

SPIRITED MOTIVATIONS, VIRTUE, & THE GOOD:  
THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF SPIRITED MOTIVATIONS AND RATIONAL BELIEFS IN PLATO'S MORAL  
PSYCHOLOGY

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Cornell University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Brianna Marie Zgurich

August 2023

© 2023 Brianna Marie Zgurich

SPIRITED MOTIVATIONS, VIRTUE, & THE GOOD:  
THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF SPIRITED MOTIVATIONS AND RATIONAL BELIEFS IN PLATO'S MORAL  
PSYCHOLOGY

Brianna Zgurich, Ph. D.

Cornell University 2023

Confidence, courage, and shame are typically agreed upon by scholars to be what Plato refers to in his middle dialogues as *spirited (thumoeidic) motivations*; i.e., strong emotional responses that are not themselves rational (i.e., not calculating about what is best), nor appetitive (i.e., about bodily objects of desire such as food, drink, and sex). This dissertation focuses on courage and shame in particular. While courage finds itself as one of Plato's four cardinal virtues (along with wisdom, moderation, and justice), shame, a particularly strong passion that can result in either virtuous or non-virtuous responses, is not quite so easy to place. Further the roles of these two motivations for virtuous action, along with their connection to reason, are not fully appreciated by scholars. I argue that we can use the psychology of Plato's final dialogue the *Laws*, and especially the famous "puppet passage", to understand what these "spirited motivations". I have found that these motivations are especially closely linked to reason—not only in following reason but also in enabling reason's best condition: wisdom. Along the way, I address some of the early and middle dialogues, arguing that the speech of the laws in the *Crito* appeals to shame (before those who share one's conception of the good), and that such shame is crucial to Socrates' *elenchus*; however, whether the *elenchus* succeeds at getting the refuted party to seek knowledge or to avoid the shame by bringing down others (as in the *Apology* and also the *Laches*) depends on the person's conception of the good. Further, I argue that the myth of the *Protagoras* depicts shame's role as reason-dependent and, for that reason, is conducive to political community.

Finally, I argue that courage in the *Republic*, understood as belief-preservation, is crucial for the development of reason's best condition: wisdom. So, using the *Laws* as a framework, I argue that we can recognize the interdependence of courage and shame with rational beliefs for virtuous action, answer questions that arise from some of the early and middle Platonic dialogues, as well as see a consistent, complex, and unique moral psychology emerge from Plato's corpus.

**Keywords:** shame, *aischunē*, *aidōs*, courage, virtue, *elenchus*, spirited motivations

## Biographical Sketch

Brianna Marie Zgurich grew up in Arizona's Phoenix area, attending Northern Arizona University (NAU) where they majored in Business, Philosophy and German language. They began the philosophy major at the end of their first semester after a thought-provoking ethics class with Luke Maring. It was, however, the way that George Rudebusch taught ancient Greek philosophy, and specifically the intricacies, symbolism, and poetic language of Plato's *Republic* that persuaded Brianna to make ancient Greek philosophy their focus. They were given the opportunity to TA ancient and modern philosophy at NAU and fell in love with teaching, specifically how the college classroom can help students develop real world skills. Philosophy, in particular, is a subject the skills of which were pertinent to every discipline and lifestyle, so they, with the support of NAU's excellent faculty (especially George Rudebusch, Jonna Vance, Julie Piering, and Christopher Griffin) decided to attend the Ph. D. program at Cornell University the fall after their graduation in 2017. At Cornell, they pursued excellence in teaching through four years as a fellow at Cornell's Center for Teaching Innovation, and they wrote a dissertation on Plato's moral psychology supervised by Rachana Kamtekar, Tad Brennan, and Scott MacDonald, just in time to walk at graduation with friends and members of their cohort in May 2023. Brianna hopes to find a job working with faculty or students, whether it is as a consultant, instructor, or advisor. They love the environment of higher education and want to work towards making it more enjoyable and inclusive for future generations of students.

*To my mentors, family, and the love of my life, Aiden, all of whom offered constant support to help me  
become the first person in my family to receive a PhD*

## Acknowledgments

I am deeply indebted to many amazing friends, scholars, teachers, and mentors in the development of this dissertation. First of all, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Rachana Kamtekar, for her nearly constant support, reassurance of my decisions and work, encouragement to communicate and interact with other scholars, and for offering for her near-encyclopedic knowledge of the views of the main contemporary scholars of Plato's moral psychology, which was indispensable for helping me recognize new research avenues for this project. I am also grateful to her for always making time for me and for expending significant time in reading and providing substantive comments on a myriad of lengthy drafts for this project. This final product would not be the same without her.

Next, I send my deepest gratitude to Scott Macdonald, who, while working with me on my A exam proposal, persuaded me to develop holistic views about Plato's philosophy, a strategy which also inspired the methodology of this dissertation. His questioning made me think more deeply about even the smallest points and to leave no gaps unfilled. He was also critical in my development of scholarly research skills such as how to efficiently locate valuable sources, manage my notes, and build a comprehensible system for my references. He has made clear to me how to continue successful research even beyond my time at Cornell.

I would also like to thank Tad Brennan for the use of his extensive library and for allowing me to pick his brain about the minutiae of the Greek language. I would also like to thank him for treating me like an equal and a colleague throughout graduate school, which always made me feel that I had something worth saying. I also value the very detailed comments provided on the draft of my dissertation which improved not only the overall form but helped me to clarify major ideas.

George Rudebusch, at Northern Arizona University, also deserves my thanks not only for his comments on early drafts, but also for his constant mentorship and support of my scholarship since

2015. I truly believe that it is because of him that I had the mental wherewithal to make it through this smiling.

Other scholars whose inspiration or support was very meaningful to me throughout my graduate career and during this project include: Julie Piering, Jonna Vance, Luke Maring, Susan Sauvé Meyer, Charles Brittain, Terrence Irwin, Emily Fletcher, and Joshua Wilburn.

I am also thankful for my friends and colleagues. Yumeng Zhang, in Cornell's department of Asian Studies, has been one of my best friends of the past two years and always has a unique and sunny outlook that helped me stay positive despite challenges. Alejandro Vesga has also been one of my closest friends since my initial visit to Cornell in 2017, and I believe we helped each other build confidence and stay on track by comparing our progress and sharing success strategies. I wish him the best as he embarks on his well-deserved future career as a professor. For other help on this project in one way or another I would like to thank Bobby Cohn, Peggy Zhu, Erin Gerber, John Proios, and Peter Osorio.

I would also like to thank the undergraduates of Cornell's Undergraduate Philosophy Club, LOGOS, especially Sophia Gottfried, Jacqueline Allen, Liam Gale, Katerina Zhuravel, Brian Alle, and Ashley Gasdow for allowing me to share my research with their club and hear unbiased feedback on the accessibility of my discussions.

I am also grateful to the audiences at Cornell's Ancient Philosophy Working Group, and the Wayne State Plato Symposium in 2021 for their comments on earlier chapters of this dissertation.

I would also like to acknowledge utterly indispensable sources of encouragement these past six years: my siblings (Brandon, Lynnae, and Emily Zgurich), step siblings (Felicia Magallanes, and Alyssa and Tony Lagana) as well as my parents (Brian Zgurich, Christine and David Lagana) my mother-in-law (Juanita Mayes) and my late father-in-law (Michael Mayes), one of my biggest supporters, who tragically

passed away just one month before my defense, and finally my grandmother Helene Schrantz, who has been a huge inspiration to me in finding the best of what life has to offer.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my loving husband and best friend of 14 years: Aiden Mayes, who joined me here in Ithaca to start our life together. He has been nothing but patient, loving, helpful, and kind throughout all these years—I do not know what I would do without him.

Thank you all again.

## Table of Contents

<b>Biographical Sketch .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Review of Literature .....</b>	<b>14</b>
i. Three influential accounts of spirited motivations .....	14
<b>Background/Research Problem (The Gap).....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Research Aims, Objectives, and Questions.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Significance.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Limitations.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Structural Outline .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Spirited Motivations in the Laws: A Framework for Reading Prior Dialogues.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Spirited Motivations .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Spirited Cords .....</b>	<b>40</b>
i. Phobos.....	47
ii. Tharros .....	51
iii. Cultivating the anticipations .....	55
iv. Who/What are reason’s helpers? .....	59
<b>The Role of Law in our Journey to Self-Control.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Chapter 2: The Laws’ Appeals to Spirited Motivations in Plato’s Crito .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Appeals to Shame in the Crito.....</b>	<b>72</b>
i. Crito’s appeal to shame.....	73
ii. Shame worth being motivated by .....	74
<b>Appeals to the Badness of a Certain Kind of Character .....</b>	<b>77</b>
iii. Avoiding confirming others’ negative preconceptions .....	79
iv. Avoiding hypocrisy and inconsistency with ideals .....	83
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Socrates’ Use of Shame in the Apology.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Plato’s Apology and Socrates’ Use of Shame .....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>The Role of Non-Rational Motivations .....</b>	<b>94</b>

<b>Brickhouse and Smith's View .....</b>	<b>100</b>
i. How shame contributes to virtue and vice .....	101
iii. Gaps in Brickhouse and Smith's view .....	111
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Examination of the Laches: Shame as a Self-Evaluative Belief .....</b>	<b>116</b>
Introduction .....	116
<b>Shame as a Negative Self-Evaluative Belief .....</b>	<b>118</b>
i. Content and self-evaluative beliefs .....	118
ii. Brickhouse and Smith's focus on content beliefs.....	125
<b>Self-Evaluative Beliefs in the Laches.....</b>	<b>131</b>
i. Laches' shame .....	131
ii. Laches' non-virtuous response to mitigate his shame .....	135
iii. Aftermath .....	142
<b>Conclusion &amp; Elenchus' Rationale .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Chapter 5: The Protagoras through Platonic Lenses: Interpreting the Myth of the Protagoras Through Plato's Later Dialogues .....</b>	<b>148</b>
Introduction.....	148
<b>The Myth .....</b>	<b>149</b>
i. Wilburn's interpretation .....	151
<b>My Interpretation: Aidōs Depends on Dikē (&amp; Vice Versa) for a Stable Society .....</b>	<b>156</b>
i. Punishment and Society.....	157
ii. Dikē as the capacity to establish law .....	162
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>Chapter 6: The Exceptional Courage of the Republic's Philosopher Ruler .....</b>	<b>172</b>
Introduction.....	172
<b>Courage as Selection Criteria .....</b>	<b>174</b>
i. The tests of courage .....	183
<b>Virtues of the Philosophers.....</b>	<b>191</b>
<b>Dialectic.....</b>	<b>195</b>
i. Motivation.....	196
ii. Goal of dialectic.....	197
<b>The Dangers of Dialectic and the Importance of Spirited Flexibility .....</b>	<b>199</b>
i. The significance of "spirited flexibility" .....	200
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>Overall Conclusion .....</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>215</b>

## List of Abbreviations

*Ap.* = *Apologia*

*Chrm.* = *Charmides*

*Cri.* = *Crito*

*Grg.* = *Gorgias*

*Hdt.* = *Herodotus*

*Hes.* = *Hesiod*

*Lach.* = *Laches*

*Leg.* = *Leges*

*Lys.* = *Lysis*

*NE* = *Nicomachean Ethics*

*Phdr.* = *Phaedrus*

*Phlb.* = *Philebus*

*Prt.* = *Protagoras*

*Rep.* = *Republic*

*Soph.* = *Sophist*

*Symp.* = *Symposium*

*Thucy.* = *Thucydides*

## Introduction

After being handed a death sentence by the Athenian jury for impiety and corrupting the youth of ancient Athens, Socrates says: “But, I have been convicted due to my lack, not of words however, but of audacity (*tolmēs*) and shamelessness (*anaischuntias*) and the willingness to say to you such things as would have been most pleasing for you all to hear” (*Apol.* 38d5-6)<sup>1,2</sup>. Rather than pandering to the crowd in an overly bold and barefaced way, Plato’s early dialogue describes Socrates as sticking to what he believed was best—even at the cost of his life. In this way, I view Socrates as defending his virtue, and his life mission, with *courage* and *shame*, the positive counterparts of audacity and shamelessness. In Plato’s final work, the *Laws*, his “Athenian citizen” continues Socrates’ mission by employing similar concepts of a special kind of fear (*aischunē*) and confidence (*tharros*) which he argues contributes to the virtue of a state’s citizens, without being proper virtues themselves.

These attitudes: confidence, certain types of fear, courage, shame, etc. are typically agreed upon by scholars to be what Plato refers to in his middle dialogues as *spirited (thumoeidic) motivations*; i.e., motivations which come associated with a strong emotional response that are typically not themselves rational (i.e., not calculating about what is best), nor appetitive (i.e., about bodily objects of desire such as food, drink, and sex). For this dissertation, I plan to focus on courage and shame in particular. While courage finds itself as one of Plato’s four cardinal virtues (the others being wisdom, moderation, and justice), shame, as a particularly strong emotional feeling that can result in either virtuous or non-virtuous consequences, is not quite so easy to place. Further the roles of these two motivations for virtuous action along with their connection to reason are not fully appreciated by scholars.

---

<sup>1</sup> ἀλλ’ ἀπορία μὲν ἐάλωκα, οὐ μέντοι λόγων, ἀλλὰ τόλμης καὶ ἀναισχυντίας καὶ τοῦ μὴ ἐθέλγειν λέγειν πρὸς ὑμᾶς τοιαῦτα οἷ’ ἂν ὑμῖν μὲν ἤδιστα ἦν ἀκούειν.

<sup>2</sup> All my original translations are accompanied by the original Greek text in a footnote.

The aim of this dissertation is to show that throughout his dialogues Plato has explained, clarified, and combined these spirited motivations with reason in interesting and complex ways to explain virtuous action. Using the *Laws* as a framework, we can recognize the interdependence of courage and shame with rational beliefs for action, answer questions that arise from some of the early and middle Platonic dialogues, as well as see a consistent and unique moral psychology emerge from Plato's corpus.

### Review of Literature

In this section, I want to emphasize that the framing of this dissertation is unique. I use Plato's latest dialogue as a framework to analyze the views of earlier dialogues. So, due to this dissertation's broad scope and original strategy, there is not a well-defined, general body of scholarly literature that can be used to introduce it. So, instead of a traditional review of literature, I will instead utilize this section to address the scholarly literature that motivated this project and will defer my other reviews of literature to the chapters to which they best correspond. Each chapter of this dissertation will review a relevant selection of scholarly literature. By doing this, the contribution of each chapter and how my conclusions are situated in scholarly discussion, will become specific and overt. Readers who are not interested in a review of the literature that motivated this project may feel free to move onto the next section.

#### i. Three influential accounts of spirited motivations

There are three influential views of spirited motivations, their function, and their relation to reason/our rational motivations. I will begin by discussing Brennan's teleological account of the spirit, whereby we can understand our spirited motivations as being the response of our rational motivations to moderate our appetites. I then look at some passages that undermine aspects of this view. The second view I discuss is that of Singpurwalla, who argues that our spirited motivations are motivated by the same concerns as reason, namely *the Good*. I also provide some problems with her view, and I end

the section by discussing the main problem I have overall with both of their views, namely that they claim it is merely coincidental that our spirited motivations line up with our rational motivations. The problem I see with these views has motivated the current project of showing a more complex interdependency between our rational beliefs and spirited motivations, because I want to show Plato and Socrates believed that our spirited motivations and rational beliefs must be connected more than just coincidentally.

Lastly, I will discuss the views of one of my contemporaries, Joshua Wilburn, who claims that *thumos* actually has two faces: a side that exhibits aggression towards one's enemies and friendliness toward one's friends. This is an expanded notion of *thumos*, when compared to the two previous views. I will not critique his view here, unlike the others, as I deal with his views more specifically in later chapters, most notably chapter 5.

*i. Brennan's view of spirit as anti-appetite*

Brennan's view of the spirited part of the soul is that spirit's function is best understood as being primarily anti-appetite. He looks at the spirited part of the soul from the perspective of the *Timaeus'* demiurge and asks the teleological question: what is the purpose of creating the spirited part of the soul? He claims: "All of its [the spirited part's] functions involve responding to and relating to appetitive souls" (Brennan 2014: 103). Brennan's first test case is the fevered city, the purpose of which is to show that in such a city, the appetites grow out of hand; for if one never saw the appetites getting out of hand, it would be unclear why the spirited part would be necessary. His view is that the spirited part serves two essential functions in a mortal individual, both critically in relation to the appetites. Spirit serves to suppress one's own appetites, which are by nature inclined toward excess, and spirit also negotiates with the appetites of others for the world's limited resources.

Spirit's characteristic good is honor, and interactions with the external world create such a good directly, but any facts about honor are dependent on facts about our sociality and embodied existence.

According to Brennan, there are no objective facts concerning a form of honor, rather any facts about honor would be determined by looking at the form of the Good instead. So, any facts about what is genuinely, objectively honorable are dependent on, and derivative from, what is genuinely and objectively good, not from any facts about honor itself. Further, whatever spirit *believes* about honor it grasps from customs and traditions of its social group (111). The reason for this is that spirit, being inherently social, has a natural affinity for the *oikeion*, or what is familiar. So, the criterion for how spirit picks out what to do is first that it is *oikeion*, and then it comes to recognize a prescription or action, because it is *oikeion*, as good. Spirit is comfortable with, and defensive of, certain things simply in virtue of having grown up with those things, and not by any sensitivity to any inherent goodness or badness of those traditions. Its exposure to certain customs and traditions establish what spirit thinks is honorable, dishonorable, good and bad, etc. This is why good rulers are important, since they will establish customs and traditions that are *actually* good, so that when spirit develops loyalty to these practices it acquires an affinity, by extension, for what is *actually* good. Brennan affirms this when he writes: “Having been raised with good customs and traditions, spirit can endorse as customary and traditional exactly the same things that reason endorses as good” (116). Thus, in the virtuous person, what spirit acknowledges as *oikeion* and is defensive over and what reason identifies as good are not necessarily the same. Instead their goals can align due to a good education, and so their alignment is coincidental on this basis, by which I mean there is nothing intrinsic to the qualities of spirit or reason that then make them align. Brennan corroborates this understanding when he says “the only way to ensure that people will act in accordance with the good, is to guarantee that there will be an extensional coincidence between the good and what is familiar to those people. This way, their spirit, moved by what is *oikeion*, will support and not oppose reason when it strives for what is good” (117).

My main objection to Brennan’s view has to do with the coincidence between what reason orders and what spirit loves. My view is that Plato thinks spirit must have some receptivity to reason

that is directly responsive to rational beliefs, rather than accepting of them due to mere familiarity. However, Brennan can respond by saying that it should be a coincidence, since if one makes the dependence of spirit on reason too close, then it is difficult to see the harmony which virtue represents. In other words, since virtue is described as a harmony, one might worry that making spirit depend on reason too closely eliminates that harmony. Brennan might further explain that the coincidence between the two is sustained by education, as education makes the coincidence a stable set of beliefs. This thought is supported where Socrates says:

He'll [the one properly educated] rightly object to what is shameful, hating it while he's still young and unable to grasp the reason, but, having been educated in this way, he will welcome the reason when it comes and recognize it easily because of its kinship with himself." (*Rep.* 401e3-402a3)<sup>3</sup>

This passage seems to suggest that it is because the individual was educated in the right things and developed this kinship when they are young that they easily accept reason, not because of any sensitivity to reason *qua* reason or *qua* relation to goodness. Rather it suggests that it is a good education that aligns one's feelings with the good. Further, while spirit is obedient to what one's reason prescribes, it does not seem to be sensitive to its rational evaluations *per se*. Exemplified by the above passage, we can see that on this view of spirit, spirit is sensitive to non-rational considerations, but that it restricts its sensitivity to those beliefs about goodness which were developed through custom and early education. So, on Brennan's view the importance of education would be highlighted by this fact of coincidence between what spirit is socialized to believe is good and what is actually good (when decided by just lawmakers/educators).

However, the *Phaedrus* in particular poses a compelling challenge for Brennan's teleological view due to Socrates' explanation of the gods' chariots. Socrates analogizes the human soul to a charioteer with winged horses. Socrates says, "The gods have horses and charioteers that are

---

<sup>3</sup> In the *Laws* at 653b1-c3, Plato also defines education by this principle of virtue being acquired through the initial routes of correctly educated pleasure and pain.

themselves all good and come from good stock besides, while everyone else has a mixture" (*Phdr.* 246a4-b1). For humans this means that they have one good, obedient horse and one rowdy, disobedient horse. The good horse corresponds to our spirited motivations and it "is an admirer of honor with temperance (*sōphrosunēs*) and shame (*aidous*); companion of true opinion (*alēthinēs doxēs*), and is directed, without blows, by *verbal commands and by reason alone*" (253d5-e1, translation slightly modified) while the other horse corresponds to our appetitive motivations and is "a companion to wild boasts and indecency, he is shaggy around the ears—deaf as a post—and just barely yields to horsewhip and goad combined" (253e3-4, translation modified). However, if the gods have two good horses, and the good horses correspond to spirit, then it seems by extension that they must have two spirited horses. What is interesting about this is that the spirited motivations here *only* have relation to reason; i.e., the charioteer. There are no appetitive motivations for them to resist, so for the gods, at the very least, their spirited motivations were established to have a relation to reason, rather than being reason's response to appetitive forces. We should also remind ourselves that most Greeks believed the gods were the physical celestial bodies and would need to move in a physical space, just like one's body does when they are driven by internal motivations. The spirited horses of the gods, I suggest, are necessary for the movement of their bodies. I believe that this is also the same in the human case: the spirited horse is required to propel the directing charioteer, regardless of the direction the appetitive horse is pulling in, such that if all the horses align, there is no resistance, and they can get to their goal quickly, but if not, then spirit will pull and strain against the appetitive horse in the direction reason prescribes. This analysis casts doubt on the claim that spirit's primary function is to monitor appetites, for it instead suggests that spirit's role is assisting reason by moving the physical body toward reason's desired action. It is only with the horses' assistance that the charioteers of the gods move around and see the forms

---

<sup>4</sup> τιμῆς ἐραστῆς μετὰ σωφροσύνης τε καὶ αἰδοῦς, καὶ ἀληθινῆς δόξης ἑταῖρος, ἄπληκτος, κελεύσματος μόνον καὶ λόγῳ ἠνιοχεῖται

and live their best life. Without these horses, they would not be mobile. For human beings too, it is the spirited horse which helps pull them in the right direction. But since the gods have two spirited horses, this seems to pose a serious counterexample to Brennan's teleological view. My teleological view, by contrast, is that the horses have a *telos* of their own, which is to move physical bodies, and that spirit's job in particular is to move in accord with reason, not coincidentally, but due to reason's pull. So, spirit just seems to serve an *extra* function in those of us with appetites, the primary job of which is to service reason in terms of executing its commands by way of physical movement.

On the picture where the connection between spirit and reason is an extensional coincidence: though spirit is pulling in the direction of reason, it is pulling that way not *because* of reason's pull but because of the extensional coincidence between what reason wants and what spirit was taught. To my mind, the connection between the two must be closer than coincidence because Plato and Socrates seem to believe that spirit derives its initial motivations and beliefs from external rational agents, laws, etc. (that must *become oikeion*, unless they believe, as I do, that there is something naturally *oikeion* about the rational), then later solidifies them through education and practice.

ii. *Singpurwalla's account of our spirited motivations being genuinely sensitive to the good*

An alternative account of one's spirit is offered by Singpurwalla, who argues that spirit does not go after what is good coincidentally as a result of its learned traditions and social norms. Rather, she argues that spirit is genuinely sensitive to the *kalon* and not just to social norms; for one's spirit is aiming for self-respect and self-worth. In other words, she can say that the "honorable" is what spirit is after (as Brennan does), but unlike Brennan she is giving spirit an independent object besides the *oikeion*, which it seems to be sensitive to *qua* something rational. According to her, living up to one's reason is exactly what will contribute to someone's self-respect and self-worth because living up to one's own reason is honorable. Insofar as one sees themselves as living up to their own ideas about how they should live, as well as the respect of others, and insofar as they publicly display their courage, strength of will and self-

control, they will be living up to their rational views. These things, on her view, are the kinds of things that are objectively honorable, so spirit, in desiring to pursue them, also pursues what is *kalon*. It is worth looking at her account in a bit more detail.

Singpurwalla derives a basic picture about what it is to be truly good and fine from Socrates' teleological account of what it is to be good and fine in *Republic* 10, where she suggests that virtue, beauty, correctness, even living creatures are related to the use for which each thing is made or naturally developed (*Rep.* 10.601d3-6). She combines this evidence with the evidence of *Republic* 1, where Socrates argues that a thing of a given kind is good when it fulfills its function (*ergon*) (1.352d10-354a5). The second essential feature of goodness is that something has an internal order that constitutes a unity that allows it to realize its particular function. So, to be truly fine has two conditions: (1) having a function/purpose/goal and (2) having all their parts or elements so ordered as to help the individual fulfill that function. The human function, she takes Socrates to believe, is reason; for in Socrates' personification of the soul, the human being is identified with the activity of the rational part, while an animal and a beast are associated with the lower parts (9.588b8-589b5). In order to be fine and honorable, one needs to live in accord with reason. The person with the ordered soul displays the kind of traits that constitute the "basis of a universal or natural class of admirable traits" (Singpurwalla 2013: 56). Because she takes such traits to be self-control and following reason, she identifies an objective class of honorable acts toward which the spirit, by aiming for esteem, can be motivated.

She claims that the evidence used by proponents of the view that spirit's conception of the fine is informed by social norms does not establish their views. These commentators take the educational program in *Republic* 2 and 3 to be mainly for the spirit, but she argues that such an education is intended for reason as well. Essentially, the problem is that if reason is also informed by the educational program, then it is not clear that spirit is not being informed by reason's understanding of the social norms. In other words, it is just as plausible that reason is informed by the social norms and spirit is then

informed by reason, as spirit being informed by the social norms directly—hence why it does not establish her opponent’s views. She acknowledges that it is true that we are deeply affected by social norms, but that there is no reason to think definitively that the spirit is solely or primarily affected by them, for reason is *also* affected by them. The second bit of evidence is about spirit’s concern with honor. Commentators often see spirit’s concern with honor as being concerned with norms, since if a spirited person wants honor, they must conform to the norms that will win them praise. But she argues that this line of argumentation makes the assumption that what people tend to find honorable is unrelated to what is actually fine and honorable. She puts forth a view that “it is what is truly fine that shapes social norms about what is fine and honorable” (Singpurwalla 2013: 51). However, such a response, when read charitably, is consistent with Brennan’s view, as he agrees that there is *some* connection between what is fine and a society’s social norms, however he does not view the connection as strongly as Singpurwalla. Here, if she is saying that social norms take what is truly fine and honorable as their starting point<sup>5</sup>, Brennan can say the same thing and that it is these lessons that spirit internalizes. She also attempts to counter the reasonable objection that what people find fine and honorable is variable, but she thinks, variability aside<sup>6</sup>, that there’s some universality in what is fine and honorable, and that if this universality exists, this is what spirit would likely make its primary object. Since Socrates says there are some things the timocratic city finds honorable, this provides some unity in the possible objects of honor, and further that these “bear a relationship to what is truly fine” (51)<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> This is a charitable reading of her view. If she meant, however, that social norms *always* end up good and honorable as a result of taking what is good as their basis, this is clearly false. Singpurwalla most likely recognizes that social norms which develop as a result of looking to what is fine and good do not necessarily themselves end up fine and good; i.e., such norms can still end up with outcomes that do not actually promote that good, due to the complexity involved in human affairs and the way an objective good translates at the practical level.

