens, will be in charge of regulating the music; their age and wisdom is what gives them authority in this matter (2.665c-666d, 2.670a-671a; see also Morrow 1960, 315; *Republic* 3.409c-d). However, the Athenian believes that the elderly face a unique difficulty since they are reluctant to participate in chorus:

1. Meyer (2015, 207–8) takes liking and hating to be hedonic forces; nonetheless, it is possible that “liking” and “hating” have intentional structure similar to anger, fear, and shame.
2. The passage informs us that there are different types or degrees of evaluative judgment; for example, we can have true belief, stable true belief, or wisdom.

ATH: As a person advances in age, doesn’t he become increasingly reluctant to sing? That is, he enjoys it less and, when compelled to do it, he feels especially ashamed [*aischunoit*᾽ *mallon*]—the more so the older [*presbuteros*] and more moderate [*sōphronesteros*] he has become. Isn’t this so? (2.665d9-e3)

CL: Very much so. (2.665e4)

ATH: And he would feel even more ashamed [*mallon aischunoit*᾽] if he sang in the theatre, standing up before all kinds of people. Even worse, suppose such men had to be lean and sing on an empty stomach, like choruses who are engaged in competi- tion. Wouldn’t they find singing the height of unpleasantness and humiliation [*aēdōs te kai aischuntēlōs*], and carry out their task with no eagerness at all? (2.665e5-10)

CL: Most necessarily. (2.666a1)25

In this passage, we see the second way shame can be limited: it is possible to find good educational behavior shameful. By becoming more moderate, the elderly become more ashamed to participate in chorus, which prevents them from safeguarding their education, as well as preventing them from leading the citizens in chorus (2.665c-d).26 In other words, their moderate nature makes them feel a greater sense of shame, which in turn prevents them from acting correctly. So here, shame is preventing a good behavior.

This is reminiscent of a passage in the *Charmides* where Charmides says that because moderation (*sōphrosunē*) makes men ashamed (*aischunesthai*) and bashful (*aischuntēlon*), moderation is the same thing as shame (*aidōs*) (160e2- 3). Utilizing an example from the *Odyssey*, Socrates objects to this definition (*Charmides* 161a). When Odysseus goes to town in the form of a beggar, he is advised by his son Telemachus (via a message from the swineherd) that “shame [*aidōs*] doesn’t suit a person in need” (*Odyssey* 17.347; 17.352; Cairns 1993, 106, 373). On the supposition that virtues are supposed to always benefit their

1. Saunders (1970) and Meyer (2015) translate *mallon aischunoit*’ as “more embarrassed,” while Pangle (1988) translates it as “more ashamed.” The distinction between shame and embarrassment is not easy to decipher, but usually embarrassment is explained in terms of a feeling of disgrace applying to non-moral and accidental cases (e. g., belching in public), while shame applies to moral and voluntary cases (e. g., running away in battle). Nonetheless, the line between shame and embarrassment is blurred in the case of the elderly men. The Athenian describes them as *presbus*, which does not only mean “old,” but includes a notion of respect and importance. For citizens of this stature, it is shameful to look foolish in public.
2. Eventually, in Book 2 we learn that the elderly will sing finer music than the music sung by the other choruses (2.666d-671a; see Meyer 2015, 292). What these “finer songs” are is a little hazy. Morrow (1960, 313–5) and Saunders (1962, 10) suggest that the “singing” is really philosophical discourse. Nonetheless, we are told at 2.665c the elderly will sing the “charms” sung by the entire population and the general population will not practice philosophy.

possessor, Charmides and Socrates reject this definition (see especially *Laches*

193d; *Protagoras* 349e-350b; Cairns 1993, 373n88).

In light of this, *Laws* 665d-e is quite interesting because it appears that mod- eration *and* shame prevent one from behaving correctly.27 Of course, the elderly do not possess complete or perfected moderation (see also, 3.696b-e, 4.709e-710a; *Meno* 88a-b; Benson 2015, 162n19; *Statesman* 306b ff.). Nonetheless, the self-control (or “moderation”) that they do possess is a positive character-trait generally; after all, it is in virtue of their self-control and intelligence that they are in charge of governing the educational policies of the city. What this shows is that character- traits that can normally be beneficial, such as shame and self-control, can also be harmful in certain situations. This suggests that Plato is thinking of a complete moderation and shame as something like an Aristotelian mean between excess and deficiency (see especially 6.773c-d; Belfiore 1986, 429). To see this, we have to turn to the Athenian’s discussion of the symposium.