<sup>6</sup> It is, however, difficult to see the universality in what is considered fine and honorable when we consider groups with incredibly problematic conceptions: racists, misogynists, etc. We may not even want to say that what they believe is in any way related to what is fine and honorable. I also do not think we want to construe ‘fine and honorable’ so vaguely that it can justify anything.

<sup>7</sup> She sees two serious objections to opponent accounts that argue that the spirit internalizes social norms and values from which it derives its conception of what is fine and honorable. The first is they cannot “readily explain Socrates’ claim that spirit has a privileged relationship to reason” (47). Brennan’s view, however, does not fall to this criticism. On his teleological

Additionally, if spirit is genuinely sensitive to the *kalon*, then it need not wait for reason to determine that something is *kalon*, since it would already know and have the power to pull an individual in that direction.

For Singpurwalla, the key reason that spirit is motivated to live up to rational views is that it sees for itself that these things are fine and good. When Singpurwalla says “fine and good”, a charitable reading of her view is that it is the *kalon* that is the proper object of the spirited part’s desire, but by *kalon*, she means the *objectively kalon*, as opposed to the *kalon* as given by reason. This is evidenced when she says:

why not think instead that people tend to honour and esteem what is truly fine[...] If this is the case, then spirit, with its aim of attaining self-respect and the respect of others, should be seen as aspiring to something truly fine (51).

But the claims that spirit both itself aims at what is objectively *kalon*, and also wants to do what reason says is objectively *kalon*, are in tension with each other when reason is incorrect about what is objectively *kalon*. People who pursue something, conceiving it to be good when it is not, such as oligarchic characters, are particularly problematic for her view. Oligarchic characters clearly have a false belief that the Good is wealth (*Rep.* 550e). The reason is that these characters have rationally misidentified the good, but their spirit is still obeying reason (since on her account “living up to our rational view of how we ought to behave” (Singpurwalla 2013: 56) is one important aspect of what it is to be fine and honorable). The spirit must also then consider wealth to be objectively honorable since reason identifies it as good. But if it were true that spirit saw what constitutes genuine fine activity (self-

---

account, spirit has such a privileged relationship to reason by being created precisely to be reason’s mechanism of enforcement against the appetites. It needs to be able to hear reason in order to do what it asks. Secondly, she says it is clear that “Socrates does not think what is truly fine and honorable is determined by societal norms” (49). Instead, she claims that Socrates believes that there is a fact of the matter concerning what is admirable. She thinks, rather than society determining what is truly fine and honorable, that there is some underlying fact about the matter that can be determined by looking at what is universally honorable. She may be right that what is truly fine and honorable is not determined by social norms, but, as I mention above, it is not clear that spirit (by itself) can actually see what is truly fine and honorable aside from what society designates as such. It seems more likely that it is reason that would say that something should not be considered honorable by the spirit.

control, living in accord with reason, etc.) then there seems to be somewhat of a contradiction because wealth is not a genuine good, so pursuing wealth would not be objectively honorable. In other words, it is a contradiction to assert that spirit always does what is truly fine and honorable and also what reason proposes, since what is truly fine and honorable is not always what reason asserts is the good.

So, if spirit does what Singpurwalla calls "fine and honorable" (following reason) it would not pursue the genuine good (nor would it have properly identified it). She says "being fine and honourable just is living up to our rational views, despite appetitive deterrents" (56). Yet, in this case, living up to our rational view involves pursuing an object that is not a genuine good. So, with respect to these cases of non-virtuous characters, there is a serious incompatibility with saying that spirit goes after what is objectively honorable (if reason is in error about what is objectively honorable), and that spirit always follows reason. Either spirit would have to disagree with reason when reason is wrong, which is impossible due to the fact that she asserts it always follows reason, or spirit will not be able to see the genuine good and must follow reason even when it is in error, which her account of spirit's ends also seems to reject. However, for consistency's sake, it seems she must reject some aspect of the view she's developed and say either spirit must sometimes see what is objectively fine and disagree with reason when reason gets it wrong, or spirit must follow reason and ultimately not see what is objectively fine<sup>8</sup>.

The reason Singpurwalla's account appeared to work was because she was assuming the reason in virtuous characters, but virtuous characters are not the only ones with reason and spirit allied together. So, when one has spirited motivations to follow reason, it cannot be because one's spirit itself sees what is fine and honorable, since if reason is wrong, spirit will instead be pursuing what is not fine and honorable. The alternative, however, is that the spirit must oppose reason (if it sees what is truly

---

<sup>8</sup> It is perhaps open to her to accept the former case, but say that spirit follows reluctantly, despite feeling that it is wrong. This is sometimes what happens in what are referred to as "personal moral dilemmas" (Greene 2009), where for instance you might calculate that it is best to do something immoral in order to achieve some greater good. For instance, one might kill someone close to them to save others. Oligarchic characters, however, may still be a problem as they seem both to desire wealth and not feel it is wrong to pursue it, as they have calculated wealth brings them a lot of goods (but failed to consider the pains it brings as well).

fine and honorable even when reason is wrong), and it is debated by scholars whether it is actually in spirit's capacity to oppose reason or not<sup>9</sup>. So, because she claims that (1) spirit sees, by itself, what is fine and honorable and (2) is also motivated to live up to reason's view about these things, combined with the observation that our reason can be mistaken, especially when we are not yet virtuous, are inconsistent with each other, we see that her view cannot be right insofar as non-virtuous agents are concerned.

There is an alternative explanation that explains what she sees the spirited part as doing, that actually just amounts to Brennan's view: spirit actually seems to have a relationship to the norms of their society, rather than to what is genuinely fine and good. Take the instance of vicious characters above. It is the case in their society that those who have wealth are honored, and as a result their reason misidentifies wealth as the Good. So, the spirit is not sensitive to something objectively honorable in the act, but rather goes after it because their reason identified it as good, after reasoning about the facts around them, and the explanation for why their reason said it is good is because it is a norm in their society, and they can see the benefits<sup>10</sup>. Consider this second case: one may think telling the truth is honorable, as well as defending one's friends, and respecting one's parents, and at the same time one may not think that fleeing in war is dishonorable. If in fact there were some underlying fact that they grasped, they should be able to determine, for any number of acts, whether it would be honorable or dishonorable on the basis of whether it contours with that underlying fact. Yet, for the person to know that fleeing in war is dishonorable, they would have to know the *norms* of war, *expectations* of soldiers, *consequences* of flight, etc. They are not seeing some underlying fact about honor, but rather recognizing the norms of their society and finding it dishonorable because it opposes those norms, which their reason endorses.

---

<sup>9</sup> Kamtekar (2017) argues that spirit *never* opposes reason, even in vicious characters.

<sup>10</sup> I think norms must be conceived as having some benefit in order for rational uptake. The spirit however, does not need to understand the benefit in the same way as reason does.

This is not to say that someone advanced enough could not do this kind of intellectual labor, but not everyone will be able to, and since everyone has the capacity for spirited motivations, Singpurwalla has not satisfactorily shown that, even *if* there is some underlying universality concerning what is honorable, that people *can* recognize it. Even when they accept the norms, they still may not know what makes them right or wrong; they just know *that* they are right or wrong in their society. Only their developed rational part can know what makes them right or wrong. Now, she might say that what she means is that the social norms we have, we have *because* we are sensitive to this form of honor. So, if what is truly fine and honorable does shape social norms, there must be some underlying fact that people are aiming for when they make prescriptions. However, it is unclear what such a fact (or facts) might be, and further, the burden of proof would be on her to show that different norms do in fact track this objective underlying fact when the norms, as we see them, appear incredibly varied<sup>11</sup>. In any case, at this point, it seems clear that our spirited motivations are sensitive to what reason prescribes as good, which are most often determined by social norms, and when this is the case, both our spirited motivations and our reason can be wrong about what is *kalon*. It depends on whether the norms actually track the *kalon* or not, and the above considerations show that it is not clear that all norms do that.

Similar to Brennan's view, Singpurwalla's view also generates an extensional coincidence between our rational beliefs and spirited inclinations, for, on her view, spirit follows its own conception of what is honorable, and even though the internal descriptions are different (spirit pursues an action because of its aesthetics, and reason because it understands why it is good) they still prescribe the same action. But it is nothing that reason is doing that is inspiring this obedience, and no necessary sensitivity

---

<sup>11</sup> One may want to further argue that these norms are compatible if they reflect different aspects of this universal thing. It is unclear to me how this would work in the above case, but even if it did, it still seems clear that someone can find something honorable for the wrong reasons. For instance, men may find strength honorable for their ability to attract partners with said strength, and this looks more like seeing strength as a means to an appetitive end rather than perhaps as a means to a healthy body that they can use to protect others.

on behalf of the spirit to the rational. Thus, my current project was developed because scholars seemed to believe that reason and spirit are related by extensional coincidence alone. This is what I take issue with, since I see Plato recognizing that reason has a closer than coincidental relationship to spirit and vice versa, and the purpose of this dissertation is to explain in more detail the interdependent relationship I see developing and the effects rational beliefs and spirited motivations have on each other.

*iii. Wilburn's view of thumos' two faces*

While Joshua Wilburn's view shares some aspects of Brennan's and Singpurwalla's views, I think he goes farther than Brennan in saying what spirit is sensitive to, but not quite as far as Singpurwalla. Wilburn's 2022 book entitled *Plato and the Political Soul: Plato on Thumos, Spirited Motivation, and the City*, argues for an expanded conception of spirited emotions, claiming that it has "two faces". Wilburn explains:

Plato recognizes two faces of spiritedness, the most primitive expressions of which are the ones found in *Republic 2*: savageness and aggression toward the foreign or *allogrion* on the one hand, and gentleness and affection toward the familiar or *oikeion* on the other (Wilburn 2021: 54).

In this way, they are like two sides of a coin: not only are spirited motivations responsible for aggression and fighting against one's enemies (the first face), but he argues that spirit has a softer side that, like the characterization of the dogs to whom the auxiliaries are intended to be similar in the *Republic*, book 2, which is friendly to familiars (the second face). His point is that spirit is also responsible for feelings of gentleness and friendliness towards one's friends. So, on his view, *thumos* has two faces, which he further describes as "contraries" and "opposites (57) as well as "not entirely incompatible" (58). In this way they are like two sides of a coin, necessary aspects of a single cohesive thing, which can show at different times and in different circumstances.

Wilburn takes three main pieces of evidence to support his view that serve as reason against the common view gentleness originates from the rational part of the soul. In the *Republic*, book 2, he argues

that spiritedness (*thumoeidēs*), specifically the aspects typically attributed to aggressive and savage animals that exhibit Homeric fighting spirit, is not intended to be all inclusive of the motivations Plato wishes to attribute to the spirited part (*to thumoeidēs*) (Wilburn 43). Secondly, the fact that the book 3 passage (*Rep.* 3.410d1-3) grammatically says that something tame by nature becomes *tame*, is because, according to Wilburn, Plato intends to attribute this tameness to the spirited part of the soul. Finally, and one of the strongest arguments for this point, is that, according to the canine-auxiliary analogy, the dogs were described as philosophical, but Plato does not recognize a rational part in canine souls, and so it must be that either canine souls do have a rational part in which gentle motivations originate, or they originate in its spirited part, the option which Wilburn prefers (Wilburn 2021: 44-5). In chapter 5, however, I argue that some of his evidence for this view, which he takes from the gifts Zeus provides in *Protagoras*, does not seem to support his view as much as he initially thought, as Zeus did not provide only distinctly spirited things, but rather something spirited and something rational.

Though Wilburn acknowledges that Plato may be using this analogy in a joking and whimsical way, he believes that Plato is actually hinting at something far more serious. First, “spirited impulses must be informed by *knowledge* of some kind in order to be reliably useful” (46) and second, “spirited impulses are not beneficial unless they are subordinated to reason and informed by the intelligence and knowledge that only reason can provide”, a crucial idea he takes Plato to develop over the course of the *Republic*. This is where I think Wilburn, even in offering this picture of *thumos*’ two faces, still offers an incomplete picture. I agree with Wilburn that at least some form of this softness, which I refer to in chapter 6 as “spirited flexibility”, is essential for spirited motivations and ultimately virtue. I disagree, however, that the connection between reason and spirit is one-way. While he believes spirited motivations must be subordinated to reason to become beneficial, I argue that spirited motivations are *also* beneficial in acquiring reason’s best condition: wisdom, and so reason also relies on the spirit in an importantly interdependent relationship I outline in detail in chapter 6.

## Background/Research Problem (The Gap)

Socratic and Platonic moral psychology experienced a boom of scholarly interest in recent decades<sup>12</sup>. Particularly Plato's moral psychology is often cashed out in terms of the interplay of three parts of the soul: the rational, spirited, and appetitive parts, or in the late dialogues by a broad contrast between rational and non-rational motivations, with some scholars thinking that Plato abandons tripartition altogether<sup>13</sup>. A focus on tripartition, however, excludes discussions of the early dialogues, during the writing of which Plato had not yet developed, nor perhaps even conceptualized, his tripartite psychological theory. While Plato himself might not use the word "spirited" in terms of motivation in some earlier dialogues, he does use words like "shame" (*aidōs* or *aischunē*) and "courage" (*andreia*) and identifies specific kinds of fear (*phobos*), which he seems to label under some of the aforementioned spirited categories later on<sup>14</sup>. It is thus more desirable to discuss motivations themselves outside of a theory of tripartition, which little literature has done<sup>15</sup>. Such a strategy also allows us to better appreciate the interconnection of these motivations, draw a more fleshed-out view of these motivations, and recognize compelling lines of intellectual development through the earlier dialogues<sup>16</sup>.

---

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the following two excellent books: Brickhouse & Smith (2010), *Socratic Moral Psychology*, Kamtekar (2017), *Plato's Moral Psychology*.

<sup>13</sup> With respect to the *Laws*, Rees (1957: 112-16), Fortenbaugh (1975: 24), Laks (1990), Robinson (1995 and 1970), Müller (1951: 22) Schöpsdau (1994: 229-30), Sassi (2008: 133-8), Frede (2019: 18), and Graeser (1969: 102-5). Saunders argues a qualified tripartite/bipartite view wherein the tripartite can be collapsed into a bipartite view, and the bipartite view expanded into a tripartite view. Bobonich (2003: 258) does not find this view attractive. Meyer (2012: 327-28) argues for a qualified version of tripartition and seems to agree with Wilburn (2013: 51) who argues that Plato may have an implicit tripartition, in mentioning that an explicit account would obscure other points he is trying to make, so tripartition is presumably not very useful for Plato's moral psychology in the *Laws*. Annas (2017: 74) briefly mentions that the tripartite theory of soul is not mentioned by Plato but seems to agree with Wilburn that we need not infer that this lack of explicit mention means Plato has abandoned the theory. Her thought is that Plato intentionally obscures it because such a theory would have been "unfamiliar to the unintellectual Spartan and Cretan" in the *Laws*.

<sup>14</sup> Cairns (1993: 383) and Meyer (2012) both take the kind of fear associated with shame to be primarily spirited in nature, however, Fortenbaugh (1975) suggests that it is rational.

<sup>15</sup> Wilburn, (2021) *The Political Soul: Plato on Thumos, Spirited Motivation, and the City* and Meyer, (2012) *Pleasure, Pain, and "Anticipation" in Laws I*, are two excellent scholarly pieces that deal with the motivations without "part-talk".

<sup>16</sup> Scholars do not typically take early dialogues as a source of Plato's own views, and a solid line is often drawn between the philosophy of Plato's character "Socrates" in early dialogues and the more rigorous philosophy of Plato's middle and late dialogues; it is not hard to believe, however, that the life of Socrates was greatly embellished by Plato to add not only more interest, but also greater coherency to his views. Whether Plato himself believed what he understood Socrates to be trying to say is up for debate, but I do think the way Plato filled out these views does influence the views he develops later on—particularly with respect to the function of shame and courage in a political society.

While most, if not all, scholars recognize the importance of spirited motivations for helping one resist appetitive motivations, many relegate its role to that of a simple watchdog—merely reliant on the wisdom of reason for receiving its commands and defending against anything contrary to reason<sup>17</sup>. In other words, on this view, one’s spirited motivations are dependent on rational considerations to dictate their actions, and their main purpose is to suppress one’s unwieldy appetites. However, as I just showed in the prior subsection, the approach that focuses on the suppression of unwieldy appetites misses the essence of the spirited part of the soul by neglecting other immensely important and sophisticated functions of our spirited motivations that come out of the references to them in early dialogues. So, while my research accepts the first role of spirited motivations, it aims to provide a more comprehensive picture of the functions and powers of spirited motivations by using the *Laws* account of motivations as a framework to better appreciate how these motivations work throughout Platonic dialogues.

#### Research Aims, Objectives, and Questions

My overall aim is to offer a more detailed account than scholars have typically provided and describe how Plato understood the interplay between spirited motivations and rational beliefs for decision making and virtuous/non-virtuous action. By looking at a wider variety of Platonic dialogues than ordinarily considered by scholars in the context of Plato’s latest dialogue, we will be able to develop a richer understanding of Platonic moral psychology. I will focus particularly on shame and courage, which are powerful motivations that scholars uncontroversially accept as having a particularly close relationship with one’s reason—the details of which relationship, however, are disagreed upon immensely. I will first lay out the relevant passages, terminology, and ideas from the *Laws* around which I will frame my discussions. Then, beginning with the *Crito*, I will show that Plato’s Socrates does recognize that non-rational motivations play a role in virtuous action. Thereafter, I will further describe

---

<sup>17</sup> For this view, see Brennan (2014), ‘*The nature of the spirited part of the soul and its object*’ in particular.

what the relationship and function are by looking at other dialogues where these play a featured role, and where the interdependence of spirit and reason is highlighted. Then, from this and considerations of the middle dialogues, I will show how spirited motivations allow for wisdom to develop and explain in more detail what the “defense” of beliefs by our spirited motivations looks like. Once we see that spirited motivations play a role that is much more involved for virtue and virtuous action than has typically been recognized, the rationale for the political change Plato envisioned becomes much more apparent.

I thus seek to establish answers to the following questions: does Socrates recognize non-rational motivations that play a role in virtue, and if so, what role do they play and how do they function in one’s psychology? What is the nature of the relationship between spirited motivations and rational beliefs for virtuous and non-virtuous action in the personal *and* political spheres? How do shame and courage contribute to virtuous action? And finally, in what ways do spirited capacities and motivations contribute to our rational development?

### Significance

Aside from the unique framing, this dissertation makes several contributions to scholarly understanding of Plato’s moral psychology, specifically by illuminating the complexity of the relationship between spirited motivations and rational beliefs without focus on parts-talk. For instance, while most scholars believe the dependency is one-way, which can be roughly captured with the slogan ‘spirited motivations simply defend our rational considerations against appetitive desires’, or otherwise called the “watchdog” view, I argue that the relationship is actually importantly interdependent. Thus, while my picture is compatible with what scholars have thought before me, the main ways my view differs from prior scholarly views is that I argue spirit plays two roles for which reason depends on it: (1) the execution of rational judgment and (2) the development of wisdom. I plan to show that Plato thinks we cannot develop our wisdom nor then know what is best without spirited motivations. Importantly,

however, knowing “what is best” is *not enough* for acting virtuously. The watchdog view is inadequate because reason, I will argue, depends on spirit for execution, but that some strength of commitment to beliefs offered by spirit is necessary for developing wisdom—without it, one will vacillate between beliefs too quickly. The analysis I will offer not only expands on prior scholarly contributions but also offers a more detailed account with considerable explanatory power and has the benefit of providing a relatively consistent view of moral psychology throughout Plato’s works.

### Limitations

Before moving to the outline of the chapters, it is important to mention the limitations of this ambitious project. For one, while I want to draw a picture highlighting increased explicitness about spirited motivations throughout the dialogues—hence beginning with the *Laws*, it is virtually impossible for me to treat all of the Platonic dialogues in this dissertation, so undoubtedly there is some evidence from some dialogues that will be left out, and objections from others which cannot be dealt with due to the scope of this project. To the best of my ability I treat a select few dialogues thoroughly and generally think that my analysis could extend to other dialogues as well. I also consider the objections which I consider the most important. Second, I do not deny that there are complexities surrounding the connection of the ideas present in the early and middle to late dialogues, but I want to acknowledge that I assume Plato’s interpretation of Socrates from these earlier dialogues includes to some extent also Plato’s own ideas, understanding, and explanation that is beyond what the historical Socrates may have expressly stated. This assumption makes the view of intellectual growth more plausible, as I believe some of the time Plato spent working out “Socrates” views also came to find their way into his own views or made apparent some problems that he considered in refining his own views; I do not take this to be immensely controversial. Third, I focus on a very limited set of spirited motivations: courage and shame, and while there are others that fall under the scope of “spirited” such as “anger”, I will not address these in thorough detail except where they come up in the context of courage or shame. This

does not mean I think anger, or other such motivations are unimportant, or that they are not also closely related to rational beliefs. Quite the contrary, but I want to focus on courage and shame, which are traditionally given less treatment than anger, as spirited motivations for action.

### Structural Outline

In the first chapter, I interpret the famous “puppet analogy” of Plato’s *Laws*, which provides us insights about spirited motivations that I suggest will serve as a framework for the following chapters. I show that Plato’s character, “the Athenian”, recognizes non-rational motivations, especially spirited ones which he dubs “anticipations”. I argue that at least *some* of these anticipations, especially those of “fear” and “confidence” are spirited and point out that they give us new ways of understanding these and closely-related spirited motivations in earlier dialogues. Further, I address one of the main questions that arises out of the puppet analogy, which is who the “helpers” are. I argue that they must be spirited motivations, including, but not limited to, the anticipations mentioned. How we get our rational “cord” to be in charge, and why we execute certain behaviors on its behalf, I also argue as being because of its helpers. Through this, I show the interdependent nature of spirited motivations and our rational beliefs, which give us another way of reading the relationship between spirited motivations and reason for developing civil society in the *Protagoras*, but also for developing wisdom and executing reason’s judgments in the *Republic*. Thus, this puppet analogy conveys a wealth of information about spirited motivations which offers a perspective we should keep in mind when we read the earlier dialogues as we can appreciate new features of these dialogues and how Plato’s view has become more specific with time.

In the second chapter, I seek to establish that, in early dialogues, Socrates himself recognized non-rational forms of motivation as important for influencing virtuous action. I begin by analyzing a puzzling aspect of the *Crito*, namely why the personified Laws employ what seem to be non-rational forms of motivation in addition to persuasive rational argumentation, if rational argument should be

sufficient, as Socratic intellectualism suggests that being convinced that something is best is enough to motivate action. I argue that the kinds of arguments that the Laws seem to be making appear to target Socrates' sense of shame and further that the good the Laws appeal to in order to activate Socrates' sense of shame is different from the conception of the good to which Crito was attempting to appeal. The difference, I suggest, lies in the fact that Crito was appealing to what others think is good, while the laws are appealing to Socrates' own internal principles. This attempt at persuasion then, succeeds, I argue, because being shown that one will be acting in opposition to one's own conception of the good generates motivation on top of a calculated, outcome-oriented cost-benefit analysis to act in some way. A sense of shame responds not only to the content of a rational argument but also to one's internal principles. This view of shame and spirited motivation more generally, I show, is confirmed by the *Laws* and also has explanatory power when it comes to other dialogues, and especially Socrates' use of the cross-examination (*elenchus*).

In the third chapter, I look at Socrates' use of the *elenchus* to support the claim that mere content learning and rational knowledge alone are not sufficient to produce feelings of shame that motivate actions. I examine how other scholars interpret the role of non-rational motivations and how shame can contribute to both virtue and vice. I also explain some gaps in their views as targets for what my view will seek to explain.

In the following chapter, I highlight an area where there has not been much scholarly focus, namely how uses of shame in this way often go awry. I offer an explanation for this phenomenon by looking at a sample *elenchus* from the *Laches*, whereby Laches is shamed by Socrates into recognizing that the implications of his lack of knowledge about courage greatly mar his reputation concerning it. Instead of accepting his ignorance, Laches attempts to conceal it by implicating Nicias in his ignorance as well. I argue that Laches' action cannot be easily understood on other scholarly views. Nicias and Laches

thus prove to be an interesting study of how the threat of shame influences action in morally different ways.

In the fifth chapter, I turn to the myth of the *Protagoras*, in which Protagoras argues that virtue is teachable by looking at two gifts given by Zeus to humankind: *aidōs* and *dikē*, the result of which are different human motivations that allow for civil concord. I look at alternative scholarly interpretations of what motivations *aidōs* and *dikē* correspond to and discuss why they are unsatisfactory. I argue that this myth alone lacks the detail to explain the effects Protagoras is hoping to justify. I argue however, that by looking at the myth through Platonic lenses, we see better how Plato may have thought, beyond what Protagoras said, that these gifts promote the good of society. Looking at this myth through Platonic lenses, however, in direct contrast with how some scholars, and especially Wilburn, have been thinking about *aidōs* and *dikē*, I argue has the effect of showing that *aidōs* must inspire spirited motivations while *dikē* must be a rational capacity, which highlights how their interdependence can establish communal concord, a feature that the *Laws* highlights considerably.

In the final chapter, I turn toward the middle period and discuss the guardians of the *Republic*, who excel with respect to courage and wisdom. In this chapter, I argue that courage is one of the most important characteristics of the guardians because of its function as an executive virtue, namely reason cannot execute its commands without one's courage to preserve reason's beliefs. I argue that the initial tests the guardians go through all test the strength of courage, and that the final test of dialectic tests one's "spirited flexibility"; i.e., the person's willingness to yield to new rational considerations. In other words, spirit is habituated into waiting for reason, so the person becomes flexible because of changes to spirited motivations, and the person also becomes stronger because reason is aided by these motivations. Without both strength and flexibility, reason cannot come into power nor execute its commands, which highlights the dependency of wisdom on spirit for action, while spirit is dependent on

wisdom for its guidance, a reading which the *Laws* confirms, and which further links these dialogues in terms of a core message.

Thus, I will have shown that using the *Laws* as a framework sheds light on the importance of spirited motivations for the development of virtuous character and execution of virtuous action in Platonic dialogues. I will also have highlighted an important interweaving interdependence between rational and spirited motivations that not only explains the role of spirited motivations for the development of wisdom but also in the execution of the wise commands.

## Chapter 1: Spirited Motivations in the *Laws*: A Framework for Reading

### Prior Dialogues

#### Introduction

The *Laws* was the final and longest dialogue Plato ever wrote, perhaps still unfinished at his death. This dialogue notably does not feature Socrates as a main character, but instead an unnamed Athenian, who nonetheless can be observed sharing many of Socrates' ethical commitments, such as the importance of virtue at the individual *and* state level, that evil acts should *never* be done, that virtue is a unity, and further that "no one does wrong willingly". This dialogue also features two interlocutors: Cleinias and Megillus, a Cretan and Spartan respectively. Unlike Socratic dialogues in which Socrates challenges the viewpoints of his interlocutors and questions them to reveal inconsistencies in their accounts of virtue, Plato's spokesman of this dialogue, the Athenian, works collaboratively with Megillus and Cleinias, the latter of the two being on a legislative board for the development of laws in a new Cretan colony. Developing these laws requires a fair bit of moral psychology in addition to political and geographical considerations.