As I just discussed, the elderly have grown reluctant to participate in chorus, finding it shameful. The Athenian suggests that drinking festivals are the cure for this ailment. Consider two passages:

ATH: 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 [*austērotētos*] of old age. Its effect is that we are rejuvenated [*anēban*], and the soul, by forgetting its despondency of spirit [*dusthumias*], 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 [*prothumoteron*] and less ashamed [*hētton aischunomenos*] to sing chants (as we have often called them), in the pres-

ence, not of a large company of strangers, but of a small number of intimate friends? (2.666b2-c8)

ATH: 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 [*plattein*] 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 [*tharraleon*], more shameless than he should be [*anaischuntoteron tou deon- tos*], 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 ignoble daring [*eisionti tō mē kalō tharrei*] that is filling him they can send in the finest opponent: fear with justice. This

1. For Aristotle’s view of shame see especially *NE* 2.6.1107a10-26, 2.7.1108a31-1108b10, 4.9.1128b10-35; *EE* 3.7.1233b25-30; for his view of moderation see especially *NE* 2.7.1107b4-8, 3.11.1119a1-20, 7.11.1152b-14.1154b.

is the divine fear that we called ‘modesty’ and ‘shame’ [*aidō te kai aischunēn*]. (2.671b2-d3; see Morrow 1960, 315)28

We can breakdown the healing process as follows. Old age makes one more self-controlled, shameful, crabby, and despondent (2.656d-e, 2.666b-c). This makes the elderly less eager to participate in chorus, finding the activity shameful (2.665d-e). Wine can aid the elderly in overcoming their austerity and crabbiness by putting fire in their soul (see also *Timaeus* 60a), which makes experiences more pleasurable and lowers their self-control (2.671b-d). This makes the elderly more eager to sing and dance and it makes them more malleable so that when they do participate in chorus they can cultivate the appropriate feelings. This resembles the state that they were in when they were young. After all, the young are malleable (2.664), fiery (2.666a), and eager to sing and dance (2.653d-654a; 2.657d; 2.664e-665a; 2.672c and 2.6.73c-d; Belfiore 1986; see Meyer 2015; 214–5, 327). This is precisely why the Athenian believes the young should be forbidden to drink wine—for that is like pouring fire on fire (2.666a).29 In other words, the young are too unrestrained and the elderly are too restrained. Thus, the optimal condition is a mean between both extremes.

To summarize, Plato thinks that one can find something shameful and ugly, and still think it is worth pursuing. Additionally, it is possible for a sense of shame to inhibit one from performing good behaviors. We have seen that the former issue can arise from an improper education, while the latter can arise when one’s education diminishes through time. However, this is only a rough explanation of these problems; in order to understand them fully, we will have to explore Plato’s view of education in greater detail. In doing so, I will argue that what emerges is two accounts of shame: (1) a public account of shame more closely tied to the rational faculties and (2) a private account of shame more closely tied to the non-rational faculties.

1. At *Republic* 3.411a-b, Plato uses the same metaphor when he says that music softens the soul and makes it malleable in the way that iron is softened and made malleable.
2. It is clear from the discussion of drunkenness in Book 2 that the Athenian has not lost sight of the benefits discussed in Book 1 (cf. Murray 2013, 116). For example, at 2.671c-e, the Athenian explains that if a drunk becomes unduly shameless, the symposiarch will rely on the divine fear, *aidōs* and *aischunē* to correct them, which I take to mean that the leader will shame them into behaving properly. This suggests that wine can still reveal whether one has a proper sense of shame and can be used as a means for training in the cultivation of shame. Furthermore, at the end of Book 2, the Athenian reiterates the importance of cultivating mastery over pleasure as opposed to merely abstaining from it (2.673e; see also 2.672d), which was very much the lesson of Book 1.

# 5 Public and Private Shame

In Book 2, the Athenian explains that when choral performances correspond to one’s nature and training, one finds them pleasurable and calls them noble (*kala*) (2.656d-e). Similarly, when the performance runs opposite to one’s nature and training, one finds them painful and calls them disgraceful (*aischra*) (2.656e). In other words, if one’s training and nature are in harmony, one’s evaluative judgments and one’s feelings (such as, emotions, pleasure, pain, etc.) will be in harmony as well.

However, conflict can arise when one’s training is correct, but one’s nature is incorrect, or vice versa (2.656e-656a). Call these “mixed cases.” In mixed cases, one will call the choral performances “pleasant but wicked [*ponēra*]” (2.656a1-2). And

people like this, when they are in the presence of those they think wise [*phronein*], are ashamed [*aischunontai*] to move their bodies in such dances, and ashamed [*aischunontai*] to sing out their hearty declaration that these things are beautiful [*kala*], although they do enjoy doing so when they are on their own [*par hautois*]. (2.656a2-5; see Meyer 2015, 234-5)

Consider another very similar passage:

It’s just like what happens to someone who associates with bad men of wicked character and comes to enjoy and welcome their company instead of disliking them. When he condemns their wickedness it is as if he is playing a game and only dreaming of their badness. When this happens, surely it is inevitable that the person who is pleased becomes like this sort of person he enjoys, *even if he is ashamed to praise him*. (2.656b1-6, my emphasis)

These passages demonstrate two things. First, mixed cases do not simply result in a discord between one’s evaluative judgments and one’s feelings. The indivi- duals described in the cases above judge that *X* is beautiful and pleasurable, but among noble people, they find the activity shameful. This makes one afraid to perform *X* in front of them; indeed, the passage suggests that such an experience would be painful and embarrassing. This means that in mixed cases, one makes conflicting evaluative judgments *and* experiences conflicting feelings.

Second, in mixed cases there is a divergence between how one feels in private and how one feels in public. For example, among wise individuals, one is ashamed to praise certain songs and dances; however, on one’s own (or among likeminded individuals), one finds them enjoyable. Notice, that this distinction is not simply a matter of thinking that some activities by their very nature are shameful in public, but not shameful in private (see *Hippias Major* 299a). Rather, the distinction is between recognizing that a group of people take an activity to be shameful, but that you do not, except when performing it around them.

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle captures this phenomenon when he says:

And, generally, we feel no shame before those whose opinions we really look down as untrustworthy (no one feels shame before small children or animals); nor are we ashamed of the same things before intimates as before strangers, but before the former what seem genuine [*alētheian*] faults, before the latter of what seem conventional [*nomon*] ones. (2.6.1384b23-8; see also 2.4.1381b10-34; Sokolon 2013)

A close reading of the 2.665d-e demonstrates that one of the reasons that the elderly are ashamed to participate in chorus is because it is in the public.30 Indeed, one of the reasons that the drinking parties are supposed to be success- ful at getting the elderly to participate in chorus is that they are not among “a large company of strangers” but are among “a small number of intimate friends” (2.665c2-6).

We now have the beginning of more developed explanation of why shame can sometimes fail to motivate correct action. When one’s nature and training diverge, one can find *X* shameful while in public but find *X* noble in private. This is problematic for three reasons. First, in cases like these, individuals will lack psychic harmony—they will often experience conflicting feelings and make conflicting evaluative judgments. Second, in cases like these, individuals will not be able to make consistent plans. If one judges that *X* is shameful and noble and is pained and pleased by *X*, it will be difficult to direct one’s life towards a consistent goal. Third, in cases like these, shame is only going to prevent one from behaving correctly when one is being observed in public. This is because when one is not in public, one will not be pained by these behaviors and find them shameful, but will take pleasure in them and judge them noble. It is clear that the Athenian thinks that these problems will be pervasive since he thinks that one’s education tends “to slacken” and “become corrupted to a great extent over the course of human life” (2.653c7-9). This means that even the citizens with the best nature and training, will feel pulled in different ways at some point in their life.

With these ideas in mind, let us return the account of moral psychology put forth in Sections 3 and 4 so that we will have a more complete account of Plato’s view of intoxication and shame. In Sections 3 and 4, we saw that intoxication reveals one’s non-rational states by diminishing one’s cognitive abilities. As I argued, this does not mean that the drunk is incapable of cognition, but, rather, means that one’s rational faculties are weakened and thus have less of an influence.

1. Another reason that it is embarrassing seems to be because the songs are better suited for the young; see also, *Politics* 8.7.1342b18-23.

Now, we saw that when the elderly are sober and in public they judge that behavior *X* is shameful and find performing *X* painful, but when they are drunk and in private company they do not judge that behavior *X* is shameful and find performing *X* pleasurable. Since intoxication diminishes one’s cognitive abilities, this suggests that the feelings and judgements the elderly make while sober and in public are more closely connected to one’s rational faculties or are the result of the rational faculties influence. Furthermore, this suggests that the feelings they experience and the judgments they make while drunk and in private are less connected to the rational faculties, since the rational faculties have relinquished control.

Consider an example. Privately, Tom enjoys stealing laptop computers in university libraries and judges that this is a good behavior. After stealing, Tom justifies his selfish behavior to himself by maintaining that university profes- sors and students are capable of knowing that they should not leave their computers alone and they are wealthy enough to afford losing them. Call this aspect of Tom: Bad Tom. However, when Tom is attending a university lecture and the lecturer advises that everyone should be careful with their belongings because there has been several reported instances of robbery, Tom feels a sense of shame and thinks his thieving behavior is wrong. Call this aspect of Tom: Good Tom. Now my reading of Plato’s view suggests that we think of Good Tom as being more bound up with the influence of the rational faculties and that we think of Bad Tom as being more bound up with the influence of the non-rational faculties. Thus, we should expect a drunk Tom to usually be a Bad Tom.