As a result, the *Laws*, I believe, sets out the clearest articulation of Plato's views on moral psychology in terms of how we act ethically and what psychic motivations are involved. I suggest that understanding what Plato is saying in this dialogue gives us ways of understanding the moral psychology of earlier dialogues as well. The moral psychology of Plato's *Laws* is sketched in a Book I passage about the causes of human behavior and how we can achieve self-control. In this passage at 1.644d7-645b1, humans are analogized to a puppet controlled by cords representing one's basic motivational pulls. This passage raises questions concerning what kinds of motivations Plato recognizes in the *Laws* and what their role is in our achieving self-control. I will argue that among the various cords described in this passage are appetitive motivations, such as the pleasures of food, drink, and sex, which can draw us

toward certain behaviors on the one hand, and *spirited* motivations, e.g. motivations of shame and self-esteem which can draw us away from those pleasures, on the other hand. I argue some spirited motivations in this passage give us a way of opposing appetitive motivations when the latter pull us contrary to rational calculation.

In the first section, in order to argue in the second section that some of the iron cords in the *Laws*'s famous puppet passage are spirited in nature, I first give a characterization of spirited motivations which will show that the *Laws*' characterization of certain motivations is best understood as spirited. In the second section, I assess a discussion of the cords as "anticipations" and the discussion thereafter that clarifies the motivational force of these anticipations and show how it is paradigmatic of spirited motivations as defined in the first section. Having established that spirited motivations are playing a role in the *Laws*, I argue, in the following section, that my understanding of how the spirited cords are functioning in this analogy (i.e., as obedient to reason as something rational), gives us insight into the role of law and how Plato is suggesting we achieve self-control in the *Laws*.

### Spirited Motivations

In discussing spirited motivations, it makes sense to first draw an account from the *Republic*, where the term "spirited" is used explicitly to lay out some of its most essential characteristics. Socrates outlines some of its characteristics when he says, "will a horse, a dog, or any other animal be courageous, if he isn't spirited (*thumoeidēs*)... its [spirit's] presence makes the whole soul fearless and unconquerable" (*Rep.* 2.375a10-b2). Here, Socrates claims that courage, in the form of fearless unconquerability, is necessarily spirited, and yet he goes on to explain that in order for such a spirited person to not be completely savage, they cannot have these qualities alone. These guardians also have another quality in order to avoid contradiction. They need also to be gentle too: "love of wisdom (*philosophos*), spirit, speed and strength must all be combined in the nature of anyone who is to be a

fine and good guardian (*phulax*) of the city” (2.376c4-5, slight modification). These characteristics spell out clearly what good qualities a spirited person must have.

Love of wisdom is a particularly interesting quality because he does not mean the kind of love which full blown philosophers exhibit (in the form of contemplation), but rather having natural attractions to knowledge and aversions to ignorance. This is evidenced by Socrates description of dogs being philosophical in the sense of liking what is familiar to it and disliking what is not familiar: “when a dog sees someone it doesn’t know, it gets angry before anything bad happens to it. But when it [the dog] knows someone, it welcomes him” (2.376a5-7) and this is a refined quality in its nature and philosophical because “it [a dog] judges anything it sees to be either a friend or an enemy, on no other basis than that it *knows (katamathein)* one and doesn’t know the other (2.376b3-4); in other words, dogs are naturally attracted to what they know, and the parallel is that spirit is naturally attracted to what it knows, which is its authority: reason. One who is more laudably spirited, then, is the one who exhibits its obedience the best (i.e., has the essential quality of adherence to its master: reason) and executing its master’s goals (a well-ordered city, fighting against outsiders (beliefs, enemies, etc.).

This feature of being sensitive to what it knows also provides an important social dimension to spirit. People being sensitive to the opinions of those they are close to is due to the naturally receptivity they have to these people as group members in a particular hierarchy<sup>18</sup>, and to be a member of the group is to contribute, while also being susceptible to praise and blame for complying with and breaking group norms. Praise and blame offer relevant information to spirit about its performance, and really only matters when it comes from a relevant authority. I suggest spirit’s love of praise does have something to do with reason: praise from that which established the norms for behavior is a much

---

<sup>18</sup> There is the interesting feature that people who are group leaders actually resemble wisdom in their efforts to care for the group.

greater good than praise from a random source, and this desire for affirmation can be a strong motivator of action.

The other quality the spirited auxiliary has is fearlessness and strength, but, of course, to be good it cannot be *completely* fearless; it must at least fear doing something of which its master would not approve; i.e., the scope of its fearless action must be in some way constrained, as Socrates explains, so as to not harm those they ought to be protecting. The strength must be not only physical but psychological, being willing to endure pain physically and psychologically in order to persevere in doing what the master says/desires in spite of the circumstances; for instance, just as a dog may attempt to fight off an intruder, despite the chance of suffering physical harm, so will the auxiliaries similarly fight off foreign invaders.

So, the two qualities of spirit which are indispensable are its “love of wisdom”, which manifests as a willingness to “listen to reason”, and also its “fearless” strength, which allows it to resist pleasures that reason would disapprove of and endure laudable pains. The “love of wisdom” has with it an importantly social dimension and leads to a natural deference to what one perceives as a natural superior, as listening to reason entails some degree of communication to that which is greater, and even just a simple understanding of what the superior desires.

I will argue in the next section that the puppet passages suggest helpers of exactly the kind of help spirit can offer. I argue that these two (non-exhaustive) qualities: love of wisdom and strength in the form of fearlessness, manifest clearly in the form of spirited cords in the *Laws*’ famous puppet passage. The anticipations of *phobos* and *tharros* map to each respectively, which will give us a richer understanding of these motivations and further allow us to seek antecedents in prior dialogues more easily.

## Spirited Cords

In this section, I will argue that at least some of the pulls in the famous puppet passage must be spirited; i.e., that the motivations that impel us to action are reliant on reason for understanding what to pursue and serve the purpose of guarding us against pleasures and allowing us to endure pains. In this passage, the Athenian characterizes some of the iron cords as anticipations/expectations and one of these, *phobos*, refers to two possible kinds of fears, only one of which I will focus on, namely the laudable one referred to as “a sense of shame” (*aidōs*). The other anticipation is *tharros* and is primarily associated with military victory but plays a valuable role in other contexts. I will first discuss the passage itself and explain why we have reason to suspect the iron cords are not all appetitive impulses. I argue that *phobos*, when construed as the laudable kind of fear, is associated with spirited motivations (*thumoeidēs*), specifically the aspect that makes us fear deviation from rational prescriptions and inconsistency with our rational beliefs and values due to the harm they do to our self-conception. Thereafter, I argue that the other anticipation, *tharros*, is also associated with spirited motivations such as confidence in oneself to resist pleasures and pains, as well as dialectical confidence. Self-control is achieved when these spirited motivations, whose natural impulses toward reason are fostered through education, pull successfully in the direction of the rational pull against appetitive pulls. The account I give of both anticipations, along with the realization that there are other kinds of spirited cords, can be used to understand these motivations better in earlier dialogues. I end the section by discussing two other scholarly alternatives that conceive of self-control as being a matter of strengthening one’s reason. I argue that these alternatives do not work because Plato has a commitment to strength and malleability of belief being opposing features of our motivations.

In a famous passage of the *Laws*, the Athenian draws a connection between humans and puppets to help us understand the causes of human behavior, and what it means to be greater or lesser than oneself. The imagery of the puppet is intended to help us think about our own psychology and

motivations and about how to align ourselves with the best part of ourselves. The Athenian begins the analogy by saying:

Indeed, concerning these things, let us think it over in this way. Let us hold that each of us living creatures is a puppet (*thauma*) belonging to the gods (*theion*), [a puppet] put together either as a plaything (*paignion*) of them or as [a thing] for some serious business: for indeed at any rate we do not know this, but we know the following: that these affections in us, such as tendons or some cords in us both are pulling (*spōsin*) us and, being opposite to one another, draw against (*antheikousin*) one another to opposite actions (*praxeis*), in the place where (*hou dē*) virtue (*aretē*) and vice (*kakia*) lie distinguished. For reason says that each one should resist the other cords, always following one of the pulls (*tōn helxeōn*) and in no way leaving it, and this is the golden and sacred guidance (*agōgē*) of calculation, [guidance] that calls upon (as a helper or ally, *epikaloumenēn*) the common law of the city; this one is soft seeing that it is gold, while the others are hard and steely, and like (*homoios*) all kinds (*pantodapois*) of forms (*eidesin*). Indeed, we should always assist (*sullambanein*) the finest guiding force (*agōgēi*) which is from the law (*tēi kallistēi agōgēi tēi tou nomou*): for since calculation is on the one hand fine, while on the other hand it is gentle and not forceful, there is need for helpers (*hypēretōn*) of its [calculation's guidance] in order that the gold kind in us conquers the others.<sup>19</sup> (*Leg.* 1.644d7-645b1)

Let us start with the defense of my translation of *epikaloumenēn* as “to call upon in aid”. LSJ tells us that a main definition of *epikaloumenēn* (in the middle voice, rather than passive as many commentators take it) can mean to “call in as a helper or ally” (LSJ A.II). The most common definition commentators have used is “called by a nickname” which is a bit odd in the context of this passage as it is strange to think that an internal motivational force is called “the common law of the city”<sup>20</sup>. Secondly, instances of *epikaleomai* being used in the way I have described map other contexts of its use in the middle voice. In other authors such as Thucydides and Herodotus, for instance, when *epikaleomai* or its cognates means “call upon as an ally”, we see language in that paragraph that further emphasizes the aspect of help/aid or explains it more. For example, in Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War*, he says, “And the

<sup>19</sup> περί δὴ τούτων διανοηθῶμεν οὕτως. θαῦμα μὲν ἕκαστον ἡμῶν ἡγησώμεθα τῶν ζώων θεῖον, εἴτε ὡς παίγνιον ἐκείνων εἴτε ὡς σπουδῆ τινι συνεστηκός: οὐ γὰρ δὴ τοῦτό γε γινώσκομεν, τότε δὲ ἴσμεν, ὅτι ταῦτα τὰ πάθη ἐν ἡμῖν οἷον νεῦρα ἢ σμήρινθοί τινες ἐνοῦσαι σπῶσιν τε ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀνθέλκουσιν ἐναντία οὔσαι ἐπ’ ἐναντίας πράξεις, οὗ δὴ διωρισμένη ἀρετὴ καὶ κακία κεῖται. μᾶ γὰρ φησιν ὁ λόγος δεῖν τῶν ἔλξεων συνεπόμενον αἰεὶ καὶ μηδαμῆ ἀπολειπόμενον ἐκείνης, ἀνθέλκειν τοῖς ἄλλοις νεύροις ἕκαστον, ταύτην δ’ εἶναι τὴν τοῦ λογισμοῦ ἀγωγὴν χρυσῆν καὶ ἱεράν, τῆς πόλεως κοινὸν νόμον ἐπικαλουμένην, ἄλλας δὲ σκληρὰς καὶ σιδηρὰς, τὴν δὲ μαλακὴν ἄτε χρυσῆν οὔσαν, τὰς δὲ ἄλλας παντοδαποῖς εἶδεσιν ὁμοίας. δεῖν δὴ τῆ καλλίστῃ ἀγωγῇ τῆ τοῦ νόμου αἰεὶ συλλαμβάνειν: ἅτε γὰρ τοῦ λογισμοῦ καλοῦ μὲν ὄντος, πρᾶξου δὲ καὶ οὐ βιαίου, δεῖσθαι ὑπηρετῶν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀγωγὴν, ὅπως ἂν ἐν ἡμῖν τὸ χρυσοῦν γένος νικᾷ τὰ ἄλλα γένη.

<sup>20</sup> Griffith seconds this thought in his translation of the *Laws*, footnote 41.

Thasians, being defeated in battle and besieged, called upon (*epikalounto*) Lacedaemon and urged her to *aid them (epamunein)* in invading (*esballontas*) Attica<sup>21</sup> (*Th.* 1.101). In Herodotus: “Then, it is said by the Lydians that Croesus understood Cyrus’ change of heart and when he saw all the men were trying to put out the fire, but being not at all able to suppress it, he, calling Apollo to their aid, cried out that if Apollo was given anything enjoyable from him, to stand by him and *to rescue him (rhysasthai auton)* from the present evil<sup>22</sup>” (*Hdt.* 1.87). Another such instance in Herodotus: “And it seemed good to them to pray to the gods and to call upon the sons of Aeacus *as allies (summachous)*<sup>23</sup>” (*Hdt.* 8.64). All three of these different instances utilize *epikaleomai* in a context with additional nouns or verbs of help or aid. In these we see rescuing (*rhyomai*), *aid (epamunō)* and *ally (summachos)*. This language is lacking from instances where naming is the purpose of this word. Like these passages, in the *Laws’* passage we see words like *assist (sullambanein)* and *helpers (hypēretōn)*, which I think are relating to *epikaleomai* in an interesting and nuanced way, rather than being merely coincidental. One *Laws’* passage reads: “Indeed, we should always assist the finest guiding force which is from the law (*tou nomou*)”<sup>24</sup> (1.645a3-4), indicating the need for some kind of assistance. Scholars often read this sentence as though the guidance itself is the law, but it is not clear, then, whether there is a fine guiding pull in ourselves or a finest pull outside of ourselves which is “called the law”. Taking it in this latter sense means it would be saying it is necessary for us to assist the external law, when the passage was supposed to be about our internal moral psychology. However, if there can also be a fine guiding force within us (its direction encouraged by that of the finest guiding force), then the “finest” guiding force, the external law of the city, can come to aid our internal golden cord (our personal reason) by giving the stronger iron cords

---

<sup>21</sup> Θάσιοι δὲ νικηθέντες μάχη καὶ πολιορκούμενοι Λακεδαιμονίους ἐπεκαλοῦντο καὶ ἐπαμύνειν ἐκέλευον ἐσβαλόντας ἐς τὴν Ἀττικὴν

<sup>22</sup> ἐνθαῦτα λέγεται ὑπὸ Λυδῶν Κροῖσον μαθόντα τὴν Κύρου μετάνγνωσιν, ὡς ὦρα πάντα μὲν ἄνδρα σβεννύντα τὸ πῦρ, δυναμένους δὲ οὐκέτι καταλαβεῖν, ἐπιβώσασθαι τὸν Απόλλωνα ἐπικαλεόμενον, εἴ τί οἱ κεχαρισμένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἔδωρήθη, παραστήναι καὶ ῥύσασθαι αὐτὸν ἐκ τοῦ παρεόντος κακοῦ.

<sup>23</sup> ἔδοξε δὲ σφι εὐξασθαι τοῖσι θεοῖσι καὶ ἐπικαλέσασθαι τοὺς Αἰακίδας συμμαχοῦς

<sup>24</sup> δεῖν δὴ τῇ καλλίστῃ ἀγωγῇ τῇ τοῦ νόμου ἀεὶ συλλαμβάνειν

something to move toward; i.e., an authoritative rational prescription to follow along with, which is to say that this external assists the internal golden cord by using its external force to pull the other internal cords in the right direction. This is my interpretation and this assistance essentially serves to calibrate the internal cord so it will begin to pull in that way too.

The *Laws*' passage also mentions helpers: "for (*gar*) since calculation is on the one hand fine, while on the other hand it is gentle and not forceful, there is need for helpers (*hypēretōn*) of the [finest] pull, in order that the gold kind in us conquers the others<sup>25,26</sup> (1.645a4-b1). This passage is given as a reason (*gar*) for why we should assist our golden cord: it needs helpers. However, without the indication previously from what could be offering some such help, it is completely mysterious in this passage how one is supposed to help and what kind of help could be offered. My translation gives us a referent for the helper and, as I will argue, it nicely works with the explanation of education given thereafter. We should not be thinking about how these internal forces can be named "law" as such, but rather what Plato wants us to think about is the interplay between politics and psychology, which can best be seen by viewing the law as a helper which is capable of drawing up internal resources to serve as helpers. The plural of helpers above can indicate there is not just one kind of helper but multiple: the external helper that sets the goals and provides an initial pull, and the internal ones that allow for long term stability and pursuit of said goals.

The evidence for the alternative passive translation is often cited as being the quote at *Laws* 1.644d1-3: "and against all these things is calculation[...] which after becoming (*genomenos*) a common

---

<sup>25</sup> ἄτε γὰρ τοῦ λογισμοῦ καλοῦ μὲν ὄντος, πράου δὲ καὶ οὐ βιαιοῦ, δεῖσθαι ὑπηρετῶν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀγωγὴν, ὅπως ἂν ἐν ἡμῖν τὸ χρυσοῦν γένος νικᾷ τὰ ἄλλα γένη.

<sup>26</sup> Griffith (2016) and Nightingale (1999: 104) have also chosen this translation for *epikalomenēn*, though we are presently a minority.

What I translate as "and this is the golden and sacred pull of calculation, [a pull] that calls upon (as a helper or ally, *epikaloumenēn*) the common law of the city" other commentators translate "a power which in a state is called public law" (Saunders 1962), "this is the golden and sacred pull of calculation, called the common law of the city" (Bobonich 2002), "this is the sacred and golden guidance of calculation, also called the city's common law" (Meyer 2017), and "it is the leading-string, golden and holy, of 'calculation,' entitled the public law of the State" (Bury 1968).

belief (*dogma...koinon*) of the city is called (*epōnomastai*) law (*nomos*)”<sup>27</sup>. Which seems to suggest that, in the puppet passage, Plato is saying that it is the guidance of calculation which is called the common law of the city. However, rather than reiterating this point in different words in the puppet passage, I suggest Plato is making a nuanced point about the interaction between psychology and politics. Our own reason requires interaction with the law, which is, in a more ideal state, the result of rational activity that has been agreed upon by others (and so then called the “common law”), to form our rational conception of the good. So, my suggestion breaks this up into a few more stages and explains the interplay between the external and internal. First, there is agreement within a community that sets expectations referred to common law. The common law then informs the conception of the good of those being newly educated. That external law, then, once committed to heart, becomes one’s internal law. Without having the conception of the good established by law, the golden cord would not have clear direction to guide the iron cords. Reason would also have to do all its calculating on its own, which is not easy for individuals at the beginning or even the middle of their moral education because reason’s pull is weak. Our *logismos* requires this assistance from the external common law to inform its rational conception of the good, and the law also provides initial rational motivation for the spirited cords, which I will discuss in the final section of this chapter.

Returning to the puppet passage, the Athenian here characterizes us as having different motivational pulls within us that are at odds with one another. I would like to focus on this aspect of the passage, namely the characterization of these two kinds of pulls. One set of them is described as “steely” or “iron-y”, in order to emphasize the strength and inflexibility of these particular pulls, and another cord is golden to emphasize not only its greater value, but its flexibility. This gold cord is described as the pull of calculation, which is intended to be an analogy for our internal law. Since Plato conceives of law as aiming at the good of the whole, the internal law, as well, will pull in the direction it

---

<sup>27</sup> ἐπὶ δὲ πᾶσι τοῦτοις λογισμὸς... ὃς γενόμενος δόγμα πόλεως κοινὸν νόμος ἐπωνόμασται.

has calculated as being best for one's whole self. The iron-like cords, however, pull every which way when they are not guided by the golden cord and "being like all kinds of forms" and "steely" suggests varying compositions, not just gold and iron or steel, but perhaps also silver. Taking the value distinction of iron and gold seriously, commentators like Bobonich think that the aid provided to reason must come from outside of the iron cords, as he claims there is no explicit reference to a "silver" set of cords to come to the aid of reason (Bobonich 2019, 39). However, I assert that it is over-reading the text to assume that there are only two types of cords.

Additionally, it strikes me as mysterious, on Bobonich's view, how we are supposed to "assist" our golden cord against so many contrary influences. The problem I see is a lack of an explanation for how an internal harmony can be achieved by some external force merely making changes to reason. The mention of assistance to reason, however, does have the effect of calling our minds back to the assistant of the *Republic*; i.e., the spirit. My proposal is that, rather than there being solely some external entity that assists the gold cord, some of the cords of other forms (iron or otherwise) could be spirited in nature and thus assist the golden cord from internally. Then we would have a possible internal candidate for how we pull in accord with reason, since these steely cords could be a part of ourselves that pull in the direction of reason like the spirited part does toward the rational part in the *Republic*. Plato did not say above that the steely cords do not pull in the same direction of reason just that they can pull in opposite directions of one another (which could also include the direction of reason, or directions in opposition).

What the Athenian says just prior to the puppet passage may give us good reason to think there is this spirited and appetitive diversity among the iron cords:

Athenian: Can we assume then, that each of us is a single entity?

Cleinias: Yes.

Athenian: But possessing within himself, a pair of mindless and opposed advisers – to which we give the names pleasure and pain.

Cleinias: That is so.

Athenian: And in addition to these two, there are also opinions (*doxas*) about what is going to happen, to which we give the general name 'expectation' (*elpis*) but the particular name 'fear' (*phobos*) for expectation of pain, and 'confidence' (*tharros*) for expectation of the opposite. And above over all of this – deciding which of them is better or worse – is 'calculation' (*logismos*); and when this is enacted by the city as a whole, it is called 'law' (*nomos*). (1.644c4-d3, minor modifications)

Seeing as the name of the gold cord is also the *logismos*, those over which it presides should presumably be the other (iron, etc.) cords. So, these cords are meant to encompass both the mindless advisors, pleasure and pain, as well as the expectations of both. The effects the mindless advisors have on us can perhaps be understood as reactions we have without calculation, such as instincts or reflexes. For instance, at the feeling of pain one might wince, flinch, or grit their teeth, as well smacking their lips due to the natural bodily impulses of hunger or thirst. At the feeling of pleasure, one might relax, perk up, feel happy, smile, etc. The future-directed "anticipations", on the other hand, have more room for knowledge or ignorance to be involved and possibly engage in planning, be influenced by opinion or facts, etc. With the expectations/anticipations there is also generally more space for knowledge about what to do to better guide action. The common way of interpreting this passage is to think that some cords are pulling toward pleasures, some away from pains, and some toward expected pleasures and away from expected pains<sup>28</sup>. Instead, I see the expectations as performing very particular jobs that can actually go against the natural inclinations that typically accompany pleasure and pain. I mean that pleasure usually encourages one to pursue something and pain to avoid it, but I suggest that the expectations *phobos* and *tharros* can actually thwart these natural inclinations by encouraging one to avoid specific pleasures or endure something painful. In this way, the pull of one's expectations can then resist some of these other steely cords, and with a strength that, when they are properly aligned with

---

<sup>28</sup> Meyer argues in her paper that pleasures and pains are more than objects of our predilection or aversion, but rather they are ways of responding to our options. She argues if the anticipations really are expectations of pleasures and pains, then "confidence" is a strange name for the expectation of pleasure, when these expectations are intended to be impulses pulling in a particular direction (Meyer 2012: 317). Her thought is that people who are already confident are not likely to attempt to bring that particular outcome about. However, I disagree with this point. For instance, a runner may be confident that they are a faster runner than their competitors, but during the final round it would be weird to say they would *not* try to bring about their victory by running fast as they can.

the rational cord, allows that cord to conquer the whole. Below I will go into more detail about how *phobos* and *tharros* can do this work,

#### i. Phobos

There is good reason to think that the *phobos* that Plato has in mind captures more than just a general fear of pain, for in the discussion following this statement the Athenian differentiates *two* kinds of fear, and the second kind differs in two key respects. Analyzing these two kinds of fear will help us make sense of their place and how they operate in our psychology. The Athenian explains one kind of fear when he says: “we fear bad things, anticipating that they will happen<sup>29</sup>” (1.646e6). This type of fear seems future-directed as it opposes possible expected harms by eliciting fear that makes us reluctant to perform the action. It is also quite general, and further the content of this fear does not always take oneself as the object. One can fear both bad things happening to them; i.e., having to suffer through certain pains, but one can also fear a bad thing befalling a friend or loved one.

With respect to the second fear, the Athenian says: “in fact, we often fear opinion (*doxan*), believing that we will be thought to be bad for doing or saying some of the things which are not fine<sup>30</sup>” (1.646e8-9). Unlike the more general, future-oriented fear targeting events usually outside of one’s control as discussed above, this fear differs in a key respect: it is social and cannot be felt without the presence of a judgmental “other”. I believe that being afraid of this is common for people who live in a civil society, as much of the quality of one’s life is dependent on the perception that others have of them. This kind of fear is described as laudable because it can appropriately curb one’s desires to what law (i.e., the reason established by the majority) says is appropriate. So, this fear of being thought of as bad by others is at least one source of motivation to obey the law.

---

<sup>29</sup> φοβούμεθα μὲν που τὰ κακά, προσδοκῶντες γενήσεσθαι.

<sup>30</sup> φοβούμεθα δέ γε πολλάκις δόξαν, ἡγούμενοι δοξάζεσθαι κακοί, πράττοντες ἢ λέγοντές τι τῶν μὴ καλῶν

While the text does not explicitly say it, there is, however, another way this kind of fear can work to produce a laudable result that I believe Plato would be happy to recognize. I mean that the individuals can internalize the rational prescriptions and what is right such that they come to fear that, if they act in a certain way, they may also come to think of *themselves* as bad. In other words, their motivation shifts a bit from wanting to be seen as good by others to also wanting to abide by these prescriptions even when others are not present. They want to be good not just to receive praise from others or evade their opprobrium, but for themselves and their peace of mind. Certainly, one's feelings do not start out this way, but over time, as the rational prescriptions are internalized, this second kind of fear *may* become deeper and turn into a fear of doing the act in general, lest they become bad themselves. Not everyone will be actively thinking about how their actions reflect on their character, but someone who is self-reflective is more likely to consider this aspect. The text suggests something in this vein, namely in the discussion about making one fearful. Plato's says:

Don't we have to bring him face to face with shamelessness, train him to fight against it, and in this way give him victory in his battle against his own pleasures? With the cowardice in his heart, it is only by fighting against it and defeating it that he can become perfect where courage is concerned, whereas if he is inexperienced and untrained in these kinds of struggles, then no matter who he is, he has no chance of becoming even half the person he could be where goodness is concerned. (1.647c6-d3)

The kind of training which the Athenian has in mind here is exposure to opportunities to test one's ability to resist pleasures. The method of testing this involves exposing people to the kinds of pleasures they ought to be fearful to pursue—the ones which will encourage them to act shamelessly. So, by being brought face to face with their own shamelessness, they can be taught to fight against it and develop the right kind of fear and shame. The Athenian mentions if they are inexperienced and untrained, they will fail to become a fully virtuous person, which further suggests the importance of this internalization for being virtuous, for internalizing the right way to behave when faced with certain fears would be the way of passing the test that such a drink would pose.

These kinds of fear anticipate a pain that is more laudable than the physical/material pain anticipated by *phobos*. While it is possible for one to have a conditional appetitive fear, such as fearing a future bodily accident, this second fear concerns behaviors that are more in one's own power, and therefore also result more often in social opprobrium or disapproval. For instance, one may fear the social disgrace they will incur by fleeing in battle, but it is not up to chance or the power of others whether they will flee in battle (like it is somewhat out of the control of a wealthy person whether their wealth will be stolen); this is an outcome that is determined on the basis of their own decision, and hence why they would be blameworthy. The fear they have thus takes a conditional format "If I steal this money, I and/or others will think I am vicious and reprimand me".

. Plato draws out this emphasis on disgrace when he describes it as "a fear about terrible disgrace in the eyes of friends<sup>31</sup>" (1.647b6). This is also why it is referred to as a "sense of shame" (*aischunēs*)<sup>32</sup>. This fear manifests itself both by being "opposed to pain and other fears, but also opposed to the most numerous and powerful pleasures" (1.647a3-4). This fear is not only opposed to fear of pains like injury or death in battle, or being dishonored by fleeing a battle, but it is also opposed to pleasures, such as pleasures of overindulgence, specifically the pleasures most associated with the appetite, such as food, drink, sex, etc. There is also no reason why it should be limited to disgrace only in the eyes of one's friends, for the best kind of people will avoid disgraceful actions even when they will not be caught. As evidence for this, both Glaucon and Socrates, in the *Republic*, believe the just man is one who "As Aeschylus says, doesn't want to be believed to be good but to be so" (*Rep.* 361b6-7) and hence why the project of the *Republic* is to convince others that justice is valuable in itself (or for the unique consequences it has for the soul), not merely the for the reputation associated with it. So, one is

---

<sup>31</sup> φίλων δὲ φόβος αἰσχύνης πέρι κακῆς

<sup>32</sup> Other evidence which supports the interpretation that shame is a spirited motivation comes from the *Phaedrus*, where the good horse, which in the charioteer analogy represents the spirited part of the soul, experiences shame. When the lover sees his beloved, he pulls the reins and the good horse, after being pulled back more, "drenches the whole soul with sweat out of shame (*aischunēs*) and awe" (*Phdr.* 254c3-4). Here the spirited horse is experiencing shame at an attempted pursuit of something reason drew it back from.

fearful of the actions and pleasures that will disgrace them in the eyes of those whom they respect, which can include themselves as well, due to the rational prescriptions they have internalized by their superiors or those whom they respect.

This second kind of fear is ultimately more praiseworthy than the first merely anticipatory fear because rather than shying away from pain, it both makes one willing to endure pain *and* actively opposes pleasures—specifically pleasures that would result in disgrace<sup>33</sup>. In addition to resisting appetitive fears, this fear, by being socially-motivated and caring about the opinion of select people, derivatively resists appetitive pleasures, making it especially important for civil society; for in civil society the temptations of appetitive pleasures are more prevalent and numerous than those on the battlefield. This kind of fear is also more closely linked to actions that are considered virtuous, by being connected to disgrace which is responsive to what behaviors are considered good<sup>34</sup>. By thinking an action will bring them disgrace someone will be motivated to not perform the action. So, these differences mentioned above make it distinct from appetitive fear and show that it is importantly related to our spirited emotions, especially if we remember that our spirited emotions are socially-oriented and related to our self-image/desire for honor and esteem (i.e., its desire to be esteemed by those it deems superior), to which this fear is naturally attuned.

This understanding of the motivational force of a fear of disgrace, in the eyes of oneself or respected others, shows up very early in the Platonic dialogues, most notably the *Crito*. Armed with this insight, we can read the dialogue in a new way that answers some interpretive questions about the number and type of persuasive strategies the Laws employ in their arguments. This analysis also will have the additional upshot of showing that Socrates, at least as Plato understood him, also recognized

---

<sup>33</sup> If we remember from the *Republic*, this job of opposing pleasures is primary job of spirited emotions.

<sup>34</sup> It is possible that the behaviors which are considered virtuous by a society are not objectively or universally considered virtuous, so when I say, “this fear is more closely linked with actions that are considered virtuous”, I mean in particular the actions that are considered virtuous by one’s society but are not necessarily objectively virtuous.

non-rational forces of motivation that can have an effect on motivation. This will be the objective of Chapter 2 of this dissertation. For now, I will turn to the second motivation, *tharros*, and show that it also shares distinctly spirited aspects.

## ii. Tharros

In the *Laches*, Nicias contrasts *tharros* with courage. A big difference between *tharros* and courage, Nicias suggests, seems to be that *tharros* may involve a lack of understanding, and a lack of fear, (even when perhaps the individual should be afraid) (*Lach.* 197b1-c1), whereas courage does not<sup>35</sup>. This characterization of *tharros* being an inappropriate boldness due to ignorance is something the Athenian agrees with when he calls *tharros* “a great evil in both public and private life” (*Leg.* 1.647a8-b1). But this is not all that the Athenian means when he discusses *tharros*. Meyer, in her article on *Pleasure, Pain, and Anticipation in Laws 1*, names the expectations *tharros* and *phobos* as “oppositional impulses”, due to being “impulse[s] that oppose our hedonistic attraction to pleasure and aversion to pain” (Meyer 2012: 230). She analyzes *tharros* as a characteristically aggressive impulse that opposes the fear of expected pains, which is especially characteristic of the kind of daring behavior soldiers exhibit. Meyer, however, never goes the whole way of saying that this response *is* a spirited motivation; she does, however, say it is highly suggestive of the *tharros* attributed to the auxiliary class in the *Republic*.

I, in agreement with Meyer’s idea that *tharros* opposes external threats, would like to give us reason to think that *tharros* is itself genuinely spirited. In the *Laws* at 1.647b5-6, the Athenian describes *tharros* as crucial for military victory; it is a “boldness against enemies” (*tharros men polemiōn*). So far this could look like someone who is not afraid, even when they are in a situation where they should be

---

<sup>35</sup> The link between *tharros* and courage (*andreia*), however, should not be overstated, though they often result in the same actions. The key distinguishing feature between confidence and courage seems to be that courage involves some knowledge that one exhibiting *tharros* might not have. For example, one who goes into a battle they have good reason to think they cannot win may be courageous, whereas the person who thinks they can win (without knowledge of the unlikelihood of their victory) may be exhibiting *tharros*.

somewhat afraid, but in this context, it seems especially clear that *tharros* is boldness in the face of prospective pains/evils before which the Athenian does not want individuals to cave. To see how *tharros* is related to spirited emotions in this context, it actually does help to think of *tharros* as confidence. However, there are a couple of ways of understanding this. In one sense, one may feel assured or confident because they are ignorant of the situation and/or have misjudged the facts involved (this is Nicias' characterization of *tharros* in the *Laches*). But, on Plato's view, one still can, and must, exhibit *tharros* even when one has judged that they are likely to suffer or even lose. I suggest construing *tharros* as a "confidence in one's ability" as opposed to merely "a lack of fear of things ordinarily considered fearful". The Athenian explains that "when our aim is to make any particular individual fearless in the face of all sorts of dangers, we bring this about by exposing him, with the approval of the law, to fear" (*Leg.* 1.647c3-4). This not only applies in a military context but also outside of it. One example may be the confidence in one's ability to withstanding a significant pain, such as physical harm. This means we can be motivated to pursue an action we foresee as causing harm even though this harm would otherwise naturally deter us. For instance, one might dive right into tumultuous waters without considering the high risk that they too may be swept under, but instead having confidence in their ability to swim over and rescue the child who swam out too far and further believing that doing so is laudable. In fact, this, in its own way, also offers a kind of pleasure distinct from that which the mindless advisers draw one toward and is also intrinsically motivating; one can be pleased by the fact that they have this strength and ability, and this pleasure one takes in own's own ability can occur even in the face of some pain, especially necessary or unavoidable pain. So, it is sufficient to motivate one against other appetitive pleasures or pains which are also intrinsically motivating. Additionally, one may feel good about their ability to endure these situations, even while finding these situations painful. In this way, *tharros* also serves a function that is the opposite of the function ascribed to it by earlier interpreters. It is not *just* an expectation and impulse to go toward expected pleasure, but rather to endure in the face

of prospective pain (Meyer 2012: 317-18). Sure, it may be possible for someone to be wrong about their own pain thresholds, etc., but it is this *tharros* which keeps people persevering as long as they can in the face of pain. Someone who also has confidence in themselves to endure a pain will also be less likely to quit than someone who lacks this perception of themselves.

I do not mean to limit *tharros*' function to the mere endurance of pain. I believe this same confidence applies to pleasures as well, namely one's ability to resist certain temptations/pleasures or to not be defeated by certain pleasures. For instance, one's ability to resist the temptation of treasures offered at the cost of betraying one's countries' secrets would make one trustworthy and reliable in enemy territory. One could even have this confidence despite knowledge about how likely the chance of capture is as well as how great the rewards for betrayal may be.

Courage is differentiated from *tharros* by being concerned with an overarching conception of the good, while the "confident" person has a more limited conception of the good as "sticking to their guns" to earn the admiration of those who are authoritative or whose admiration they desire most. The problem with *tharros* alone, as Meyer notes, is that its sociality is limited: "If misdirected or carried beyond its proper military context, it yields the aggressive self-seeking at the expense of fellow citizens that a sense of shame is supposed to curb" (321). As Meyer describes, a sense of shame can balance one's confidence, not allowing them to become so confident that they believe themselves untouchable.

These two anticipations: the aspect of *phobos* considered to be *aischunē*, a sense of shame, and *tharros*, as one's confidence, play a very interesting role in the *Laches*, and by understanding this characterization of them in the *Laws* we can actually better explain Laches' reaction to Socrates' *elenchus* in that dialogue. We can observe the good and bad outcomes of *aischunē* and *tharros* can have in different individuals; Laches is a good example of the sub-optimal outcomes while Nicias provides a paradigm of the desirable outcome. This will be the subject of the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

So, the anticipations need not always pull in the same directions, or in the same directions as the mindless advisors, but they can pull in opposition to them<sup>36</sup>. This interpretation of confidence in oneself makes it clear how this is a spirited response, for spirited responses relate to one's perception of oneself/one's self esteem, and *tharros*, as I have characterized it, is a confidence in one's own abilities to overcome/endure pain and the temptations of pleasure. In other words, it meets the other essential conditions outlined in the *Republic* for spirit: the "fearless" strength; i.e., the ability to resist appetitive pleasures and endure necessary pains.

Another version of *tharros* is dialectical confidence. Frequently in prior dialogues, Socrates can be found exhorting his interlocutors in a way that seems intended to inspire confidence in what they are saying; for instance, we see it in exhortations to say what they mean to say, even with the possibility that Socrates may find problems with it. Similarly, in the *Laws* too, the Athenians' interlocutors exhort him to have confidence and tell them the argument for the benefits of wine using forms of *tharros* (*Leg.* 1.642d1 and d4). These two interlocutors, whose home cities are famous for their courage, would be quite familiar with the benefits of *tharros* and so aim to eliminate the Athenian's fear that he will be talking a lot about something of little importance. In other words, they want him to feel confident in himself that what he has to say is important<sup>37</sup>. This may give us reason to think dialectical confidence is also spirited in nature, as being related to one's self-perception.

---

<sup>36</sup> I do not want to suggest that *all* anticipations are spirited in nature, but it does strike me that many of the anticipations, especially the ones based on *phobos* and *tharros* as I have described them, will be spirited. It may help to think of the anticipations as being a wider class and fear, disgrace, confidence, etc. as species of this wider class. There may not necessarily be a one-to-one correspondence of spirited motivations to anticipations. Every time one has an anticipation one may not also have a spirited motivation; spirited motivations are a subcategory of this broader class. However, all I need for my purposes are that some of these anticipations are spirited.

<sup>37</sup> When construing confidence as belief in oneself and a lack of fear, it is clear why the Athenian says that boldness is "a very great evil, both in the public and private sphere" (1.647a8-b1), for if one has this level of confidence normally, I suspect that the Athenian thinks they are more likely to think that they deserve more than they are owed, which can lead them to commit great injustices. Additionally, if they are not afraid of the things of which the general population is afraid, such as legal consequences or retaliation by citizens for their injustices, they may be more emboldened to do bad things. Meyer says that "if misdirected or carried beyond its proper military context, it [*tharros*] yields the aggressive self-seeking at the expense of fellow citizens that a sense of shame is supposed to curb (*Republic* 375b–c; cf. 410d–e, 411c–e)" (Meyer 2012: 321). So, this kind of confidence, she thinks is not very advantageous outside of the military context, but it also seems clear from the above discussion that there is a time and place for *tharros*, specifically when one faces pains they must endure, or embolden themselves among friends for the

We can also connect *tharros* with spirited emotions by considering what work it is doing. The Athenian describes it as crucial for victory and it is a salvation in war (1.647b5-6). As noted before, the people exhibiting *tharros* feel confident in their own ability to resist the pain that the enemy might inflict on them. If they were too afraid of the pain of injury or death, they would flee the battle, and if people flee, the chances of victory become slimmer. So, in order to better ensure victory, the warriors must not be afraid of these pains<sup>38</sup>. Thus, one also needs this confidence to resist their own appetitive motivations for self-preservation in order to achieve a greater good. This opposition to the appetites to do what reason says is best is an important function of spirited emotions, as outlined in the first section of this chapter and was well discussed in the introductory chapter that introduced Brennan's view, (which highlighted this aspect of spirit as the most critical). Thus, one's confidence in their own ability to overcome the things that would otherwise make them fearful is a spirited emotion and this expectation in one's own confidence is associated with pleasure, for it is pleasant to imagine oneself as overcoming adversity.

### iii. Cultivating the anticipations

In the discussion following the puppet passage about the educational benefits of wine, the Athenian and his interlocutors decide that citizens need to both be fearless and fearful (1.647b8). Fearlessness is cultivated by exposing individuals to fear. They begin with a thought experiment concerning a fictional medicine that could make someone experience fear, and while in this fear-induced state, individuals can practice conquering their fear. The Athenian says:

A person could go off all on his own somewhere, listening to the voice of shame, and deciding he has no business appearing in public until he was in a presentable state and do the anti-fear training on that basis, relying just on this drink instead of the usual stuff. That would be a perfectly correct way of going about things – but then so would believing in himself, deciding he

---

sake of a productive discussion. Being shameless in the face of pleasures is what is bad, not necessarily in the face of some pains.

<sup>38</sup> These pains are also most notably bodily or appetitive; they are the fears of fears physical injury or death. These such pains are associated with the preservation of the body, which is why the appetites are necessary as a part of the mortal soul to begin with. Without the appetites we would have no idea about our basic needs and be incapable of satisfying them

was well equipped by his nature and training, and not hesitating to exercise in the company of a number of fellow drinkers, showing off his speed and strength against the power of the drink. (648d1-e1)

There are two possible ways of interpreting this passage. One way is to read it as describing two different types of people training for different things in the same way. One is more prone to shame and builds their fearlessness in isolation, while the other, who believes in himself exercises in front of company. On this interpretation, the difference between the two people is that one is more ashamed of being seen in a bad state in front of others while the other is not. The second way is to read the passage as describing two different stages of training. Until one is in a “presentable” state, he might want to train in isolation, where mistakes may be less serious, and then, after he has honed his skills and become more confident, go somewhere public exhibit his strength. The difference between these stages, then, is that the first is preparation for the second, being spurred on by shame. In any case, both stages would be ways of showing self-control and appear to both be equally good ways in the Athenian’s eyes of going about this training, which results in training in the ideal kind of *tharros*: training to become the kind of person worthy of being seen in public.

There is no drink to cultivate *tharros* like that in reality, so they agree that they must go about it in the usual way: military training, but they do mention that there is a drink that can oppose its opposite: fearlessness (*aphobias*) and excessive and untimely confidence (*kai lian tharreïn kai akairōs*). To cultivate the right kind of fearfulness, the Athenian says, “Don’t we have to bring him face to face with shamelessness, train him to fight against it, and in this way give him victory in his battle against his own pleasures?” (1.647c6-8). This is intended to call our minds back to the fact that some of the anticipations in ourselves are able to pull in opposition to our motivations aiming at pleasure. This undoubtedly would be a drink that would give us an opportunity to practice our *phobos*, but not just any kind of *phobos*, the laudable form synonymous with *aischunē*. This is evidenced when the Athenian says:

[B]eing under the influence of things whose nature is to make us particularly fearless and bold – that would be the place, apparently, to practice being not shameless (*anaischuntous*) and full of

effrontery, but wary of ever being so barefaced, on any particular occasion, as to say, do, or have done to us, anything shameful (*aischron*). (1.649c7-d2)

His point is that, to develop or practice not acting shamelessly, one has to be put in a situation where there is a somewhat attractive opportunity to act shamelessly. What better drink to induce such a state, the Athenian asserts, than an alcoholic one? Wine shuts down people's rational capacities, and it is at this point when it would be easiest to practice combatting the pleasures that urge people to act shamelessly. Since the anticipations can be trained to pull in the direction reason typically prescribes, it would be expected that in the absence of reason they will still be inclined in the direction reason had pulled them in the past; i.e., in the direction of what is good and honorable because they are familiar with the pattern of previous command. For example, imagine someone whose reason had often in the past advised them against telling certain kinds of offensive jokes. They develop certain feelings toward that way of acting (i.e., they find it shameful) and want to resist what pleasure they would get from telling that joke and getting laughs from others. Someone who is drunk will no longer have rational beliefs telling them not to tell the joke, but if the feelings of shame associated with it are strong (and practiced) enough, they will still do as reason would have prescribed, even though reason is inactive. By pulling in accord with what reason has prescribed in the past, the pull of these cords can become stronger simply in virtue of their teamwork encouraged by reason's guidance. Due to their teamwork in following reason's prescription they will pull more easily in that direction, such that each time it should become easier and easier, due to the sustained connection of these impulses, to resist the other impulses. This discussion shows that it is the *anticipatory motivations* that acquire collective strength and that they can be artificially separated from reason's active guidance. But in the end, the explanation for why they are going in the direction they are is because reason made that prescription in the past, and our anticipatory motivations, due to their spirited nature, want to be in accord with reason<sup>39</sup>.

---

<sup>39</sup> The Athenian further identifies things which make one likely to behave in a shameless way, such as "anger, sexual desire, arrogance, ignorance, avarice, [and] cowardice" and "anything which robs us of our wits in the intoxication of pleasure" (649d4-

This case shows that even when one is drinking wine, resulting in less active reason, there are still pulls within them guiding their behavior. When those non-rational motivations, which can resist pleasures and pains, are encouraged to collaborate, they can pull consistently in the direction that reason has prescribed in the past. This suggests that an education focused on building physical strength to resist pain and also inculcating a sense of shame would be a way to later ensure reason's rule because such an education better connects and orients the set of oppositional impulses to resist appetites and pursue rational orders instead, even when reason is not presently active.

This point about the cultivation of spirited motivations such as *tharros* and *aischunē* is essential for assuring that reason's commands will be obeyed. Further, the fact that reason's prescriptions are held even when it is inactive, and that certain spirited motivations are necessary first before reason can reach the fullest potential of its rule, are both important themes that arise in the *Republic*. I will discuss this in more detail in chapter 6. Thus, both kinds of anticipations: *phobos*, when construed as a sense of shame (and which I will refer to as *aischunē* moving forward to differentiate it from general *phobos*), and *tharros*, when considered as confidence in oneself or one's ability to endure, are clearly spirited motivations. As such motivations, I will argue in the next section that they assist the golden cord in a way that could not be accomplished without them<sup>40</sup>.

---

6). The Athenian's idea is that by using wine as a touchstone we can see their anticipatory cords put to the test. There are some things which, a soul well trained in seeing certain things as shameful, would still see as shameful despite being drunk. Using wine in this way the Athenian seems to have in mind that we can pick out who is in need of further training, and who has already truly accepted what reason says is best. Those who resist have their resolve strengthened further.

<sup>40</sup> The purpose of the education in the *Republic* was to bring spirit and reason together: "It seems, then, that the god has given music and physical training to human beings not, except incidentally, for the body and the soul, but for the spirited and wisdom-loving parts of the soul itself, in order that these might be in harmony with each other, each being stretched and relaxed to the appropriate degree" (*Rep.* 3.411e4-412a2). This language of stretching, relaxing, and harmony also call our mind to the puppet passage. What this would mean for our purposes is that this education is capable of lining up our spirited and rational motivations, and Plato still thinks in the *Laws* that this kind of education is necessary. Thus, it makes sense that some of these basic motivations would be spirited and that education aids in their alignment, though, as I have argued, not coincidentally.

iv. Who/What are reason's helpers?

Scholars who argue that the help comes from other sources than the anticipations, such as from "us" or from the golden cord itself after strengthening our reasoning or deliberation, do not explain that passage well. I will discuss two similar views in this direction, by Bobonich and Wilburn respectively, and explain that their interpretations ultimately cannot work because Plato has a commitment to strength and malleability being opposed features of beliefs, which entails that reason itself cannot exert the force required to move one to action without the assistance of additional motivations.

On Bobonich's view, the puppet is meant to be interpreted as an agent, and as such, capable of pulling its own cords. He says one's intervention may take the form of increasing "the strength of his rational judgment or of the associated desire for what is overall best" (Bobonich 2008: 267). By doing this, one will, in some cases, successfully pull the iron cords along with the golden one as the Athenian prescribes, and this is possible if one conceives of the overall agent as a single subject of their internal *pathē*. One issue I have with Bobonich's interpretation, however, concerns how the help the agent is intended to offer actually obtains. Bobonich might think that, by strengthening his rational judgment or desire for what is best, the golden cord, being that desire, is also strengthened to a point where it is capable of pulling against the iron cords.

Wilburn, in his 2012 article, *Akrasia And Self-Rule in Plato's Laws*, offers a version of this above possibility where he says, "our assistance or intervention consists in deliberating about the value of specific actions and arriving at conclusions about those actions that are entailed by the correct laws that we accept" (Wilburn 2012: 35). The function of the golden cord is to calculate, and these calculations give us some small motivation to follow it. This motivation is so small, however, that the cord stands in need of helpers, but Wilburn here is saying that the assistance to the golden cord is deliberation; however, one might think that the first pull exerted by the golden cord *just is* the *output* of deliberation. Wilburn has proposed giving the role of helper to this act of deliberation, and this leaves utterly

mysterious the purpose of the initial pull. Wilburn's thus appears to be proposing that to pull along with the golden cord you need to do what you already did, namely deliberate! He mistakenly gives the role of helper to that which needed the helper to begin with.

It is further unclear how such deliberation actually succeeds in helping us follow our golden cord, for the reason we are not following the gold cord has to do with the strength of our other motivations and the misalignment of them with our rational impulses. Not only is there is no evidence in the puppet analogy that indicates the Athenian expects us to deliberate again, but this simply reproduces the problem we began with, namely that there is nothing to explain how we get the other non-rational cords to follow our rational inclinations. Additionally, the language of the passage supposes that we need to *add* some kind of help in addition to the pull of the golden cord, but on Wilburn's view, we are merely doing the same thing over again and expecting a different result. So, neither Wilburn nor Bobonich have shown that the cord can be strengthened in the way they suppose.

There's an additional reason why the proposals of Bobonich and Wilburn do not work, and the reason is that their interpretations are not supported by the text since the text does not suggest the golden cord can be *strengthened*. In fact, Plato is actually committed to strength and malleability being opposed. I would like to explain this idea of the opposition of strength and malleability in more detail and why Plato would believe this. There may be some materials, for instance like silk, which are both strong and malleable; yet, most other things are not like this, and our capacity for reasoning is one of them. First, it is not clear what it means for deliberation to be "strengthened". Perhaps this means something like how steadfastly one can come to the appropriate conclusions and how well it can persist even amidst interference such as from the passions. However, if one's deliberative powers persist too strongly on one line of thinking it can be difficult to see other evidence and solutions. It is rather the flexibility of our deliberative capacities that would allow us to take new evidence seriously, adjust, and

develop creative solutions. I suggest that this strengthening would oppose reason's best feature of flexibility because such strength would hinder its ability to be flexible to new experience and evidence.

Passages from the *Laws* also show that Plato is committed to strength and malleability being opposed features of our reason. Evidence that Plato thinks our reason cannot be strengthened is that the iron and gold metaphor in the *Laws* is being used by Plato to express this same idea which occurs in the *Republic* in terms of size. One occurs at *Rep.* 4.442a4-6, where Socrates is describing that reason and spirit, both being properly educated, "Will govern the appetitive part, which is the largest part in each person's soul", and that reason is referred to as the small part (*tōi smikrōi merei*) (442c4). The same size metaphor also appears in the *Laws* when the Athenian is discussing the greatest ignorance in a city. He says:

This discord, I maintain, between pain and pleasure on one side and rational opinion on the other, is the ultimate – and greatest – stupidity, because it affects the most populated part of the soul – the part which feels pain and pleasure being to the soul what the common people and population at large are to the city" (*Leg.* 689a5-b2).

Here the size metaphor is used for depicting the strength of each part. The appetites have considerable strength due to how populous they are, whereas reason does not, which is why it is necessary that the spirited part of the soul in the *Republic* assist reason. In other words, reason's strength, due to being so small, is not enough to have it conquer the larger part all on its own. There is no suggestion here that the rational part itself can be made bigger or stronger by its own devices, nor is the solution to this problem in the *Laws* to make the rulers more populous. Thus, the only way our reason can become stronger, in line with the political metaphor, is to give it more allies such that it can then overpower the numerous appetitive cords. So, reason is not the kind of thing Plato takes to be capable of increasing in size or strength. Rather it is the kind of thing which needs strong allies. This makes more sense if we think about what this strength and flexibility actually metaphorically represent in the *Law's* passage. Since flexibility is a characteristic of the golden cord, and the golden cord calculates and takes account of what is best, the flexibility of it is best actualized by the process of reasoning; i.e., the individual's

receptivity to arguments, reasons, and facts which can change one's opinion or outlook. Strength on the other hand may be contrasted with this characterization. This strength must at least accompany a nonreceptivity to arguments or reasoning; it is a resolve to go with its own desires/opinions—a characteristic which an individual can also have due to its multiple parts, but which a single part cannot. Construed this way, strengthening the gold cord would be counter to its intended purpose and because of this, neither Wilburn's nor Bobonich's interpretations can work since they both rely on reason being strengthened to make sense of the passage.

So, with strength and malleability being opposed, even on Plato's own view, it cannot be the case that we somehow strengthen reason to achieve self-control. Rather, it is the helpers which will aid us in achieving this end. Helpers, which I have argued, must consist of some of the cords referred to as "anticipations". *Aischunē*, the laudable fear about what others think about us, which helps us resist pleasures by making us afraid of a conditional outcome of becoming vicious in the eyes of others or even ourselves (by preventing us from doing bad things), and *tharros*, a confidence in ourselves, especially in our own ability to resist possible pains (which helps us do good). These can help us pull in accord with our rational cord<sup>41</sup>. I explore two possibilities for how exactly this might occur in the next section. In the section thereafter, I will provide my own account, which is somewhat of a hybrid of the two views explained in the next section.

### The Role of Law in our Journey to Self-Control

In this section, I will expand upon my alternative proposal for reading the puppet passage. I aim explain what kind of aid can be provided to our rational beliefs and spirited motivations in order to ensure that we act in accord with our rational beliefs. I suggest here that the common law is called in aid as an ally because it can provide both rational and spirited motivation. I defend the plausibility of this

---

<sup>41</sup> These are perhaps not the only helpers, as I believe courage is also a cord that can help. Whether courage itself is also an anticipation is not something I take up here.

reading here. On my interpretation, the law code both establishes reason's conception of the good; i.e., the law code sets what one is rationally motivated toward through education and sets the expectation of behavior, deviation from which inspires shame. This first external helper, the law, then has the effect of encouraging the aid of the internal resources (the cords which are anticipations); i.e., the internal motivations to avoid shame and to stick to their commitments. Following this explanation, I tackle the following question: whether the law is also a motivational source for appetitive cords, which may undermine my distinction that pulls apart the "iron-y" cords as spirited and appetitive. I end by pointing to other dialogues, the reading of which with these themes offers us a richer account of the role of spirit in Plato's moral psychology and characterizes which themes I suggest we carry over in order to appreciate this account.