The main difficulty that the view I am suggesting faces is that it draws a connection between two variables, but there is no way to tease them apart so as to understand their exact causal relationship. In the text we see that the follow- ing two things can affect the elderly’s judgments and feelings: (1) whether they are sober or drunk and (2) whether they are in public or in private. The text suggests that judgments that occur when sober relate to those held when in public and the judgments that occur when drunk relate to those held when in private. Nonetheless, we cannot determine for certain how each of these con- tributes to one’s overall behavior.31

Despite this limitation, the view I am proposing is both intuitively plausible and explanatorily powerful. There are four main points in its favor. First, it explains why one’s feelings and judgments about what is shameful appear to

1. For example, is the person who is drunk in public more restrained than the person who is drunk in private? Is the person sober in private less restrained than the person sober in public? On my reading of Plato, the answer to both questions seems to be yes.

shift when one is sober or drunk: when sober, one’s rational faculties are in control and thus can influence one’s feelings and judgments, when drunk, these rational faculties are restrained; thus, the feelings and judgments one expresses will appear to alter. However, these feelings and judgements are actually a part of one when one is sober, they are just suppressed by the rational faculties.

Second, it is plausible that the public sense of shame requires more cognitive abilities than the private sense of shame. The public sense of shame requires the ability to predict and anticipate how others will feel towards a behavior, which requires memory, some form of calculation, and imagination (or what psychologists call a “mind-reading”). The private sense of shame requires these faculties to a lesser degrees since it is a reflection of what you truly feel and believe.

Third, this explains why some drunk individuals act properly and why some drunk individuals do not. Individuals who have cultivated the proper non- rational states will act appropriately when drunk, while those who have not, will act inappropriately, since their rational faculties can no longer restrain them. In addition, this explains why some individuals act like different people when in public than they do when in private. For example, Socrates prided himself on being the same person in public and private and only caring about the opinion of noble people (see especially *Apology* 28b-c, 33a; *Crito* 47c-d; cf. *Republic* 10.604a; Austin 2016). On my interpretation, we should expect to find Socrates making the same evaluative judgments and experiencing the same feelings while drinking wine and completely sober, which is the depiction we find of him in the *Symposium* (see 214a).

Fourth, and finally, this interpretation helps us understand one of the strangest passages in all of Plato’s corpus (see Gonzalez 2013) and I will conclude this paper by explaining how. The citizens of Magnesia will not work menial and physically taxing jobs; instead, they will constantly participate in festivals, sacrifices, and choral performances. This, however, is problematic; oddly enough, the Athenian believes that these back-breaking and degrading jobs starve off erotic desires (8.835e). Thus, without having the citizens perform these tasks, the lawgiver will need to adopt policies so that the citizens avoid pederasty, homosexuality, and adultery (8.836a). The Athenian notes that although most of their contemporaries do not adequately respect the law, shame is able to prevent all people from having sex with some individuals who they find attractive—namely, their siblings, parents, and children (8.838a-d). Because there is complete unanimity that such acts are unholy and revolting, and such unanimity prevents the citizens from performing these acts (8.838a-d). The Athenian wants to teach the citizens

that just as incest is shameful, so is pederasty, homosexuality, and adultery (8.839a-b).

Nevertheless, the Athenian acknowledges that not every citizen will accept this policy (8.839b-e). For those reluctant citizens, training in the resistance of pleasure is especially important (8.840-b). This can be aided by telling citizens myths (8.840a-e). However, even with these additional measures, the Athenian doubts the complete compliance of every citizen:

My point is that the appetite for pleasures which is very strong and grows by being fed, can be *starved* (you remember) if the body is given plenty of hard work to distract it. We’d get much the same result if we were incapable of having sexual intercourse without feeling ashamed: our shame [*aischunēn*] would lead to infrequent indulgence, and infrequent indulgence would make the desire less compulsive. So in sexual matters our citizens ought to regard privacy—though not complete abstinence—as a decency demanded by usage and unwritten custom, and lack of privacy as disgusting [*aischron*]. (8.841a6-b5)

Francisco Gonzalez (2013, 161) accurately summarizes the new law as “do not engage in extramarital sex unless you have to, in which case restrict it to the opposite sex and keep it hidden from everyone else.”

This demonstrates that the Athenian has in mind both a public and private sense of shame. The ideal situation is one in which all citizens have a proper sense of shame in both their public and private lives. However, this is not always possible because some citizens will have defective natures. Furthermore, even the best policies, which generally help citizens cultivate proper dispositions, will have negative consequences. For instance, as we saw, the Athenian believes that a life of peaceful leisure is, on the whole, good, but it has the downside that the citizens’ sexual appetites can no longer be controlled through menial labor. Likewise, Plato believes that old age brings intelligence, experience, and self-control which will allow one to lead a city, but it also has the downside of making one too rigid and restrained. When citizens’ natures are defective or the public policies are imperfect, the Athenian believes that proper public conduct can still be salvaged through public shaming and honoring, even if this does not entirely control their private feelings.

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