During one's education, one's feelings are directed to adopt lessons the state decides as being best, as these laws are authoritative due to their ability to govern our lives. One's feelings then develop into motivations drawn to obey these lessons, recognizing their authority and then coming to also feel that they are what is best through consistent exposure to them. The fact that the law itself is reason that has been agreed upon by others gives it a dimension of social motivation that is not present when one's own reason makes prescriptions, and this provides us additional motivation to act in accord with the prescriptions: we can be perceived of as good by others and avoid shame, something we see as bad. This means that these motivations are essential for us adopting and sticking with initial conceptions of the good. As our faculty of reason develops, we become able to justify our conceptions of the good such that when one's own reason makes prescriptions, on the basis of one's own facts and calculations, one is motivated to act in accord with them so as not to develop a negative or contradictory conception of themselves. Similarly, when the law makes the prescription, one is motivated to obey out of fear of being seen as bad in front of others, or disappointing those they hold in high regard. The coupling of the law and one's own reason (when both line up accordingly) provides a powerful set of motivations where

one has motivational forces coming from within (self-evaluative) and without (social). The idea is essentially that one acquires a conception of the good from others. However, by not acting in accord with it, one not only appears bad to others, but one would also appear bad to themselves because they would be acting in violation of their conception of the good.

I propose that one's desire to be seen as good is specifically a desire to be seen as good by others who share one's own rational conception of the good (regardless of whether their reason is mistaken). For example, one who holds the good is the acquisition of wealth will only care about the opinions of those who also think that wealth is the good, rather than the opinions of those who think that the good is virtue or strength. This is obvious from the case of Socrates himself, who often emphasizes that one ought to not care about what the majority thinks because they are the majority. Instead, if we want to be good, we need to be good for those whose opinions actually matter<sup>42</sup>. This is why there is so much emphasis in the *Laws* on making sure that people are obedient to the laws in *their own city* and developing *their own reason*—these are the opinions which should matter. Further, Plato is clear at 7.811d3-4 that the *Laws* is meant to be read as a text in school especially by the young. This text is thus presented as an authority, and this authority makes its uptake easier for those being educated. *Aischunē* then, as characterized earlier, is a motivation that assists by rejecting feelings that threaten to disobey these conceptions and not earn the disapprobation of those it cares about nor damage their own self-conception.

Not every law of every city will be compatible with one's own reason, only the laws that the individuals grew up with and which formed their rational conception of the good. If the laws are coordinated with one's own reason (or aided in reason's development), then the properly educated individual will also have spirited motivations to follow it. If the law conflicts with one's own reason, such as prescribing something one believes to be bad, they will experience conflict and may not be motivated

---

<sup>42</sup> See *Crito* 48a and onward or skip to chapter 2 of this document.

to obey. One's spirited motivations are then dependent on what good one's rational motivations are directed toward, and one main reason for this is that one's spirited motivations see reason's reasoning/calculating abilities as authoritative, seeing as they consider goods for oneself beyond the rational goods. The law, on the other hand, is authoritative in virtue of having been established on the basis of reasoning and being presented as the caretaker of citizens.

As the law can have an effect on our spirited motivations, it follows that some of the spirited motivations it can have an effect on are our feelings of *aischunē* and *tharros*. On the one hand, being disobedient to the law, which is superior to us and created on behalf of our good, would be shameful, triggering our *aischunē*; i.e., our negative feeling about ourselves. The shame of facing the consequences or being seen as bad can also be motivating in this way. *Tharros*, on the other hand, can be inspired by the law because *tharros* involves self-confidence, which includes living up to our own ideas about what is good. Since the law establishes our rational conception of the good, we can feel confident that when we obey reason, we are obeying what is right and living up to our ideas about what is really good in an honorable way, rather than merely avoiding dishonor. In fact, language in the *Laws* seems specifically intended to invoke spirited motivations when he says at line 4.715c2 that service of the gods should be entrusted to one who wins a specific victory (*nikē*), a victory which is ensured by being the most obedient to the established laws. This is directed at motivating those who highly value these laws and their prescriptions.

These two "anticipatory" pulls often work together: we both want to avoid being seen as bad by ourselves or others (part of the response of *aischunē*), and we also want to be seen as good and achieve our goals that make us feel good about ourselves; i.e., the goals that are associated with our ideals, and this is the reaction of our *tharros*-related anticipations. These two will often occur together, but it is possible for one to occur without the other. For instance, it may be shameful to walk the streets naked, but that does not mean one feels that they are a great person for not doing so, or that not doing so is to

be applauded. In this case, one will have a *aischunē*-related response, but a *tharros*-related one may not activate. The opposite may be true as well, as for instance if your average person rushes into a burning building to save a child, they have exhibited *tharros*, but not a sense of shame, for it would not necessarily have been shameful to not rush into such a dangerous situation—in fact people are often lauded for such heroic efforts.

So, we are able to achieve self-control and pull in accord with our gold cord because the law informs our rational conception of the good and provides us with law-inspired rational motivations. Some of our anticipatory cords, namely the spirited motivations, pull in accord with our rational one because it is the authority, but additional motivation from the law can activate other spirited cords to pull in that same direction. Obedience also wins the approval of the lawgivers, gods, and other external authorities and this inspires that aspect of us that is confident in our ability to endure pains and resist temptations to coordinate with reason, as we want to be seen as good and this boosts our image (both the perception of others and our self-perception) as good citizens.

At this time, I believe it is important to address some objections to my account, and by dealing with it, it will make my account clearer. One could ask: if law assists reason by motivating spirited cords, why could it not also motivate appetitive cords to assist reason? If the law can motivate both spirited and appetitive cords, then an objector might wonder why I would complicate the account with a distinction between spirited and appetitive pulls to begin with, for a simpler account would just say that the law encourages iron cords to pull in accord with reason by instilling fear in them. I can reply that insofar as Plato thinks there are differing sources of motivation, such as body vs. reason, present vs. future, etc. there is the constant possibility of being pulled in different directions. When one is pulled in different directions, Plato does not think that it is just reason against everything else. Plato recognizes a complex set of social, non-bodily, non-immediate considerations that form an important class of motivations. This class of motivations is not reducible to appetitive motivations, and they are just as

important to use to help us gain self-control. Secondly, I am not worried about saying that the law could also motivate appetitive cords, it would simply motivate in a different way, for instance by inspiring fear of corporeal punishment or fines as consequences, rather than by fear of becoming bad. I, as well as Plato, would consider it an optimal state of affairs if *all* of one's motivations were to pull in accord with the rational ones, but we should also recognize that this may not be possible for some, who may always have to pull against certain motivations/impulses. I would just like to point out that this optimal state of affairs would not be contrary to my reading of the passage.

A second objection might suggest that the important thing in the puppet passage is not the spiritedness of the cords, as I have argued, but rather that reason can use our future-oriented cords (even appetitive ones) as counter motivations to ensure its guidance is accepted. For instance, one might have two separate motivations: a desire for wealth and a desire for sugary foods. One's reason then might be able to employ one's love of money as a counter-appetitive motivation to the one for the desire for sugary foods to help one avoid ordering a sugary beverage and a dessert while out at dinner (due to the additional cost). Then one's love of money can pull against this other motivation, being strategically in accord with what reason prescribes. While I think this may certainly be possible, it is unclear how it is reason utilizing that motivation as opposed to the love of wealth winning out. But even if this were possible, there is good reason why Plato does not seem to suggest this as a reliable formula for promoting virtuous action. Since cords are pulling in various directions and with different relative strength, and Plato believes that satisfying desires makes them stronger, using appetitive motivational forces in this way may have the undesirable result of making them unwieldy. Further, one is avoiding a particular thing for the wrong reason, meaning if the individual were to be offered a free dessert at dinner, their money-oriented motivation would have no reason to resist, and the individual's process of reasoning alone would not be enough to make them resist. So, Plato's higher standards for the virtuous

condition will rightly restrict which cords we should take advantage of, and spirited cords are a better candidate due to their natural propensity to obey reason.

Finally, I will recap my view. I have suggested that we read the famous puppet passage as not purely about moral psychology but also about the interplay between law and psychology. I argued that one's reason calls the law of the city in aid to help it by supplying a rational conception of the good for it to adopt, a view which is accepted due to one's spirited desire to be recognized as good (both by oneself and others), and that the law also exhibits social pressure which can supply additional spirited cords to act as helpers. So, the gold cord receives external help in the form of education and internal help from its spirited cords. From this we can see one's own reason adopts values during education, and that one's spirited motivations aid in the execution of the actions those values prescribe.

This account of the relationship between rational beliefs and spirited motivations that I have been presenting provides us an interesting way of understanding the relationship between Zeus' gifts of *dikē* and *aidōs* in Plato's account of Protagoras' myth in the eponymous dialogue. We can see here that spirited motivations depend on reason for the development of their initial values, but that they are necessary for the execution of what wisdom deems is best. Protagoras' account is rather vague about how the gifts of Zeus contribute to an orderly political society but understanding it in Plato's terms here gives us a way of understanding what these gifts are and how they contribute to civic obedience. This will be the topic of chapter 5.

Seeing also this executive function of spirited motivations for virtuous action in the *Laws* actually gives us another way of looking at the relationship between rational and spirited motivations in the *Republic*. Specifically, this account asks us to take a look at the forces involved in reason's development and also at its role in action, and I believe we see a similar account developing in the *Republic* as well, where spirited motivations play a role both in the development of wisdom required for wise actions and also in the execution of those prescriptions. Thus, in the sixth chapter of the

dissertation, I emphasize the role spirit has in the development of wisdom while again touching on its executive function for virtue.

So, in this section, I have argued that one's rational motivations are informed by the law, which aids reason during education by establishing our rational conception of the good. I have also argued that our spirited motivations pull in accord with reason by recognizing rationality in the law and in our own reason, which is informed by the law, but that we activate additional spirited motivations by the fact that the law is socially agreed upon. So not only do we fear becoming bad ourselves, but we fear being seen as bad by other rational agents we respect and would rather be conceived of as good by these agents. We also have the support of our confidence in our ability to physically execute what is required. I have also dealt with two objections and clarified that I conceive of fear/shame being able to motivate before our internal rational acceptance of certain beliefs by being responsive to external reason; rational acceptance just increases the strength of these motivations by getting more spirited cords to pull in its desired direction. I have also asserted that my distinction between spirited and rational motivations is warranted because Plato recognizes an important class of motivations that cannot be reduced to appetitive motivations, and it is gaining control of these that allows us to achieve self-control. In response to the final objection, I clarified that employing appetitive motivations as helpers is not an ideal strategy for reliably performing virtuous actions and explained that spirited motivations are better suited for this work due to their sensitivity to reason.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued for a new understanding of the role of law in our moral education which relies on reading some of our basic motivational impulses as spirited. I also argued that in the famous puppet passage there is good evidence to support reading the "anticipations" as spirited motivations. I highlighted key ways that understanding the *Laws* in this way has for our reading of the same or related motivations in earlier dialogues. Thus, this chapter has served to provide a frame for understanding

spirited motivations and interpreting them in the other dialogues; importantly how certain spirited motivations interact with our rational beliefs and how interdependent these two are. In the next chapter, I turn to one of Plato's earliest dialogues, the *Crito*, and argue that the different perceptions of the effects of *aischunē* (both a fear of others and a fear before oneself) are salient, but that Socrates seems to exhibit the most laudable form: the fear of becoming bad himself, regardless of what others think.

## Chapter 2: The Laws' Appeals to Spirited Motivations in Plato's *Crito*

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that understanding the motivational force of a fear of disgrace could help us understand some interesting features and answer some interpretive questions about the persuasive force of the Laws' arguments in the *Crito*. This chapter will tackle these questions. In the *Crito*, there are many appeals to one's sense of shame, some of which are more successful at persuading Socrates than others. These appeals to shame are quite interesting for a number of reasons, as some (i.e., those that do not match his conception of the good) are not taken seriously by Socrates while others (i.e., those that do coordinate with his conception of the good) seem to have affected his decision to stay in prison. One might wonder whether shame should even have a role in the personified Laws' attempt to persuade Socrates to remain in prison and accept his unjust punishment. Here, I suggest that appeals to reputation and one's sense of shame in the *Crito* takes at least two forms, which also reflects the *aischunē* as we saw in the *Laws*: (1) an appeal to what others will think of us; i.e., the kind of person we appear to be in the eyes of others, which is based partly on *their* perception of our consistency of action with our beliefs, and (2) how we will appear to ourselves—the consistency and adherence to our own beliefs about what is good/bad that define the kind of person *we* think we are. Armed with the perspective of Plato's *Laws*, we will see these two attempts at persuasion in action in the *Crito*. It is the second aspect, rather than the first, I will show, that the Laws appeal to when they employ these considerations in an attempt to persuade Socrates. This interpretation provides a richer dimension to the anticipation of *aischunē* as explained in the *Laws*, since it is related to it, yet was not explained in a lot of detail here in the *Crito* due to perhaps being the effect of long-term education and reflection—whereas the Laws here are more concerned with initial education. In showing that the Laws' appeal to Socrates sense of shame is persuasive, it will become clear that Plato's moral psychology as

early as the *Crito* acknowledges other forms of motivation than simply rational motivation (or rationalistic emotions construed as judgment about good and bad) for what is best.

First, I will describe the first instance of an appeal to shame in the *Crito*, which occurs in Crito's opening discussion with Socrates. Socrates, however, clearly rejects Crito's arguments as unpersuasive. Secondly, I will discuss the Laws' more successful attempts at persuasion through shame and show that, in order to see how they are persuasive, we must understand them as appealing to Socrates sense of shame and reputation in a different respect than Crito's initial arguments did. I argue that any instances of shame must ultimately come down to beliefs one has about good or bad ways of being seen, either by one's internal spectator or an admired external one, and so the *Crito* helps us notice that the ones before whom we feel shame can vary and that this variation has implications for our motivations.

#### Appeals to Shame in the *Crito*

This section discusses the different ways one's sense of shame is appealed to in the *Crito*. "Shame" captures both prospective and retrospective shame, but as Socrates has not yet decided on his action, the *Crito* will show itself to be concerned primarily with the prospective kind; i.e., the shame one feels in considering a shameful action one might take or in one's imaging of the shame they will feel if they do the shameful action. I first look at Crito's initial discussion with Socrates, where Crito tries to convince him that it is shameful for Socrates to remain in prison rather than letting his friends help him escape. I show that Crito fails to persuade Socrates because he considers only the opinion of the many, whose opinions are false. Socrates rejects the majority's conception of virtue and the badness of his act due to their lack of expertise. The Laws also attempt to persuade Socrates by comparing him to a runaway slave, telling him that he will strengthen the conviction of the jury, and that he will hear bad things about himself wherever he goes. These considerations cannot be persuasive for Socrates in the same way as Crito intended; i.e., by making him feel ashamed by the opinion of the many. Rather, I will show that in each of these cases, the Laws are pointing out that Socrates should be ashamed because he

is planning to go against *his own* beliefs, which would make him a hypocrite and, due to the fact that he is being a hypocrite with respect to his belief about what is virtuous, also a *vicious* person. This fear of becoming that which he despises and being unable to the pain of living with himself after add further spirited (in terms of its concern with self-image) motivation in favor of not fleeing his sentence.

i. Crito's appeal to shame

At the beginning of this dialogue, Crito visits a sleeping Socrates who is awaiting capital punishment in prison. When Socrates awakes, Crito intends to help him escape, and when Socrates does not seem interested, Crito begins to make appeals to the shame they will feel and the damage to their reputations in an attempt to persuade Socrates to flee prison and avoid his sentence. Crito first describes Socrates' death as a double misfortune to his own self by saying:

Not only will I be deprived of a friend, the like of whom I shall never find again, but many people who do not know you or me very well will think that I could have saved you if I were willing to spend money, but that I do not care to do so. Surely there can be no worse reputation than to be thought to value money more highly than one's friends? (*Cri.* 44b63-c3).

Crito describes not only how he will lose a dear friend, but also how Socrates will cause Crito's reputation to suffer, as other people will think badly of him. He asserts that others will think (since he and his friends have the connections and financial means to aid Socrates' escape) that if Socrates dies, it is because they did not care enough to use their resources to save him. In this way, Socrates' death would appear to signal that Crito and Socrates' other friends value their money more than Socrates' life. This kind of reputation is suggested to be the worst kind one can have, so this would be a great misfortune for Crito.

Crito goes on to suggest that it is not only shameful for himself, but also for Socrates, as what Socrates is doing is not just, for he is, in a sense, playing into his enemies' hands and causing harm to his friends in the way he just described. Letting oneself become a victim to their enemies was thought by many Greeks to be incredibly shameful. Further, Crito asserts that Socrates betrays his sons by leaving them, rather than educating and raising them. He criticizes Socrates by saying: "You seem to me to

choose the easiest path, whereas one should choose a path a good and courageous man would choose, particularly when one claims throughout one's life to care for virtue" (45d5-8). The implication of this claim is that Socrates is neither acting well nor courageously, for he allows his enemies to get the upper hand on him, and he chooses to avoid a possible future where he could raise his children—as a father should. Crito then, after telling him that he feels ashamed because he feels partly responsible for what happened to Socrates (and here is attempting to rectify it), comes to his final point: "So see to it that these things, Socrates, are not along with being evil *also* shameful, for both you and for us<sup>43</sup>" (46a2-3, emphasis added). Crito's assertion here confirms that the consequences he has been outlining are not only bad but also shameful for the *both* of them. All these claims are intended by Crito to persuade Socrates to see a decision to stay in prison as something shameful, for by fleeing Socrates could prevent misfortunes to his friends, raise his children, and have more time to act more courageously and justly. The emphasis is not simply due to the belief that dying in prison is bad, but that in choosing to stay, Socrates acts shamefully because he goes against what is virtuous, at least in Crito's own opinion and the opinions others might have. Crito's suggestion is that Socrates can avoid these consequences and shame by allowing him and his friends to help him flee.

ii. Shame worth being motivated by

Socrates' response to these points aims to show that there is in fact nothing to be ashamed about from his perspective of the good, which is different from that of Crito's, which indiscriminately includes the opinion of the general majority as good. Socrates begins by tackling the question of whether they should care about what the majority of people think about them. After getting Crito's agreement that not all opinions are to be valued, Socrates questions whether it must be good opinions, to which Crito agrees. Socrates specifies that good opinions are the opinions of wise people. He then forms an analogy that just like how someone engaged in professional physical training should value and

---

<sup>43</sup> ταῦτα οὖν, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὄρα μὴ ἅμα τῷ κακῷ καὶ αἰσχρᾷ ἢ σοί τε καὶ ἡμῖν.

welcome the praise and blame of the doctor or trainer, so should one accept the praise and blame of the one who is the expert in living well: the one with knowledge of the just, unjust, shameful, beautiful, etc.; i.e., the virtuous person (47a-d). As a result of this, Socrates concludes that one should not care about the opinions of the majority, who are non-experts, in terms of effects on their reputation<sup>44</sup>.

But this outcome means that there are in fact some kinds of praise and blame which are important to consider, such that if there is such an expert or authority, being shamed by them would help to promote or encourage virtue. Socrates would thus not be indifferent to the opinions of the expert, while he would be indifferent toward the opinions of the many about the lawfulness of his behavior. The standard view of Socratic morality says there is one motivation that pulls us toward virtue, and it is a rational motivation. However, if one is swayed toward virtue also by shame, there appears to be another motivation, and it is not obviously rational, nor non-rational, though I shall argue it is the latter. Rational motivations are about one's ideal, by which I mean what is best in the long term<sup>45</sup>. Motivations from shame, however are narrower and more concerned with obedience to what one has determined is best. Shame helps to maintain consistency between ideals and action, both of which determine the kind of person one is. These motivations are also directly related to reputation and self-esteem. In other words, individuals are motivated to be able to live with themselves after the choices they make, and it matters to them how their actions appear to themselves and others; however, one motivated by shame usually takes a narrow perspective and references a previously established conception of the good rather than calculating about it in the moment. Reason, however, is a globally-attuned capacity that calculates and chooses the course of action that strikes the best balance for the

---

<sup>44</sup> The second thing Socrates ends up showing, which I will not discuss in much detail here, as these arguments are detailed elsewhere, is that Socrates' flight is what is incompatible with virtue; so, his decision to stay in prison would neither be bad nor shameful for himself. It ends up not being shameful because staying in prison is what Socrates believes justice commands of him. Yet, despite having shown this, the Laws continue their discussion and labor to make Socrates feel shame at the prospect of following through, and it is these arguments that I am concerned with here.

<sup>45</sup> In the *Republic*, the friendship between the parts of the soul is on the basis that reason cares for the good of these other parts and occasionally makes decisions that fulfill the desires of these parts of the soul. If reason never acted in a way that satisfied these other goals, it would be difficult to see why they would ever willingly coincide with reason's prescriptions.

individual, which might include considerations of reputation and certain appetitive goods. Shame is not a global concern like rational ends in this way; it cares only about a subset of what reason cares about: reputation and self-esteem, both of which involve adherence to the particular sort of beliefs that we take to define us. In this way, considerations of shame are a subset of the things with which reason concerns itself, and that contribute, in part, to fulfilling rational motivations, but shame itself is not a rational motivation. This entails that, on my view, reason's purview differs from shame's by *also* including non-self-defining values such as perhaps bodily integrity for instance, satisfaction of survival-conducive desires, etc.

It is important to notice that our feelings of shame thus rely on us having a certain conception of the good already established; for instance, if we have a conception that money is a good, we will feel shame at the prospect of ourselves without wealth. Shame itself is not what decides the rationally accepted criteria, it simply responds to it. There are several points at which the personified Laws argue by making appeals to shame by highlighting how one acts in opposition to their rational conception of what is good. In being persuaded by these considerations, I will show how Socrates reveals himself to have what Plato will later identify as "spirited motivations". However, in order to see why the Laws make these appeals, and how Socrates is compelled by these arguments, I will specify how the content of the argument of the Laws differs from the argumentation that Crito was providing at the beginning of the dialogue. I mean that the Laws target Socrates' conception of the good in particular, so they focus on a difference in terms of the agent whose opinion is being appealed to. Crito argues for the importance of reputation and esteem in the eyes of others, but Socrates is not concerned with the opinion of the many, rather he is concerned with the opinion of the expert and with truth. The Laws' thus appeal to Socrates' esteem with respect to himself by trying to show that he should be ashamed of flight and feel lower with respect to himself because such flight would be vicious and cause him to fail to live up to his own ideals. I want to make clear that this is not a different kind of shame, but rather the

shame in both cases can be broadly construed as a failure to live up to one's good as one conceives it, but the Laws' strategy is to target how Socrates conceives it, which does not have to do with appeals to the opinion of others but rather with his own ideals; i.e., what he takes to be true.

### Appeals to the Badness of a Certain Kind of Character

The first passage I want to look at comes at 52c, where the Laws are attempting to show that Socrates did have an agreement with them and chose decisively to live under their laws. They say:

Now, however, those words [that you (Socrates) do not fear death, which you spoke at your trial] do not make you ashamed (*aischunēi*), and you pay no heed to us, the laws, as you plan to destroy us, and you act like the meanest type of slave by trying to run away (*apodidraskein*), contrary to your commitments and your agreement to live as a citizen under us. (52c7-d3)

The Laws assert that not only should Socrates be ashamed of the thought of now acting contrary to what he said in court, since he would be hypocritically going back on his word, but they assert that he also acts like a runaway slave. Kraut makes reference to this passage and others where Socrates is referred to as a slave. On Kraut's view, the comparison to the slave is intended to emphasize the wrongness of the act. He explicitly disagrees with me when he says: "I am inclined to think that embarrassment is beside the point" (Kraut 1984: 121). On my reading, what makes this passage effective as a means of deterrence is not only that the runaway slave acts wrongly, but that it compares Socrates' *character* to that of the character of a runaway slave. Socrates would show himself to be acting like a slave by not being concerned with that with which he ought to be concerned<sup>46</sup>. There are relevant authorities and consequences for others that he ought to be concerned with, but the runaway

---

<sup>46</sup> While Kraut says the typical Athenian's thought at this passage would be that the slaves were acting wrongly in their departure, and further that he is their offspring and servant (*ekgonos kai doulos* (*Cri.* 50e3)) the Laws seem to break the analogy with a slave when the Laws continue on saying, "if you happened to have one (i.e., a master) (*ei soi hōn tungchanen*)" (50e7). So, this type of conditional clause suggests to me that they are not thinking of him like a *literal slave*, but rather slave-like in his action. He does not owe the city strictly what a slave is presumed to owe their master, as it would be strange to say a slave has "commitments and agreements", after all, masters do not typically act as "parents" to slaves. If we presume Socrates acts wrongly because slaves act wrongly when they do this, we have a kind of disanalogy that weakens the persuasiveness of this passage. However, if we think that it is an analogy about character rather than action, the laws could presumably be saying that Socrates shows himself to have a base character. It is not the mere running away that is bad, but it is the fact that they are a slave and have a certain social status that when they disregard the orders of their superiors, they undermine the norms holding their society together, which in Socrates case, are the orders to abide by his agreements.

slave pays no mind to the fact that his action has negative consequences on others and that he disregards people who are their superiors with regard to social status. If Socrates were to flee, his actions would be exactly analogous to the runaway slave's actions in this way: he would be paying no mind to the negative consequences of his action (the fact that he is making an attempt to destroy the city, undermines the laws, etc.), and he would be disregarding his social authorities: the Laws and system that decided his sentence.

This appeal to his sense of shame and the parallel to the actions of a slave attack Socrates' character by exhibiting that he would show that he does not care about the social whole of which he is a part. It is shameful to share the same motivations as a runaway slave. Socrates would not want to act like this kind of slave, even if few noticed he was gone, for to act in this way, without self-control, internal consistency with his belief about the good, or deference to his superiors, is not the kind of person that he is or that he wants to be. It is an embarrassment to act in a way that shows he really only seeks to avoid death, when he has claimed that he cares for virtue and not about his bodily integrity. So, the primary concern is not merely that one is breaking their agreements, but that Socrates would be acting in a way he thinks would be to his advantage, when, in fact, it is one of the worst things he could do. Additionally, the claims in the passage prompting him to feel shame support the interpretation that this is the primary function of this short passage. The reason why he should feel shame is that he is acting unjustly; i.e., contrarily to his conception of the good, which requires he never act that way<sup>47</sup>. If

---

<sup>47</sup> A further point the laws make to show that Socrates should not break this agreement argues for the point that Socrates would not actually be better off by breaking this agreement (for it is easy to presume that one would think that they would be better off by avoiding the death penalty). But it does not argue for this point in the way one might expect. One might have expected him to argue that he is worse off with respect to his soul, even if his material conditions improve after running away. Rather the laws want to show that it is not his own material conditions that diminish (for they might improve) nor do they reference the state of his soul, instead they argue about the cost it would put on his friends. The *Laws* say his friends "will themselves be in danger of exile, disfranchisement, and loss of property" (53b1-2). It is a bit puzzling why this should be motivating, especially since his friends are perfectly willing to help him and are aware of the costs. Further, if he successfully fled, his friends could possibly flee to the same location with him. So, Socrates is being asked to consider the circumstances of his friends and give it weight, and to consider how these consequences to his friends can makes him worse off. The issue that must be being appealed to here is that Socrates relationships with his friends would suffer because he permitted them to benefit him at significant cost to themselves. Perhaps the underlying argument here is that he has some implicit agreement with his friends not to put them in these situations, if he can help it. This interpretation seems supported by the

he were to flee, he would be doing the opposite of what he claims to be concerned with, and this should make him ashamed of himself.

The alternative reading where the analogy with slavery is mainly about the wrongness of the act makes it unclear how this should persuade Socrates anew. The act of flight was already established to be wrong since one was disregarding a debt they owed to their benefactors. The fact that the average Greek would conceive of a runaway slave as acting wrongly adds no new considerations to the discussion; but it would be clear why the Laws are invoking this consideration and using the word *apodidraskein*, with its blameworthy connotation, if they were attempting to persuade by appealing to his sense of shame. Their claims stir Socrates' spirited motivations by attacking his character and their analogy shows that Socrates has the same considerations as a runaway slave: self-preservation. So, by saying he is like this kind of person, they make a claim about the kind of person he is showing himself to be, not re-emphasizing that the act is wrong, but that this action he is considering reflects his character and shows him to be a certain kind of person, namely the kind of person he would be ashamed to be compared to: not just any slave, but a self-preserving, runaway slave who is unconcerned with the broader consequences of his actions.

### iii. Avoiding confirming others' negative preconceptions

The second claim we will look at is the Laws' point that Socrates' leaving would strengthen the conviction of the jury that they passed the right sentence on him (53b6-c2). This is a strange point to make because Socrates frequently invokes the claim that one ought not to take into consideration the

---

text, for they say he would be harming those he should least be harming, which includes, following this passage, the Laws, parents, and friends. Thus, we could build a parallel argument here to the first argument concerning one's friends rather than one's city. The inevitable outcome of which would be that he would act unjustly were he to receive their help because by receiving their help, he destroys them. The interesting thing about this is that it explains well why he should be motivated against this, but there is nothing in the passage that says one owes a debt to their friends or further that one of the conditions of friendship is that they benefit you to begin with. But I also do not see any reason why Socrates or the Laws could not accept these claims about friendship, and if they did, it would make good sense out of why this passage, though so short, would be persuasive. It is because the argument required to flesh out why refusing his friends help is wrong has already been provided in the form of the parallel argument that fleeing is wrong.

opinion of the many. Given what Socrates says to Crito at the beginning (i.e., that people's opinions are not worth taking seriously unless they are experts), we will have to understand the persuasive power of this claim in a different way than that he simply looks bad in the eyes of others. Even if the jury were to have their opinions reinforced that Socrates is a bad person, it should not matter to him (even though it matters to Crito), for their non-expert opinions were of no concern to Socrates to begin with. To respond to this, it is worth reminding ourselves what Socrates' problem is with the opinion of the majority in the first place. At 47a-b, Socrates gets Crito's agreement that good opinions are the ones that should be valued, and that good opinions are those of wise men such as experts. There seem to be two possibilities, however, for what makes these opinions of wise men good. One option is that they are good in virtue of being true. A second option is that they are good in virtue of being the result of expert knowledge. It is important to notice that these two can come apart because one can have a true opinion without being an expert on the matter and similarly an expert can have a false opinion (though it would not be considered the result of their expert knowledge). As this second possibility, about an expert having a false opinion, may be controversial, I will defend it with an example from the beginning of *Republic VIII* that shows that Plato did recognize the possibility of experts, in certain domains, having false opinions. Socrates uses the example of rulers in the city prescribing an incorrect marriage number, and thus producing a suboptimal quantity of future offspring:

Now, the people you have educated to be leaders in your city, *even though they are wise*, still won't, through calculation together with sense perception, hit upon fertility and barrenness of the human species, but it will escape them, and so they will at some time beget children when they ought not do so. (*Rep.* 8.546a-b, emphasis added)

This passage shows that Plato does think it is possible for the wise, by which I take him to mean "experts", to have a false opinion, but it is not a deficiency in their expertise, rather the false opinion has to do with the variability in human affairs; i.e., the variability of offspring. Further, this mistake is the kind of mistake an expert can make because they have done all the right calculations that the craft requires, but some variability they did not anticipate, or could not have known about, generates the

wrong answer, so they make a suboptimal prescription. So, in domains in which there is variability, such as human offspring, medicine, navigation, etc., there may be experts who have false opinions.

This second option presented above (i.e., that the opinions are good by being the result of expert knowledge), is supported by the example Socrates gives in the text, for he immediately begins by asking whether one engaged in physical training should listen to any old opinion or that of a doctor or trainer, namely those considered experts in that domain. However, the value of the second option may be contained in the first, for the reason we care about expert opinions is because it is *their* opinions that are likely to be true. In other words, they have a background of knowledge that makes it such that their future opinions are likely to be right, at least more likely than for one without that knowledge.

So, it seems that what is really of value are the true opinions, and the reason why we should listen to experts more often than not is that they are more likely to be right than non-experts. This suggests that if someone is an expert, then their opinion is worth listening to, due to how likely their opinion is to be true. But without being an expert one can also have an incidentally true opinion, but it may nonetheless be justifiable to ignore their opinion, unless one has independent reasons to think that their opinion is actually true. In this case, for Socrates to be concerned by the opinions of others, it must be this second option: because he recognizes that they know a truth, despite being non-experts. If this is in fact the case, then the Laws may be onto something when they attempt to persuade Socrates with what the jury will believe about him. Socrates may then come to value the opinion of the jurors, not because they are the many, but because they would have a true opinion about his character if he were to flee.

But how would Socrates know that their opinion is true? He explains the reasoning for their strengthened conviction is that “anyone who destroys the laws could easily be thought to corrupt the young and ignorant” (*Cri.* 53c). So, the opinion that would be strengthened would be that he is *this sort* of bad person. Being seen by the youth as a destroyer of the laws is at least one way of corrupting

them—so, if Socrates does flee, the jury would have been right about his corruption of the youth. Notice that the truth of this opinion relies on satisfying the following conditional: if he flees from his sentence, he is the kind of person who destroys laws and corrupts the youth (and thus is deserving of death). This is something that Socrates could know because he has already been persuaded by the Laws that flight is wrong, so in acting in this wrong way he would reasonably expect himself to become this kind of person, for the injustice would harm his soul. So, Socrates would be motivated to maintain his image of himself as a virtue-oriented person and more importantly to not corrupt his soul, which would surely occur if he did the action that would strengthen the jury’s conviction. He thinks that currently such an assessment of his character is untrue and would like it to remain untrue. So, Socrates would be motivated not to flee because if he does, he will turn out to be exactly the kind of person that they claim he is. If he flees, he would prove at the most critical time for him to exemplify his adherence to his morals, that he does not value them in action as he claimed to have in words. So, what I am arguing the Laws are attempting to suggest that Socrates present action will reflect his past character and that though he did not even know it himself at the time, he is in fact a corrupter. Socrates is thus afraid of this possible truth, not about the beliefs of the jury.

This interpretation is reinforced by what the Laws say that follows: “Or will you flee both well-governed cities and the most civilized of men? And doing this, will you have a worthy life? Or approaching them will you be so shameless as to converse about what, Socrates? [...] virtue and justice”<sup>48</sup> (53c4-6, minor modifications). The Laws imply that people in well-governed cities will make the connection about Socrates’ vice, and assert that Socrates would be acting shamelessly to converse with them. Presumably then, they imply that he ought to feel ashamed, and that this shame should stop him from having these conversations. I assert the reason for this effectiveness is not simply that they

---

<sup>48</sup> πότερον οἷν φεύξῃ τάς τε εὐνομουμένας πόλεις καὶ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τοὺς κοσμιωτάτους; καὶ τοῦτο ποιοῦντι ἄρα ἄξιόν σοι ζῆν ἔσται; ἢ πλησιάσεις τούτοις καὶ ἀναισχυντήσεις διαλεγόμενος—τίνας λόγους, ὦ Σώκρατες; [...]. ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη

would have a true opinion of him but because they want to attune him to the shame of the inconsistency involved in preaching about virtue but being someone who is not virtuous himself, as he is willing to go back on his morals. It cannot be the case that he would be ashamed because the new city thinks *truly* about his vice, while Athenians currently think it falsely. The reason is that it is not merely a matter of what they think or do not think, but a matter of Socrates' own values. In this context, the Laws are pointing out the critical inconsistency in fleeing now and espousing the same views about virtue and justice he held before.

So, Socrates may take his flight as evidence that deep down he must not truly care for virtue, since in the most important moment, he would have abandoned what he believed in. This is true even if he flees to poorly governed cities, for he would be no better than the citizens there, and this fact too would make him shameless to speak to them as he previously did in Athens. The Laws' point is that Socrates will *not* act shamelessly, as their rhetorical question about whether his life would be worthy if we did this expects a "no" answer<sup>49</sup>. Socrates would thus be ashamed of himself for doing the opposite of what he knows is best here—and this is the right time for shame to motivate him. The Laws' appeals to shame are rallied in service of Socrates' conception of the good—because he conceives of fleeing as an injustice, he feels shame at the thought of reinforcing the beliefs that people had about him because they would end up true by his action of flight.

*iv. Avoiding hypocrisy and inconsistency with ideals*

A third claim I want to consider is when the Laws ask what Socrates would teach in a new city if he were able to successfully flee. They imply heavily that he would be a hypocrite to teach what he taught in Athens, namely that "virtue and justice are things of great worth for humankind as well as lawful things [lawful action and perhaps custom] and the laws [themselves]<sup>50</sup>" (53c6-7). Since, as they

<sup>49</sup> As indicated by the use of ἄρα at 53c4.

<sup>50</sup> ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη πλείστου ἄξιον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ τὰ νόμιμα καὶ οἱ νόμοι;

have argued previously, departing is an injustice (which Socrates has already accepted), if he were to assert that justice is one of man's most precious possessions, his escape would show that his deeds do not match his words. The Laws then ask, "and do you not think that the actions of Socrates would be unseemly (*aschēmon*)?<sup>51</sup>" (53c7), and if he decides to go to Thessaly instead, a city which is less well governed than Athens, they say:

Will there be no one to say that you, likely to live but a short time more, were so greedy for life that you transgressed the most important laws? Possibly Socrates, if you do not annoy anyone, but if you do, you will hear many unworthy (*anaxia*) things about yourself. You will live serving and being a slave to all men. (53d6-e2, minor modifications)

The Laws here are making a very interesting claim, namely that if Socrates flees, people will say things unworthy of his current character—further, he will live his life as a slave to them. This cannot, as I have been arguing, be persuasive to Socrates in the sense that he simply wants to avoid people talking poorly about him—as people already do this!

Kraut, in his 1984 book, *Socrates and the State*, does not have anything to say about these arguments, except that "my guess is that, in the mind of Socrates, Athens occupied a middle ground: the law did not have much power over its citizens' ideas and behavior as it did elsewhere [as in Sparta and Crete], but nonetheless its influence was far from negligible [as in Thessaly]" (Kraut 1984: 224-5). So, Kraut takes the Laws primarily to reinforce a point that Athens was occupying a middle ground between the law-abidingness of Sparta and the lawlessness of Thessaly that Goldilocks might say was "just right". Athens did not have the problems of both regimes to such a degree, and so was a sort of ideal place. Kraut also emphasizes how he takes the Laws to be saying that Socrates would not want to flee to Thessaly, which is a city having great disorder (*ataxia*) and a lack of discipline (*akolasia*); the implication, I assume, would be that he would be worse off there because he cannot pursue his goals of promulgating virtue due to the severe disorder of the citizens. But these do not seem to be the points

---

<sup>51</sup> καὶ οὐκ οἶει ἄσχημον ἂν φανεῖσθαι τὸ τοῦ Σωκράτους πρᾶγμα;

the Laws themselves are emphasizing, though it is taken to be true that Thessaly was not as well governed as Athens. The Laws are telling Socrates that people will be sure to gossip about him, claiming that he is greedy for life. Further, and more compellingly, there is not much he can even say to the contrary. The Laws mockingly suggest that it is possible no one will gossip about him, on the contingency that he annoys no one, but it would be especially clear to Socrates that no matter where he goes, he will annoy people, especially in Thessaly, a city which one might think is greatly in need of Socrates' moral guidance, as the *elenchus* is the kind of thing to which people do not take kindly. In the *Apology*, Socrates describes his role in Athens as that of a gadfly (*myōpos*) (*Ap.* 30e3-4), the kind of thing that is by nature annoying to the creatures with which it interacts. So, this passage is strange if its only goal is to show Socrates that he cannot flee to a better place, and also it is weird if we think it is trying to persuade him by making him afraid of what others will think of him. However, even if Socrates were to say to the Laws that there would be no one to talk badly about him because he will utilize the *elenchus* in a friendlier manner, hide his past and identity, the Laws could still point to one important person from whom he would hear despicable things: Socrates himself.

Kraut could say, however, that what the Laws are doing is showing that Socrates will actually be *unable* to fulfill his goal or accomplish his duty to the god if he flees because no one will be willing to listen to him. So, he should be motivated to care about their opinions insofar as their marred opinions of him prevent him from fulfilling his rational goals. In other words, good opinions of him are instrumentally useful for his goal of promoting virtue. If Socrates flees, he could no longer tell others about the importance of caring about one's soul and being virtuous because his own actions would have signaled to others that he does not actually know what he is talking about. This would make it unlikely that anyone would trust him and want to be his student or interlocutor. However, the Laws cannot be doing what this alternative suggests. One reason is that it is unclear that people in other city states would know about his past, or even care about it, especially in the less well-governed cities to which he

could flee. In fact, if there were enough evidence to support that Socrates could get away with hiding his identity in a new city, this would *still* fail to motivate Socrates to flee. On the contrary, if Kraut is right, such an opportunity might give Socrates reason to consider fleeing after all. If Socrates could successfully hide his identity, then it is not true that his rational goal would in fact be undermined. And even if they said despicable things about him without knowing about his past, but being annoyed with him in general, this would not matter to Socrates, for Socrates did not care much about his public image in Athens, and if he did not care about people suggesting that he is tricky or corrupting the youth there, he would not care about it elsewhere.

Yet, contrary to Kraut's plausible hypothesis, the Laws make it clear that these despicable things will be said if he annoys the people. So, what is it about what they say that would make this consideration motivate Socrates? The only thing that is different from the past horrible things people have said about him and the possible future things is the context under which Socrates is living in that city. Currently, Socrates is a loyal citizen of Athens, who works hard to live a virtuous lifestyle, which he takes to necessitate cross-examining the lives of others. However, were Socrates to flee, he would be unable to teach what he wants to teach, not because his interlocutors would not be willing to listen, but because Socrates would not be sure whether he could believe *himself*. Socrates says his life consists in the pious action of cross-examination on behalf of the god, Apollo, to help others examine their lives and recognize their own lack of virtue; however, Socrates would be suggesting with his own example and life that living the life he recommends for others is not desirable. How would Socrates be able to believe himself if, when at the most critical moment to show his adherence to virtue, he fled in opposition to it? It thus becomes clear that what he wants to avoid is being a bad person, and he wants to avoid these despicable words being the truth—whether they are said by others or by his own mind.

The final interesting point the Laws made was that Socrates, if he fled, would live his life serving all men. Recall that Socrates conceived himself prior to his imprisonment as serving his God by showing

that the God is correct in his assessment of Socrates' wisdom, for human wisdom is worth little. But further recall that Socrates' characterization of his mission in the *Apology* was that he wanted to find a counterexample to refute the oracle: "I went to one of those reputed wise, thinking that there, if anywhere, I could refute the oracle" (21b7-c1). Here, perhaps, we could consider Socrates' service to man in the same way. Were he to go to this new city, he would work constantly to prove to himself that they are wrong (that their conception of him as vicious for departing is simply not true), but he will spend his life doing this in vain, as there are not many more opportunities that will arise for him to exhibit his adherence to virtue on as grand a scale as the situation he is presently in. By doing an act of injustice of the level he is contemplating, he would have no choice but to perceive himself as irredeemably corrupt. So, the Laws' attempt at persuasion here is to make him feel shame at the truth of his viciousness were he to depart and show him that there is no hope in validating himself thereafter. He feels shame at the prospect of becoming that which he hates and not exhibiting the commitment to his ideals at the moment when it is most crucial. He is thus motivated by the Laws' considerations to avoid this hypocrisy, so that he does not become a person he cannot live with.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the *Crito* on the basis of the perspective we saw in the *Laws* about the importance of non-rational motivations for promoting virtuous action, and with this in mind, I was able to answer some interpretive questions about the persuasive force of the Laws' considerations outside of their rational argumentation. Notably, we were able to see that some of the persuasive force of the Law's argumentation relied on inspiring feelings of shame which, by being reflective of Socrates' own conception of the good, motivated him to stay in prison rather than going against his conception of what is just.

The persuasive force of all these arguments that invoke shame were shown to be centered around showing Socrates that he exhibits vice if he leaves, which is inconsistent with his ideal of living in

accordance with virtue. Furthermore, flight is so abhorrent because there is nothing that he can do afterward which will show his care for virtue if he shows that he cannot care about it at the most important time in his life. Even if he thought he could somehow live a virtuous life elsewhere and continue his mission, the Laws prompt Socrates into recognizing that this act is of such a scale that he could never show his commitment to virtue being the most important thing if he flees. Socrates will rightfully feel shame at the thought of valuing something above virtue and is concerned with the opinions of the jury and other citizens insofar as they actually reflect the kind of person he is. Namely they could be right about him all along, and any future people who claim to see vice in him will hold a true opinion. The Laws thus make Socrates feel a prospective kind of shame: if he departs, he becomes a hypocrite and exhibits his viciousness—for someone who betrays the laws of their home country is just the kind of person who is vicious and corrupts youth, etc. These fears result from his rational belief about the wrongness of flight and support it against alternative beliefs about what his life could look like after flight. Socrates cannot continue his mission elsewhere because he will prove to himself, through his flight, that he no longer believes in it.

In the next two chapters, I want to look more at this conception of shame that the *Laws* have helped us to draw out and how it can influence others, especially without virtuous conceptions of the good, to act. In particular, Socrates discusses utilizing shame as a tool against such people, when a sense of shame appears to be both a good and a bad thing. I will look at different views of how shame seems to be operating, attempt to explain in more detail how shame seems to function in one's psychology on Plato's view. I also analyze a sample *elenchus* that highlights the view I am drawing out and exhibits these different outcomes in action. This also has the upshot of explaining why, despite its risks, Socrates continues to use shame as a way of promoting virtue.

## Chapter 3: Socrates' Use of Shame in the *Apology*

### Introduction

In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates describes his initial journey to collect evidence of people wiser than himself to refute the oracle at Delphi, who claimed that Socrates was the wisest of men. What Socrates learned instead was that no one was wiser than him, for he did not try to stake a claim to knowledge he did not possess. Others: craftsmen, poets, and even government officials frequently asserted that they had knowledge that they did not really possess. Socrates quickly saw the value of recognizing one's own lack of knowledge for the genuine pursuit of virtue, so he came to believe his god's mission to him was to help others recognize the extent of their own knowledge so their path to virtue could become clearer. He did this via a method called the *elenchus*, where he pitted an interlocutor's beliefs against one another and then reproached them for the inconsistencies he saw among their beliefs or between their beliefs and actions. I plan to discuss the role that shame plays in Socrates' *elenchus* and other dialogues.

In this chapter, I first explain the different roles (or lack thereof) scholars have taken non-rational motivations to play in our behavior. I intend to give a more detailed account than these scholars of how change in our belief about what action is best occurs. I am specifically interested in how spirited motivations like shame and anger influence behavior because not only is inspiring spirited emotions essential to Socrates' strategic plan for promoting virtue via the *elenchus*, but also because the different outcomes (virtuous or non-virtuous action), as well as Socrates use of the *elenchus*, are actually best explained, I will argue, by understanding how these motivations are dependent on one's reason. My view on this matter can best be understood as an extension of Naomi Reshotko's view in her book *Socratic Virtue*. In her book she says:

[A]n appetite never plays a role that is more instrumental than any other piece of information that the intellect has used in order to determine what is best to do as motivated by a desire for the good. I hold appetites are like sense impressions: they are phenomena that help us form

judgments, but they do not interact with our judgments that have already been formed.”  
(Reshotko 2006: 86)

I agree with her sentiment that they do not interact with already-formed judgments in the sense of altering them, and I also agree when she says:

My momentary craving [for chocolate] could influence me to misjudge the pleasure that I will receive from eating it. If this is the case, my craving can be cited as something that led to a shift in judgment and the formation of a particular executive desire. (87)

Here Reshotko is describing how appetites also serve an executive function. Her main concern here is with diachronic belief-*akrasia*. However, I intend to fill in a gap she leaves remaining, namely the explanation that describes in what way *spirited* passions are taken into account as *solutions* to the diachronic belief-*akrasia* (or can even prevent it from arising at times). She also leaves a bit mysterious what kind of information is offered that is taken into account when we are deciding how to act, and so I seek to offer a plausible explanation of this as well. I explain that the kind of information that is offered by these passions must be how well the proposed action adheres to or promotes one’s already existing conception of their good.

Alternative accounts like Brickhouse and Smith’s cannot explain why shame, the motivation I will continue to focus on, sometimes presents virtuous actions as good for uptake by reason, and other times vicious action as good. In what follows, I explain a couple different views with emphasis on Brickhouse and Smith’s view, especially how they must see shame as *causing* both vicious and virtuous action respectively. I also explain Reshotko’s view and the benefits I see in her view over that of Brickhouse and Smith’s. I then provide more detail to my aforementioned objections to Brickhouse and Smith’s view. I diagnose the misstep in their view as being due to misrepresenting the kind of emotion that shame is (i.e., as an emotion not *dependent* on reason), while Reshotko’s view nicely recognizes shame’s dependence. So, as I see it, our spirited motivations are dependent on our rational beliefs in such a way that they never genuinely compete with it; instead they have a motivational force with the intention of preserving or advancing our conception of the good. I already showed how in the *Crito*

shame can be triggered by showing a possible inconsistency between one's beliefs, considerations or actions, and one's conception of their good. Next, I plan to explain the process of the *elenchus* and how Socrates triggers this same type of shame, then further explain why it gets him into such deep trouble.

### Plato's *Apology* and Socrates' Use of Shame

Socrates reproaches his overconfident interlocutors in order to strategically utilize shame in an attempt to make his interlocutors recognize their own insufficiency with respect to virtue and motivate them to live better lives. Socrates illustrates the process when he explains how he exhorts his fellow Athenians:

Good Sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both wisdom and power; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation and honors as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul? (*Apol.* 29d6-e2)

Here, Socrates attempts to draw his interlocutor's attention to the fact that he appears to care for things that are inferior to the best thing he ought to be concerned about: the state of his soul.

Thereafter, if his interlocutor disputes this claim, asserting he does care about the best possible state of his soul, Socrates says:

I shall question him, examine him and test him, and if I do not think he has attained the goodness that he says he has, I shall reproach him because he attaches little importance to the most important things and greater importance to inferior things. (29e4-30a2)

By this, Socrates indicates that he tests their beliefs by pitting them against other beliefs or actions they perform and thereafter reproaching or criticizing the individuals who do not act as virtuously as they claim. This practice of Socrates' is referred to as the *elenchus*, where Socrates refutes his interlocutor by highlighting an inconsistency in what they believe and how they act. One might reasonably feel shame when this inconsistency is brought to light and, in ideal situations, the shame the interlocutor feels then motivates them to do better. However, this practice famously backfires as Socrates winds up on trial due to generating the very shameful response that he intended to promote virtue. Young men, fascinated with his procedure, imitated him by practicing on their elders. It is now these elders, humiliated by these

younger men, who indict Socrates on the serious charges of impiety and corruption of the youth.

Socrates says:

I think they [the young men who imitate me] find an abundance of men who believe they have some knowledge but know little or nothing. The result is that those who they question are angry, not with themselves but with me[...] these people are ambitious, violent and numerous; they are continuedly and convincingly talking about me; they have been filling your ears for a long time with vehement slanders against me. (23c5-e3)

The fact that even young men are able to locate these men (and the fact that the men become angry) indicates they are imitating Socrates at least somewhat accurately. In other words, they are able to use Socrates' model to find those who are confident in their knowledge and question them in ways that reveal their lack of knowledge. If the young men are aiming to imitate him as much as possible, they are also likely following his lead and reproaching these older men after revealing the inconsistencies in what they claim to care about and how they actually act. Then, the first thing these older men must feel is shame, for the inconsistency the young men have found is genuine. Their reproach mocks them for this inconsistency and feeling the pain of shame with no clear way of opposing it, they then become angry<sup>52</sup>. This shame then, is one of the catalysts that causes vicious action, namely the unjust slandering of an otherwise innocent man<sup>53</sup>.

However, in Plato's latest dialogue, the *Laws*, we saw that shame was described as a positive feeling that promotes virtuous action. In the *Laws*, Plato's spokesman the 'Athenian' says:

Isn't this fear [of disgrace, a.k.a. shame] our salvation in many crucial situations? In particular, when it comes to our victory and salvation in war, isn't it this, when compared one to one with

---

<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, we have reason to think that the young men did not employ the *elenchus* correctly, as the aim of the *elenchus*, as explained in the *Sophist* at 230b1-d3, is to make one angry at oneself and calmer toward others. However, Socrates says the older men are angry at him rather than at themselves. While I do not investigate the possible differences between Socrates' employment of the *elenchus* and that of these young men, and it is out of the scope of this dissertation to give it a lengthy treatment here, I do feel that one key difference is in the overall goal. Socrates aims to help others discover their ignorance and new pathways to virtue, while the young men are after honor and the pleasure of humiliating others. Because Socrates' aims are different, he is able to meet more receptive parties a bit more often (people who enjoy the investigation with him and see it as important for how to live their lives). However, it is clear that even having lofty goals for an *elenchus* can still be irritating for the cross-examined party. Thrasymachus, in particular, is a good example of someone who finds Socrates incredibly frustrating.

<sup>53</sup> Socrates' innocence has been contested by scholars. See Burnyeat (2005) Cartledge (2009) who argue that Socrates was guilty (at the very least) of impiety, though both seem to think that death should not have been the penalty. The important point, for my purposes, however, is that Socrates thinks the Athenians are not acting virtuously when they indict him; so, I follow his understanding of the matter.

anything else, which makes the greatest contribution? There are two things, after all, which contribute to victory – boldness (*tharros*) vis-à-vis the enemy, and the fear of disgrace (*aischunēs*) vis-à-vis our friends (*philōn*). (*Leg.* 1.647b3-6)

Here, shame plays a role in developing the virtue of courage. One fears disgrace in front of friends; however, while it is true that Plato does not explicitly say “fear of disgrace before *ourselves*”, at 647b6, I suggest this is not entirely inconsistent with my argument that such fear results due to being in opposition to one’s conception of the good. The reason why one feels shame in front of their friends is because they would be seen acting in a way their friends would not approve. Further, Socrates seems to accept the possibility that friends are often friends with each other because a shared conception of the good is the basis for their friendship. For example, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says “friendship is produced on account of likeness”<sup>54</sup> (*Phdr.* 240c2-3), which suggests the possibility that people become friends with respect to how they are alike, which includes what they care about; i.e., what they consider good. Later on, too, in the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says, “it is a decree of fate, you see, that bad is never friends with bad, while good cannot fail to be friends with good”<sup>55</sup> (255b1-2). These examples support my interpretation that the good are friends on the basis of what they consider good, and so when one is fearing shame before one’s friends, the more foundational explanation is that they fear violating their shared conception of what is good.

Because their shared conception of what is good may not be what is *actually* good, shame, is not always a good thing. In the *Charmides*, both Socrates and Charmides agree with the Homeric saying: “a sense of shame is no good for a man in need” (*Charm.* 161a2-3)<sup>56</sup>. So, they conclude thereafter that “a sense of shame is both a good thing and not a good thing” (161a7). The fact that shame’s virtue-

---

<sup>54</sup> δι’ ὁμοιότητα φιλίαν παρέχεται

<sup>55</sup> The claim that like is friend to like and its accompanying rationale seems to appear in the *Lysis*, where Socrates postulates that those who are unjust are never alike, not even to themselves, and thus they cannot be friends with other wicked people, let alone good ones, but the good are alike (in their goodness) and so can be friends; so, Socrates concludes from this discussion that whoever are good are friends insofar as they are good but the bad are not capable of such friendship. (*Lys.* 214c8-e6)

<sup>56</sup> Hom. Od. 17.347;

conducive effects are not a given makes the *elenchus* an especially risky procedure. It is particularly puzzling why Socrates would make someone in need of virtue feel shame if he also holds that shame is “no good” for such a person. Why would Socrates employ such a risky procedure on his mission to aid his god in the first place? An answer to this question requires an answer to another set of questions: how does shame generate action and why would shame sometimes generate virtuous action and other times vicious action; i.e., what role exactly does it play in our action? Scholars have answered this set of questions in a myriad of ways.

### The Role of Non-Rational Motivations

In this section, I give an overview of some of the scholarly responses to the question of the role of non-rational motivations in action. I attend to a couple views in two main camps, that of the Socratic intellectualists, which includes Penner, but also Reshotko who offers a revised view, and that of the non-intellectualists which includes Devereux, Brickhouse, and Smith.

#### Penner

The standard intellectualist view of Socratic moral psychology says that there are no non-rational desires; all desires are rational desires; i.e., they automatically adjust to an agent’s beliefs, such that the only way to affect action is to change one’s beliefs. Penner formulates the view as follows:

According to this theory, all desires to do something are rational desires, in that they always automatically adjust to the agent’s beliefs about what is the best means to their ultimate end. If in the particular circumstances I come to believe that eating this pastry is the best means to my happiness in the circumstances, then in plugging this belief into the desire for whatever is best in these circumstances, my (rational) desire for whatever is best becomes the desire to eat this pastry. On the other hand, if I come to believe that it would be better to abstain, then once again my desire for what is best will become the desire to abstain. Rational desires adjust to the agent’s beliefs. In fact, on this view the only way to influence my conduct is to change my opinion as to what is best. (Penner 1992: 128; author’s own italics)

Because proponents of the standard view believe that all desires are rational in the sense that they are both good-directed and responsive to evidence, there is always, firstly, a belief about how something contributes to one’s happiness. Then, as I understand him, if one sees that doing this particular action

contributes positively to one's happiness, this belief plugs into one's pre-existing desire for what is best, and one's rational desire then just is a desire to partake of the object/action that contributes to their happiness. Following this desire, agents presumably then act on it automatically. The general idea is that there are no desires outside of rational desires, and that these rational desires, due to their good-directedness, automatically "adjust to" what one believes best conduces to their ultimate end. On this view, then, both virtuous and vicious behavior are the result of one's rational desires; it is just the case that with vicious action, the individual is incorrect about what contributes to their ultimate end. This view leaves no room for non-rational desires to influence behavior, for all the desires are presumably rational insofar as one sees (even incorrectly) them as aiming at the agent's supposed good.

### *Devereux*

Devereux, recognizing the shortcomings of the standard view for dealing with the plethora of evidence he sees in early dialogues that points to Socrates' recognition of non-rational emotions/desires, argues that people *do* have non-rational desires. However, the presence of or lack of non-rational desires are not what determines one's virtue. In his words, "the non-rational part of the soul has no role in determining moral character<sup>57</sup>" (Devereux 1995: 406). Devereux's understanding of Socrates' view is more Kantian than Platonic or Aristotelian, for on Devereux's view, Socrates does not distinguish between being self-controlled and virtuous. What makes someone virtuous is not whether they train, eliminate, or are in harmony with their non-rational emotions, but whether it is their *reason* that guides their actions. For Devereux, the virtuous agents conquer their non-rational desires through their knowledge, but vicious people, lacking this knowledge, succumb to these desires because non-rational desires can make it such that a proximate pleasure appears larger than it is, which then gives

---

<sup>57</sup> On Devereux's view Socrates' virtuous man can be the same person as one Aristotle would refer to as continent. They will do the right thing for the right reasons but may nonetheless not have the right feelings about the act in question. Devereux's thus draws a stark contrast between the views of Socrates and that of Aristotle and Plato, who generally contend that one's passions must be in line with, rather than in opposition to, reason in order for the action to be genuinely virtuous.

rise to the temporary belief that fulfilling this desire is more pleasant than it actually is (395). On Devereux's view, then, an agent's knowledge, when they have the art of measurement, always conquers their non-rational desires by seeing past the illusions that proximate pleasures provide. In this way, a virtuous agent can have strong non-rational passions, see these appearances as good, but not develop the *belief* that the object in the appearance is *actually* good. These passions simply fail to influence their virtue because the art of measurement always reveals the pleasures of the non-rational desires to be unworthy of pursuit. On Devereux's view, such an individual would supposedly have the craft of measurement, which would make them incapable of adopting non-rational interests as "rational" ones, because the way that non-rational desires influence action is by causing false beliefs, and knowledge excludes false belief.

### *Brickhouse and Smith*

Brickhouse and Smith, while agreeing with Devereux that passions can affect beliefs and even alter one's conception of the good, disagree with Devereux that people can be virtuous while having strong non-rational passions, since strong passions "influence judgment by the way in which they represent their aims to the soul" (Brickhouse and Smith 2010: 62). Brickhouse and Smith interpret that rational desires play both an informational *and* causal role in behavior, such that strong desires will hinder the functioning of reason which can cause one to behave viciously. Brickhouse and Smith explain that when:

Socrates says that appetites that have been "filled up" become unruly, he means *they resist the making of such judgments* about the pleasurable object to which they are attracted. Thus, the more wrongdoers engage in injustice, the stronger their appetites become and, consequently, the less able they are *even to consider* whether the pleasure that attracts them is actually good. If the wrongdoers' appetites are allowed to become sufficiently strong[...] when their appetites are aroused they will fail to see a reason *not* to pursue the satisfaction of those appetites." (124-125, emphasis added)

So, if one's passions become strong from overindulgence or an intemperate upbringing, their strength in silencing rational judgments about the objects of their desire also increases. As their strength increases,

Brickhouse and Smith see one's rational prowess also weakening. Since reason is what makes judgments about the goodness of different options and weighs them, if the strength of these appearances is substantial, then reason appears to lose its ability to calculate about the goods the appetite desires. I assume the thought on this interpretation of their view is something like this: given the choice between receiving \$50 and \$5,000 as a gift, one may feel resistance to calculate about whether the \$5,000 is really better or not<sup>58</sup>. The \$5,000 appears very good, and you perhaps imagine all the good things you can do with it (fancy dinner outings, buying nice clothing, etc.). The anticipated goodness takes over and resists calculating in any way that could diminish the goodness of the money. Further, when reason does not exercise its powers of calculation, reason weakens (so you may not even see a need to calculate about it), thus making it even easier for appetites to motivate a variety of morally dubious actions.

Brickhouse and Smith think that one can *only* have the power of calculation when one also has weak passions because passions, as described above, prevent reason from calculating when they become too powerful. This is in contrast to Devereux, who sees the passions as capable of coexisting, even when the passions are strong. Reason, in Brickhouse and Smith's cases, simply goes along with what the passions deem best and can adopt these desires as beliefs on their face value without calculation. On Brickhouse and Smith's view, however, since reason becomes weaker when it takes up these beliefs rather than calculating for itself, such individuals can even come to a point where their reason is so weak, it can no longer be strengthened again, and such people, in possession of all the wrong beliefs and without the strength of reason to change them, are described as "incurably vicious" (124-8).

### *Reshotko*

---

<sup>58</sup> However, if you had deliberated you might not choose \$5,000. For instance, if you have a gambling addiction, that extra \$5,000 might just lead you into greater debt because of how you would spend it. The strength of your desire, however, causes you to rationally believe it is also good for you by overshadowing (or causing you to not even consider) the negative considerations you might otherwise consider if your desire was not so strong.

Naomi Reshotko, a proponent of the standard view, agrees with Devereux that non-rational drives and urges are taken into account in our assessment of what is best, but she notes that she diverges from Devereux on a key point, namely his explanation for how these non-rational drives and urges are taken into account. Devereux allows for non-rational desires to interfere more actively with one's beliefs. She says that Devereux, at times, suggests that "irrational appetites are instrumentally equal to the desire for the good, in the production of a behavior" (Reshotko 2006: 85-6). By this, she is thinking that Devereux sees appetites as being able to have the same impact on our behavior as our desire for the good. So, these desires can essentially compete equally with our desire for the good. Devereux's view thus suggests that the appetite must be providing a motivational force other than the desire for the good (in order to compete with it). However, on her view:

[A]n appetite never plays a role that is *more* instrumental than any other piece of information that the intellect has used in order to determine what is best to do as motivated by the desire for the good. I hold that appetites are like sense impressions: they are phenomena that help us form judgments, but they do not interact with judgments that have already been formed. Our desire for the good registers our appetites in forming judgments and beliefs. The fact that I now crave chocolate will be taken into account as I judge what is best for me in my circumstances. (86, emphasis added)

Reshotko's idea is that appetites do not supply motivational forces counter to one's desire for the good, rather they are factored into decisions as pieces of information about what is best (by reason rather than directly competing with it). So, they do not change our desire for the good in the sense that our desire for what is good shifts from something rational to something non-rational. Our conception of the good is not what shifts, rather on her view, it seems that what action we think is best (i.e., that best accords with our conception of the good) changes with the information that we have.

On her view, the passions seem to act as pieces of information about the desired object's contribution to our good. When we crave something, I think she means that it provides some information about the instrumental good it offers. When one craves something and deems that it is no good, they presumably have more information that that outweighs the good of fulfilling the craving.

Reshotko makes an example of her desire for chocolate. She explains her desire is a factor in judging whether a piece of chocolate is good: “This current and intense craving might then be cited as a factor in my judging that a nearby candy is a means to what is best for me” (86). The satisfaction of this intense desire provides more pleasure than it would have if she did not have this intense desire, and this weighs against the other information that she has as she considers what action is best. Her desire for what is best, however, as it is for what is best, does not change, what is changing is her judgment about whether it really fulfills that criterion (being best for her) or not. She also explains:

I can *feel* my desire for the good propel me repeatedly toward alternative actions as I go back and forth in calculating the net good that will result from satisfying my craving as compared to the good that I suspect would be the result of not indulging, (86)

One way of understanding her here is to see her as focusing on one primary motivational force: one’s conception of the good that is supported or unsupported by different alternative actions, but for her this type of vacillation between two judgments is an intellectual struggle rather than a motivational one (88, n17). Further, it is possible that as someone reasons about the different possibilities, they see that the possibilities contribute differently (and in varying ways that are context-specific) to fulfilling their conception of the good. This variability suggests that the weights of the urges/desires are not objective but rather have subjective value for Reshotko insofar as they present the outcomes as more or less in accord with one’s conception of the good. The weight one gives to its value can change as one realizes it does not result in as much good as they expect. For instance, imagine that I have a non-lethal nut allergy, and I see a delicious piece of chocolate. I might think this would contribute to my good by a lot, as I am craving chocolate. However, upon reading the label, I realize that it has nuts. Its value now drops substantially. I might continue to reason, however that I can eat around the nuts and that it might be worth the risk. In this way, I bounce back and forth between thinking it is good for me and not good as more information becomes available or as I attend to different aspects of the available information. Reshotko clarifies what is required to leave this vacillating state: “All that is required is that, at the

moment when I act, I am entertainingly only one of them – I act on only one assessment of what is best for me in my present circumstances” (86). This suggests that attention also matters for the final act. Namely, if someone is entertaining only one conception of what is best, then their attention is focused on this alone. So, information and attention must be important to the final decision, and the size of the promise of the good can provide more weight or perhaps draw our attention more strongly. These urges, however, will not change one’s conception of the good (for instance if my conception of my own good includes my bodily health). Rather, one weighs the satisfaction of this urge (net benefit and net cost), and if the urge comes out on top, it is not because one’s conception of the good has changed (if I eat the chocolate it is not because the chocolate seems better to me than my health), but rather, as I understand her view, I have somehow reasoned into seeing the chocolate as providing more benefit than cost, or perhaps ending up likely to have little detriment on my health. This is how passions affect action on her view<sup>59</sup>.

I hold that Reshotko’s view that non-rational drives and urges influence reason, and ultimately our action, by acting as informational sources to reason (as opposed to opposing motivational sources) is more plausible than the alternative views<sup>60</sup>. Following Reshotko, I do not think that Brickhouse, Smith, and Devereux are right when they claim that there is a causal force that desires can exert on reason that actually serves to *undermine* our rational beliefs. In fact, the kind of causal interaction they imagine happening, on my view, actually occurs in the opposite way. We have certain desires, feelings, etc. *because* of our rational beliefs, and these can desires reflect and reaffirm our rational beliefs.

### Brickhouse and Smith’s View

---

<sup>59</sup> It is important to note that on this view, it is possible to have a craving and nonetheless think it is no good. Even after reasoning that it would be a detriment to oneself to fulfill this craving, one can possibly continue to crave it. For instance, one might believe it is morally wrong to have sex prior to marriage, yet desire to do so with their partner. Despite their desire, due to their moral or religious commitments, they may continue to abstain and think that doing such an act would be bad.

<sup>60</sup> I, however, think and have argued in the previous chapter, that information provided by the passions can be motivational.

i. How shame contributes to virtue and vice

In this section, I will describe Brickhouse and Smith's view of how the passions (like appetitive desire, shame, humiliation, and anger) affect an agent's beliefs about what is best to do. As I am focused on shame in previous chapters, an emotion which can yield both virtuous and non-virtuous action, I will describe in particular here how they think shame is capable of both of these different kinds of responses. I reference their example from Plato's *Apology* to help us understand how shame, on their view, must influence vicious action. Thereafter, I look at what they say about shame in another work of theirs that clarifies how they understand shame as contributing to virtuous action. Both accounts of how shame causes vicious and virtuous action have serious gaps, but I will attempt to fill them in with the most charitable interpretation of their view in light of their other commitments. In service of this, in my discussions of each, I suggest ways of interpreting their view that fills in these gaps.

Beginning with the passion of shame and how it influences vicious behavior in particular, according to Brickhouse and Smith's account, shame, like other non-rational motivations on their view, plays a *causal* role in one's belief formation. Namely there is something about the experience of shame that directly results in a new belief. In describing the impact on motivation and behavior that Socrates' use of the *elenchus* had on those who brought him to trial, Brickhouse and Smith introduce what I understand as their account of how shame influences non-virtuous action. I will focus on only the first four steps of their described process, as they are most relevant for my current purposes. They outline these steps exactly as follows:

- (1) Socrates interrogates someone, revealing that person's ignorance.
- (2) The person's pride is injured; they feel publicly humiliated [ashamed] and become angry.
- (3) The person's anger leads the person to want to slander Socrates.
- (4) But the humiliation and their own pride are such that they cannot bring themselves to reveal the truth: that it was their own ignorance that led to their humiliation. (Brickhouse and Smith 2010: 56)

Since steps (2) and (3) are the most important parts of the causal story, I will focus on these and provide only short remarks about the other steps. In (1), through the *elenchus*, Socrates reveals someone's

ignorance by asking a series of questions about their beliefs. He shows that his interlocutor thought they knew something they in fact did not. In (2), as a result of being around others such as friends and Socrates himself, when Socrates brings to light the fact that his interlocutor knew something they did not, their sense of shame is triggered, and they feel humiliated. What they must be humiliated about, on Brickhouse and Smith's view, is being shown to be inconsistent in their beliefs about the subject matter *in front of others*. There is no explicit reference to private shame on their view<sup>61,62</sup>. In order for someone to feel shame, they suppose it must be in front of others, at least one other, which on my view is also consistent with such a person being Socrates himself<sup>63</sup>. The humiliation and subsequent shame they feel is thus understood as a kind of pain, which is naturally perceived as bad. This pain triggers their anger which aims at a way of alleviating this pain<sup>64</sup>. This anger then leads someone to step (3): this physical response creates an internal appearance of a certain state of affairs as good, which is presumably the

---

<sup>61</sup> Woodruff, however, does make room for private shame, which he calls "solipsized" or "Socratic Shame". So, in saying that it is the scalding laughter (or censure) of a community, Woodruff rightly, though not in these exact words, recognizes a community of one. With Socratic shame, one feels awareness of having betrayed one's own values (Woodruff 2000: 144), and this is the sense in which one can feel censure as a community of one; i.e., one censures oneself.

<sup>62</sup> While it is true that a lot of feelings of shame arise in social situations, it is not clear that shame is something that is felt only when one anticipates being exposed to others. It is clear upon reflection that private shame does exist, for this shame can occur when one perceives themselves as going against their values. Considering everyday life as well, we can see how intuitive this view is. Someone can easily feel ashamed at something they did merely by reflecting on something they did that is inconsistent with their current general perception of what is good. Imagine someone who values being a sophisticated and restrained person. Imagine further that this particular person likes to socialize and go to parties, and at one of these parties they drink quite a lot more than usual. However, in spite of being praised by their friends for their ability to hold liquor and having a good time with them, this person may nonetheless feel shame about having gotten so drunk (i.e., not properly restraining themselves) the next day. The reason is that they have a conception of their own good, a way that they see themselves, with which their actions were incompatible. In other words, they first see an action conflicts with what they think is good, then the action causes them to reprimand themselves, thus they feel shame. They feel shame at being like the kind of person who drinks too much at parties, even though there is no social opprobrium from their friends. The only one with eyes on them is themselves, and this feeling cannot be explained if shame is merely considered to occur only in public situations.

One could also feel ashamed at their own private thoughts and scold themselves for such thoughts. For instance, one might recognize their own biased thinking when they are contemplating not choosing one of the girls for their team because of gender biases, but thereafter chastise themselves for such thoughts and try to reorient themselves to think things that are better in conjunction with other concerns they have about equality, and in spite of their initial bias, they may choose one of the girls for the team. This domain of private shame is ignored by their view, and a view that can account for it gives a much richer understanding of how shame functions in our psychology. Perhaps though, like Woodruff, if they are willing to accept a community of one, where it is possible for one to be ostracized from one's own group, their view could be expanded to accommodate this aspect. My own view will do just that.

<sup>63</sup> They could plausibly believe that there is internal shame; i.e., the individual can feel shame before themselves, but they do not discuss this, opting to focus instead on the public-ness.

<sup>64</sup> It is possible that there may be other responses other than anger, but since anger is what Brickhouse and Smith focus on, I run with their example.

same as them desiring to act in the way presented as good. Namely, the individuals in the above example, when they get angry, see slandering Socrates as a good thing. Slandering appears good because such slander can discredit Socrates. Socrates then becomes painted as a tricky and corrupting man. Such a man, the slanderers expect others to believe, cannot be right in his assessment of others as unknowledgeable, nor can his method be reliable for determining knowledge. The most charitable way to understand Brickhouse and Smith here is that this desire, when caused by strong enough anger (or passion in general) *just is the belief* that punishing is good<sup>65</sup>. They say that:

Only if the soul ended up judging that what appeared to be good [because it was presented as such by an appetite, for example] was actually the best choice one could make in a given situation, would one become fully motivated to act. The stronger the appetite or passion, the more compelling the appearance of good would be. (200)

Becoming fully motivated to act is dependent on a belief about what is best and having a belief about what is best is sufficient for action. So, this desire to punish is motivationally equivalent to having a belief that punishing is good. This leads to action presumably because the belief that something is good, is thought by them to be sufficient for pursuit. So, the way that passions yield non-virtuous, or even vicious behavior, is by creating a physiological response strong enough that the appearance it creates really convinces one that the action it prescribes is best. This is thus a new belief generated by the passions that influences reason (i.e., what one thinks is best) and consequently one's action.

ii. [Prospective and retrospective shame](#)

Brickhouse and Smith also acknowledge that shame can lead to moral improvement. They seem to identify both prospective and retrospective shame—though they do not use these terms. In retrospective shame, one is currently ashamed and acts on the basis of that feeling. In prospective

---

<sup>65</sup> Since Brickhouse and Smith do not explicitly explain what they mean by “irrational desire”, there is an open alternative interpretation, namely that desire is a physical response like a “craving”. In fact, Singpurwalla points out that this is how Devereux (393) describes his own view, and Brickhouse and Smith claim to be following Devereux on this point (Devereux 2002: 25, n5) (Singpurwalla 2013: 250, n11). But she also criticizes them on exactly this view, for it remains inexplicable how physical responses of this kind can influence beliefs. She questions rightly: “Why, that is, should we think that a pure feeling state would directly affect our beliefs about value?” (251).

shame, one fears the pain of the shame that they will feel and acts on the basis of that fear. In order to exemplify the causal process of belief uptake they see in cases that lead to moral improvement (on our understanding of retrospective shame) they explain:

The unpleasant experience of shame influences the way people act *by inducing them to change their beliefs about what is best for them*[...] so too our capacities for fear, shame, and other emotional reactions can be made to play a useful role in motivating better behavior[...] Socrates seems to think that one is much improved both by fearing and being ashamed in the proper manner, and not fearing or being ashamed when one should [*sic. not*] be (see Apology 28b6–c1, d5–9). (137-139, emphasis added)

Here Brickhouse and Smith seem to be providing an account modelled on the account of anticipatory pleasure that Socrates outlines in the *Philebus* (beginning at *Phlb.* 36a1), where instead of anticipated pleasure, there is anticipated shame. Shame, on their view, has both a physiological and psychological effect. First the unpleasant physical (and perhaps even psychological) experience of shame occurs. As described in the previous section, this unpleasant experience is derived from public humiliation. To drive home this point that it is public humiliation that they care about, rather than private shame, they clearly endorse Woodruff's characterization of shame, quoting in appreciation this passage where Woodruff describes the common Greek understanding of this emotion<sup>66</sup>:

Shame is a *painful* emotion one feels at the thought of being exposed in weakness, foolishness, nakedness, or perhaps even wickedness, *to the view of a community whose laughter would scald*. Shame is closely related to *fear of exclusion from one's group*, since derision generally marks the exposed person as an outsider. (Woodruff 2000: 133, emphasis added)

Shame is the kind of thing that Brickhouse and Smith, in agreement with Woodruff's claim here, seem to think is dependent on a community and has as its content an accompanying fear of being excluded from one's group<sup>67</sup>. This painful experience thereafter has an effect on one's belief, changing one's convictions about what is best. So, the pain of shame, we are led to believe, induces one to change their beliefs because their new beliefs (about what is best) involve ridding themselves of this pain they feel.

---

<sup>66</sup> According to Woodruff (2000), both Thucydides and Callicles endorse this understanding of shame.

<sup>67</sup> I should note that the emphasis on laughter here is only one example, for laughter might perhaps be a common response to weakness, foolishness, or nakedness, but with regard to wickedness, censure is surely the scalding reaction.

With this shift in belief comes a newly motivated action that follows. These passions, on their interpretation of Socrates' perspective, lead to good behavior when one feels ashamed in the appropriate manner and at the appropriate time. This can be achieved, I suspect they believe, by a proper educational upbringing.

In a more recent article of theirs, Brickhouse and Smith flesh out shame's prospective role. They identify two things that prospective shame can do which will generally yield virtuous action. I will deal with each in turn. The first is:

- (1) [when one is told they are thinking about acting in a shameful way (x)] they will also become more able to appreciate other reasons why it is not actually in his best interest to [do x].  
(Brickhouse and Smith 2015: 24)

This first use of prospective shame appears to make one more receptive of rational calculation. The most plausible explanation for how this works is perhaps that the anticipation of shame provides another reason that one did not consider about the downsides of their considered action. This kind of shame can then have the effect of better supporting their strong or at least unweakened reasoning. In other words, this kind of shame just helps the agent realize there are further consequences than the advantage they anticipated from pursuing the action they presently desire. This suggestion also gives us a possible interpretation for what these "reasons" actually consist in; namely that by "appreciate other reasons" Brickhouse and Smith just mean to be receptive of, recognize, acknowledge and/or take seriously other considerations about the outcome of the action that shows their supposed outcome not to be as good as they originally thought.

Let us see how this first kind of prospective shame works in the context of Brickhouse and Smith's own example. They use an example of a guard who is considering fleeing his post. Guard A is working alongside guard B and notices guard B considering abandoning his post. Guard A then reminds him that he will be marked as a "pathetic coward", his family members will not want to be held by him, his parents will feel shame at him, and by fleeing he will end up with nothing: no family, friends, fellow

citizens, etc. (Brickhouse and Smith 2015: 24). In this example, the action of flight is taken to have all of these consequences that guard B did not previously consider. Guard B, now recognizing how shameful it will be to flee, supposedly begins to appreciate these other reasons why it is not in his interest to flee. It is true that these outcomes are bad regardless of whether one feels shame or not, so if the guard sees the bad consequences of flight, there is a question about what need there is for shame. Their idea is that the shame the guard will feel will serve as a further consideration to not do the action. So, it is all of these bad consequences plus the fact that the guard will feel shame that helps with the ultimate decision to stay and fight.

I see Brickhouse and Smith's understanding of how this kind of shame changes belief as a quite simple image; it seems to be best understood as a kind of weighing. However, unlike the metaphor of weighing that Socrates' interlocutors initially assent to in the *Protagoras* (*Prt.* 356a3-c2), where one relies on vision (the perceived nearness or remoteness (as well as quantity) of a pleasure or pain) to determine a single thing's relative desirability, Brickhouse and Smith's view seems to be more like Socrates' view in *Republic X* and *Protagoras* (356d6-358a3) where a broader view of the circumstances is necessary rather than merely taking into account what is immediately visible (because it is easy to be tricked when employing the senses). In the *Republic*, Socrates emphasizes that the law tells someone to resist pain, while experience tells them to give in. There are rational justifications to obey the law that are not immediately recognizable, nor considered, but when Socrates draws them out, Glaucon sees the superiority of abiding by reason and thus the law (*Rep.* 604a-d). Rather than looking at what is immediately visible, the art of measurement should be used to ensure that the considerations are weighed appropriately, and further there are—to continue with the weighing metaphor—considerations that have not yet been put on the scale, and this is what our reason does for us—reason can offer countervailing evidence to the other side of a scale as well as our feeling of shame.

It is helpful to think of this in light of Brickhouse and Smith's guard example: prior to the conversation with guard A, there was nothing to weigh against the anticipated pleasure or good gained by flight, which is why guard B considered it worthy of pursuit. So, the pleasures of flight, at this time, appear to outweigh the pain, but after the conversation with guard A, guard B has added another reason to the scale pan that weighs against the satisfaction of flight, which then makes the pains of flight outweigh the possible pleasures. This new stone added to the pan, I assume, is the new belief that Brickhouse and Smith think we have about the situation. After weighing the two considerations against each other, the scale tips only when the new concerns brought on by shame are weighty enough. Thus, on their view, the *elenchus* must use shame to essentially add another stone (belief about a future pain brought on by the shame they will feel) to the opposite weighing pan that will then weigh against the other goods presented by their passions. In other words, these additional reasons weaken the appearance of flight as good by supplying countervailing evidence.

This is important because on Brickhouse and Smith's view, when an appearance presents something as good, and there are no defeaters present, that belief will get uptake, and one will act on its basis. For instance, when one sees a good-looking slice of cake, they will desire it and, in the absence of defeaters, will rationally believe they should pursue it and thereafter pursue it. Additionally, unlike Devereux, Brickhouse and Smith think that when one has knowledge that, for instance, the cake is not good, that this actually changes the way it appears to them; there is no distinction between the appearance that it is good and the belief that it is good. So, if one is reminded about why eating cake is bad, the cake, on their view, actually starts to look less good. Brickhouse and Smith think that our non-rational impulses can then directly interact with and even conquer our conception of the good by being motivationally distinct from it. My desire for the cake is distinct from my desire for the good, and when my desire presents the cake to reason, if my desire is strong enough, it can overwhelm my desire for my own good, and I will now believe that eating this cake is in my best interest; so, the perception and my

desire changes my belief about what is good for me<sup>68</sup>. Thus, shame is necessary to serve as a defeater and offer the countervailing evidence that a certain behavior is actually *not* good for me.

Aside from this first way of changing belief, there is another way that prospective shame helps motivate people toward virtuous behavior. This second way is that:

- (2) shame may also serve as a mild chastisement that, for one who has a sense of shame, actually serves to weaken the inclination to see [some action, e.g. "fleeing an enemy"] as a great good. (24)

This use of prospective shame seems to weaken the power of the appearance, rather than providing reason additional support. This seems to differ from the first way because it does not appear to strengthen one's reason but weakens the power of the appearance that has the consequence of allowing reason (even in a suboptimal state) to come out on top. A benefit of this, I presume, is that shame as a chastisement can be effective against people without strong reason (since people without strong reason may not be susceptible to prospective shame in the first sense above). It is worth noting that regardless of which way prospective shame encourages action in any particular case, either way would result in pursuing the same (virtuous) action.

Now, it is not immediately clear to me that these two things do not actually amount to the same thing; one case just focuses on strength while the other case focuses on weakness. Since strength and weakness are relative to one another, why would it not be the case that when reason is strengthened that the inclination to do something counter to reason weakens? Thus, when one appreciates new

---

<sup>68</sup> This idea is plausible (that x will actually start to look less good) in evaluative cases like this, but in cases of vision, like the analogy Socrates uses of a stick in the water, this idea is less compelling. In Socrates' case, he asks us to recall a common illusion of a stick halfway into a body of water and how it "appears bent" in the water. While we may have knowledge about water refraction, any amount of knowledge about it does not make the stick actually "appear" less bent to us. So, Brickhouse and Smith's understanding of how knowledge, when it does, conquers these appetites seems to only work for evaluative cases, but not even all evaluative cases. For instance, if we were to learn that the cake that we are seeing is cleverly made soap-art meant to appear like real food for aesthetic purposes, it is not clear to me that knowledge that the cake is actually soap will make that cake appear less delicious. Though one might think that knowledge actually changes the content of my desire slightly (I no longer desire to eat *this* soap-cake, what I want is a similar *real* cake to eat; it cannot change the fact that looking at this soap-cake makes me hungry (it is, after all, surprisingly realistic). There are some illusions that our sensory faculties are not capable of overcoming simply with knowledge. Singpurwalla (2006) captures this nicely while distinguishing (unlike Brickhouse and Smith) between emotions and beliefs.

reasons not to do something, one also develops a weakened inclination to do it, and when their inclination is weakened, reason is strengthened by having additional reasons, such as those understood via chastisement that result in one not wanting to do the action. Let's take an example that shows how my 'being able to appreciate other reasons why it is not in my best interest to do something' results in my having a weakened inclination to do something: if I want to tell a lie, but am told of all the shame and bad things I will bring upon myself by doing this, then I suspect that I, being afraid of the future shame, will now both realize it is not in my best interest and, after recognizing this, also have a weakened inclination to lie, where this just means that I both have new rational evidence *and* lying appears less attractive to me. So, it seems that being told about the shame we will have results in the following realization: is not in our best interest to act in the way we were previously considering, which also results in a weakened inclination to act in that way. However, conversely, is being told that something will result in shame and being chastised similar as well? My objection to this view relies on this point. Let us take their example again. Is being marked a "pathetic coward" in the first sense not also a chastisement? The specific phrasing that Brickhouse and Smith have guard A use: "Do you now plan to run back to your beloved wife and children, marked for life *as a pathetic coward?*" is ambiguous between being informational: "don't you know people will be disappointed" and accusatory: "you should be ashamed of your cowardice". If one understands this as merely informational rather than accusatory, this is not actually an example of prospective shame; merely knowing that the act results in something shameful might make one feel more cautious and deliberative than shameful.

Simply knowing how other people feel, however, is not enough yet to make one feels *shame*. Yet, if we understand it as being accusatory, and I think this verbiage better reads as accusatory, then (at least some forms of) being told you are considering acting shamefully (for some people) is equivalent to being chastised. So, on my understanding of their view, it seems that both kinds of prospective shame are reducible, in most cases, to one kind wherein the individual receives some form of information

about how an action is bad, and thereafter sees that the act they were previously considering is not in their best interest, which then results in weakening their inclination to act in that way.

Brickhouse and Smith could object and say that the strengthening of reason and the weakening of our inclination to act are two separate things because one can have non-rational motivations not to do something, and these motivations, while decreasing one's inclination to act, do not have the effect of strengthening one's reason. But it is important to notice that we are not talking about any old non-rational motivation, but shame in particular. Their claim is that shame does these two things, but the ideal consequence of shame is that it makes people *more receptive* to reason, as indicted by the Eleatic stranger's characterization of the process in the *Sophist*:

The people who cleanse the soul[...] likewise think the soul too, won't get any advantage from any learning that's offered to it until the one cross-examining, having brought the one cross-examined into a state of shame[...] and exhibits it [the soul] cleansed, believing that it knows only those things that it does know, and nothing more (*Soph.* 230c6-d3).

In other words, one can better learn what is offered to them after they are brought into a state of shame. This suggests that shame, while decreasing inclination to do something, makes one more susceptible to reasoning, which in turn strengthens their reason by causing it to calculate with the new inputs.

So, on Brickhouse and Smith's view, shame, an emotion triggered by social situations, can inspire both vicious behavior, by presenting appearances so strong that reason cannot resist them, or virtuous action, by adding relevant pain such as chastisement and future negative results as considerations in one's deliberations, which can have the result of outweighing the pleasure perceived from the action they initially desired to perform. This helps them recognize that this action is not in their best interest, and thus weakens their inclination to perform the non-virtuous action in favor of a more virtuous option.

iii. Gaps in Brickhouse and Smith's view

In this section, I raise two objections to Brickhouse and Smith's view: (1) their account of how virtuous action is caused by shame seems incompatible with how they think vicious action is caused by it because they cannot explain what is special about shame/humiliation that allows it to both weaken and support reason, and (2) even if we allow the apparent incompatibility, they cannot answer, using their resources, the related question: why can shame sometimes present a virtuous and other times a non-virtuous behavior as good for rational uptake? I contend this problem results from failing to recognize shame's *dependence* on our rational beliefs about what is best.

The interesting feature about shame, and I think this perhaps follows for all of what Plato later dubs "spirited motivations", as opposed to appetitive passions, is the possibility for it to contribute to both virtuous and vicious behavior. Shame even at times comes close to achieving the status of virtue; for instance, when Charmides identifies it with *sophrosunē* in his namesake dialogue<sup>69</sup>, though Socrates rejects this identity. With shame it is the same emotional and physiological response that leads to these different morally-valanced actions<sup>70</sup>; people tend to also feel shame at the same things yet have vastly different responses to this feeling (getting angry, vs. becoming distant). With the appetites, however, the proper way of acting when one has them, is with moderation. However, dealing with shame means one has to deal with inconsistencies that regard their conception of the good, the resolution of which inconsistencies can cause one to virtuously or viciously (even if their anger is properly directed at themselves), depending on what their conception of the good is and the accompanying education they had.

However, recall Brickhouse and Smith's description of how vicious action is caused, namely that a passion essentially overpowers rational calculation by becoming so strong that it overpowers

---

<sup>69</sup> Plato and also Aristotle ultimately deny shame the title of a virtue itself and perhaps for the very reason that it can lead to vicious action.

<sup>70</sup> I believe the same is true about anger.

alternative beliefs about the good and forbids calculation about it. Recall further that this weakens reason by not allowing it to exercise its powers of calculation. However, they also asserted that shame also apparently allows one to become more receptive to reason by helping them “appreciate the reasons” why something is not in their best interest. It is not clear to me why *only some* passions, like shame, are capable of doing both on their view, while others, such as the appetites, only weaken reason when they become strong. Brickhouse and Smith do think that the power of measurement is directly opposed to strong appetites, and so can only be cultivated when the appetites are left weak, but shame is sometimes a praiseworthy motivation, and seems to be encouraged as a part of early childhood education by both Plato and Aristotle. So, why would strong shame not also weaken reason or forbid calculation about what it suggests is good?

The strongest possible response they can offer is to say a bit more about shame, perhaps that there is something special about shame (and perhaps even about the spirited motivations in general) concerning the way it interacts with reason. I suppose the thought is something like this: when shame is in line with reason, it does not have the consequence of weakening reason. Similarly, it is only when the passion is counter to what reason considers best that it weakens reason by presenting other options as good. However, I take two issues with this line of response. The most important one is that this response would undermine their account of how passions allegedly *cause* belief, for if shame is already in line with reason, shame does not cause a *new* belief in reason. Because Brickhouse and Smith assert shame affects one’s cognition (Brickhouse and Smith 2010: 59, 61), rather than that adjusting to one’s reason (as is the case on the standard view), they will have to say that the appearance shame provides (when it does not weaken reason) is in accord with reason only *coincidentally* through the chance of having had a good upbringing; but, even with this coincidental alignment of the ideals, it is not clear what effect this has on cognition, let alone whether it *causes* a new rational belief. Second, (and this is perhaps a problem with their overarching view of shame) it is not clear to me that shame is ever *not*

reason-responsive, and it is in this sense that I take it to be “in line” with reason. In fact, I will argue in the next chapter that shame is always reason-responsive. This marks one of my major divergences from Brickhouse and Smith’s view.

I will now turn to the second problem with their view, which is that they do not explain why the same emotional response will present one course of action as good to one person and an opposite course of action as good to another. In other words, how shame can both cause the virtuous and vicious responses we see arising from different people who feel shame is underdescribed. What explains why some interlocutors want to cause Socrates’ death, while others want to learn more?

Of course, the obvious answer might be that it is the person’s education<sup>71</sup>. Brickhouse and Smith could say that some people are educated to respond to certain things in certain ways (or perhaps come to believe that sabotaging their rivals, for instance, is an acceptable behavior if that behavior is not chastised). The problem for Brickhouse and Smith, however, is that this response cannot be available to them, given that they think that shame does not adjust to one’s conception of what is best, but rather shame has the reverse effect of *influencing* one’s conception of what is best. If one already had the belief that it is right to defend one’s honor by sentencing to death those who shame them (from their education for instance), then the response to their shame which presents this action as good is inspired by their *already existing conception of the good* and as such would not compete with it but rather be in some way in accord with it. This is also not a *new* belief inspired by one’s feeling of shame.

These problems arise for Brickhouse and Smith mainly because they do not recognize the dependence of shame on reason. The truth is that desires and beliefs are much more complicated than Brickhouse and Smith make them out to be. So, in the next section, I will discuss my view of how shame

---

<sup>71</sup> Earlier (pp. 92, n52 of this document), I suggested that the outcome could have to do with the cross-examiner’s goal of their *elenchus*, but I do not discuss this possibility in more detail here because it seems that despite Socrates’ lofty goals, there is evidence from several dialogues that his interlocutors become frustrated with him, at least to the point where others have to take up the argument for them; Thrasymachus in the *Republic* and Philebus in his namesake dialogue are a couple of examples)

must be working in these contexts. I agree with Reshotko that motivations are not completely non-rational for they are dependent on reason; i.e., are triggered because of something rational. This fact can ultimately account for the different behaviors that result, while not committing me to saying that such beliefs can cause what we *rationally* believe. However, while she says that our physical craving can generate appetitive desires (rational because they are desired under the impression of meeting/fulfilling/being in accord with our rational bodily ends: survival, attention, physical pleasure etc.), she does not fully explain what information is offered by spirited motivations and this is likely because they aim at non-bodily ends. However, because Reshotko does not elaborate on how or why shame is generated on the basis of rational beliefs, I will aim to explain this in the following section. My account will focus on shame, but this does not mean there are no other non-rational motivations dependent on reason.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I began with a question about the role of shame plays in virtuous and non-virtuous action. I presented three different views about this role: the standard view, which argues that all desires are rational desires, Devereux's view that shame, a non-rational desire, can impact one's belief, but not ultimately their virtue, Reshotko's view that non-rational motivations play an informational role, but not a motivational one, for our action and that such motivations interact with, rather than alter, beliefs, and finally Brickhouse and Smith's view that shame plays an important causal role in changing beliefs that does have a significant impact on whether one is virtuous or vicious. I spent considerable time discussing Brickhouse and Smith's view because they give the most detailed account of shame in particular. Following this discussion, I identified two significant shortcomings of Brickhouse and Smith's view. The first was that their two accounts of how shame influences vicious and then virtuous action are inconsistent with each other and that attempts at reconciling them have the effect of undermining their account of the "causal role" that they want shame to play. The second was that

Brickhouse and Smith cannot easily explain why shame sometimes makes people act virtuously or viciously.

The easiest way to see how shame functions, as I will argue, is to understand spirited motivations as being the result of two beliefs often in combination with one other. Rather than belief about survival or physical pleasure as in the first case, there is a distinct kind of belief involved in spirited motivations that is self-evaluative. Let's turn to this discussion next.

## Chapter 4: Examination of the Laches: Shame as a Self-Evaluative Belief

### Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that a characteristic feature of motivations like shame is the way such passions result from two kinds of beliefs. During the *elenchus*, one first develops what I will refer to as a “content” belief about a subject matter. Then, if this is a subject in which the agent has a considerable stake (cares a lot about), the agent then recognizes that this content belief reflects either well or badly on the kind of person they are. This reflection, when it reflects badly, generates a negative self-evaluation which, as I argue, then generates the feeling of shame, and the person’s typical reaction to this shame will be to rid themselves of the negative self-evaluative belief generating their shame. I then explain two ways one might rid oneself of this negative self-evaluative belief. Thereafter, I return to discussing Brickhouse and Smith, who, in their explanation, stop at the level of content beliefs for explaining action, and these, I argue, are entirely insufficient to explain why these different kinds of action are even possible. On my understanding of Brickhouse and Smith, they seem to suggest that passions can change one’s belief about what is best for them; i.e., their conception of their good. However, as I will argue, like the standard view suggests, the relationship is reversed: reason influences our feeling of shame (and ultimately what courses of action shame motivates), not the other way around, since our feeling of shame is dependent on what we *already* recognize as good.

In the final section of this chapter, I exemplify my interpretation with a sample *elenchus* from the *Laches*. I work with this dialogue in particular as it clearly exhibits a case of non-virtuous behavior resulting from shame. In this dialogue, Laches, after proving to be unable to define courage, aims to show that his rival Nicias also cannot define courage either. This seemingly malicious action is easily explainable on my view. I will show that the emotion that Laches feels following Socrates’ *elenchus* is shame. Then, I will argue that his behavior is the result of a self-evaluative belief. I will then use Laches’ response to the *elenchus* to diagnose what went wrong with this *elenchus*. On my interpretation, Laches

is motivated by how he *appears* to others, while Nicias is concerned with the *truth*. This difference in their conception of their own good is what generates the shame that motivates their different responses. The *Laches* suggests that when one's reason is in line with what is actually virtuous (truth vs. esteem), they are more likely to pursue a more virtuous way of eliminating that belief presented to them whereas if this is not the case, they are more likely to adopt non-virtuous means to rid themselves of this negative self-evaluative belief. Nicias shows the ideal result of an *elenchus* due to his focus on truth, while Laches exemplifies a non-ideal result in desperation to maintain appearances; however, even the non-ideal result still puts Laches in a better place than he would have been without participating in the *elenchus*, for the whole experience brought him to an important realization about knowledge he does not have but will need to find if he wishes to maintain his self-conception as a competent general.

Why Socrates chooses to perform the *elenchus* when there is risk of vice on the part of the interlocutor (and risk of future retaliation against Socrates himself) is because the revelation exposes them to shame which provides the catalyst for possible future virtue. Since Socrates' goal is to expose their ignorance and vice, one of the most useful things he can do is cause them to reflect and feel shame because their response to shame speaks volumes about what they truly find valuable, as he recognizes that this response is dependent on their conception of their good. In other words, the explanation for why Socrates employs this risky method is because the benefits of shame for virtue are worthier than its risks. Those whose shame leads to vice will ultimately have to come face-to-face with their faults again in the future (unless they improve themselves), as Laches will when Nicias returns with a more sophisticated definition.

## Shame as a Negative Self-Evaluative Belief

### i. Content and self-evaluative beliefs

Brickhouse and Smith's view only accounts for what I will call "content beliefs", which are beliefs merely about the subject matter under discussion. However, in order to properly explain the different responses that we can anticipate following the experience of shame, I will show that we will have to consider the impact of the *elenchus* on one's "self-evaluative beliefs". Self-evaluative beliefs are intimately connected with one's conception of the good which will thereafter establish the scope of possible actions one can take. Understanding self-evaluative beliefs and their relationship to one's general conception of the good is essential for a fuller understanding of why people act in certain ways, since shame is actually the direct result of a self-evaluative belief rather than following from a content belief. In this chapter, I will first describe more what I mean by "content" and "self-evaluative" beliefs. Then, I will argue that content beliefs, on their own, cannot explain why someone would feel shame after an *elenchus*; rather, *self-evaluative* beliefs are necessary to trigger a response since they are sensitive to one's conception of their good. An important part of my account that I argue is that people have what I refer to as a "minimum knowledge requirement bias" that provides evidence for how well one is adhering to their current conception of their good or a "carer" of that about which they report to care. Failing the knowledge requirement is a frequent way that the *elenchus* triggers the passion of shame; i.e., the negative self-evaluative belief that forms from failing the knowledge requirement triggers their shame response, perhaps in the sense of the agent feeling inadequate. In the final section, I will explain how this account of shame allows for the diversity of reactions we can expect to an *elenchus*.

To begin, I will make the distinction between what I am calling content and self-evaluative beliefs clear<sup>72</sup>. Content beliefs are solely topical knowledge one has about a subject matter. For instance, one's belief after an *elenchus* that "virtue is not x or y", "courage is not solely endurance" and/or that their view is "inconsistent with their other beliefs" are all content beliefs<sup>73</sup>. Self-evaluative beliefs, on the other hand, are *reflective* about what one's content beliefs say about one's values, knowledge, and abilities. These can include desirable, neutral, or even undesirable self-descriptions, such as that one is an intelligent or foolish kind of person. Further these beliefs are intimately related to one's conception of their good. For instance, if I really care about politics or music, my conception of myself will include political awareness and enjoying music, and I will see these things (being politically aware and enjoying music) as my goods.<sup>74</sup> Thus when I refer to "one's conception of their good" I also mean their conception of themselves as a person who cares about certain things.

Content beliefs, on their own, are not enough explain the feeling of shame following an *elenchus*. Rather, shame is the response to understanding or reflecting on the negative implications that can result from our content beliefs. I understand **shame as the (learned) response to an undesirable self-description (self-evaluative belief) generated by the introduction of a content belief that threatens to replace one's previous positive self-evaluative belief(s)**<sup>75</sup>. To show this point, recall the common lover that accompanies "common Aphrodite" in Pausanias' speech in the *Symposium*. This lover does many acts in the name of love which people, seeing their "impropriety and immorality"<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> I should say these are not the only categories of belief that I believe exist, but they are two categories of beliefs that become relevant during an *elenchus*.

<sup>73</sup> Content beliefs may also interact with one's already established beliefs about different topics; i.e., beliefs one has about the situation and about what others believe.

<sup>74</sup> In the *Philebus*, one can experience pleasures of ridicule/comedy where one takes pleasure in someone else being less wise or rich than they think they are (also known as *schadenfreude*). The irony occurs because such people being laughed at should be able to recognize, because they value wisdom and wealth, their own situation. The part that makes it especially ironic is the knowledge bias which I will discuss later: they ought to know about these things *because* they value them.

<sup>75</sup> I, importantly, included the word "learned" in the sense of meaning that this response is one that is usually learned through education, (perhaps not necessarily explicitly), at the time when the students are internalizing certain values, making mistakes themselves and being corrected, and seeing others praised or blamed.

<sup>76</sup> ἀκαρίαν καὶ ἀδικίαν

criticize due to their immoderation (*Symp.* 182a3-4). This suggests that people generally view the lover's behavior as shameful. What is shameful about their actions is the fact that they take on young lovers for the purpose of indulging themselves physically while planning to abandon their "beloved" boys thereafter. However, the fact that this person's actions are considered shameful by others is *not yet enough* to make them feel ashamed of their behavior, nor is it enough for the common lover to form the content belief that by acting as they do, they act immoderately. Rather, the common lover must (1) concern himself with conventions in order to be moved by this consideration, otherwise they may simply scoff and say they do not care. Further, in order to feel shame, they (2) have to *believe* that these actions are bad and thus say something bad about their character that is at odds with the kind of person they want to be. In other words, this lover would have to be convinced that this behavior is incompatible with the kind of person they think they are or aspire to be. For instance, if they valued being moderate (and thus find immoderation immoral) and could be shown that the sexual relationship that they have with their beloved(s) exemplifies immoderate behavior by being concerned with their bodies rather than with the cultivation of their characters, then they would properly feel shame after this recognition; for the new content belief that they are acting immoderately, when combined with the belief that this is bad and thus says something about their character (namely that they are also immoderate), generates a new self-evaluative belief that they are bad, and this new self-evaluative belief threatens to replace their current positive self-evaluative belief that they are moderate and good.

Let us presume there is a common lover whose conception of themselves involves being a benefactor to their beloved. In exchange for beneficial instruction, the beloved indulges the lover by participating in sexual acts with him. The lover also has the current self-evaluative belief: I am a wonderful benefactor to my beloved(s). Let us further presume that he has the following content belief: releasing lovers he is no longer interested in does not harm them; the relationship they had was simply mutually beneficial since they both received what they wanted: sexual satisfaction and learning

respectively. This content belief does not generate another self-evaluative belief that is in conflict with his self-conception as their benefactor. Let us imagine, however, that Socrates confronts the lover and says: “you have a track record of abandoning boys you take under your tutelage”, to which he responds “Yes; they have benefited quite enough from me, and I from them”, to which Socrates may ask whether one “is benefited by being released from a good”, to which the lover might reasonably then reply “no”. We can similarly imagine that through an *elenchus*, Socrates gets this lover to admit to (1) being a good to the boy and (2) continued connection with a “good person” is a good thing, such that his abandonment of his beloved actually does his beloved a wrong. The lover then forms a new content belief: “when I abandon my lovers, I harm them”. Then, because of this new content belief, the lover forms the self-evaluative belief that he is a harm to his lovers, which is a bad thing, and this has an obvious incompatibility with his current self-conception: I am a wonderful benefactor to my beloved(s). This incompatibility between the new self-evaluative belief generated from a new content belief and the old self-evaluative belief sparks the feeling of shame because it threatens his self-conception as a benefactor. As a result, then, he may decide that he should not interact with others in this way<sup>77</sup>. This is, at least, one way that the *elenchus* serves to correct others and lead them more in the right direction.

### *Minimum knowledge requirement bias*

As I have been arguing, the reason why an *elenchus* can make the interlocutor feel shame is that they are shown to have incompatible actions or beliefs concerning a subject about which they report to care. Caring about something is to have that something intimately related to the kind of person you are; i.e., you are a “person that cares about X”. Since we place a high value on the particular things we care

---

<sup>77</sup> The lover could also attempt another method of reconciliation and say it is not harmful to release his lovers as he releases them when they have nothing more to learn from him. Socrates may then begin a different line of questioning go after whether the acts he engages them in are not themselves harmless *quid pro quo* but rather deeply harmful to the young men (and thus cast doubt on whether he does benefit them). Socrates may alternatively attempt to show that the lover’s own behavior is immoderate, and thus the lover cannot be providing the beneficial teaching he claims to provide, as the lover himself would be a non-expert and hypocrite regarding the virtuous matters he claims to teach. The key is that the *elenchus* aims to show a conflict between the interlocutor’s beliefs and their other beliefs, commitments and/or actions.

about, this requires us to have knowledge about them, so by caring about X, we also have to have some knowledge about X. I call this “the minimum knowledge requirement bias”. The *Gorgias* actually supports this point about the shame involved in not having knowledge about important matters. By “important matters” I understand that about which people care. Socrates says to Polus, “It’s true, after all, that the matters in dispute between us are not at all insignificant ones, but pretty nearly those it is most admirable to have knowledge about, and most shameful not to” (*Grg.* 472c5-7). In this quote, Socrates points out that not having knowledge about these matters is shameful, and it is shameful because it is an important matter, and important because it is about something in which every human has a stake: happiness. Insufficiency in our knowledge can show that we do not sufficiently care about something, which would be in direct opposition to our self-conception of being a “carer” about that thing. If we value something, we should exhibit care about it, and obvious one way we can do this is by knowing/learning about the matter about which we say we care. This inconsistency, between our self-conception as someone who knows something and our inability to articulate it (because then it appears that we actually do not care) generates the passion called shame.

In the *Laches*, Socrates says that “shame is not good for a needy man<sup>78</sup>” (*Lach.* 203b2-3), which one might take to mean that Socrates does not advocate the use of shame for self-improvement, as I am proposing he does. However, here Socrates is actually referring to the shame that might accompany what others think about us, for he says further: “And, not paying attention to what anyone may say, let us join together in looking after both our own interests and those of the boys [our interlocutors’ sons who need education]” (*Lach.* 201b3-4). The fact that here he is prescribing a journey of self-improvement indicates a concern with one’s self-conception. Socrates does not want them all to remain as they are (201a5-6) but instead to recognize their deficiency, which will cause them to feel shame and pursue the knowledge that they require since they are, as he says, really in need of a teacher. Gaining

---

<sup>78</sup> ἀγαθὴν... αἰδῶ κεχρημένῳ ἀνδρὶ παρεῖναι

this knowledge will help mitigate the shame. The problem the *elenchus* points out is that one is actually ignorant about the things one cares about, and of which one would think it is important to have knowledge.

One could object that some people do not think it is necessary to have such knowledge to indicate they care about something. For instance, one might say that they care a lot about cats, but perhaps do not have a lot of knowledge about cats. This seems possible at face value, but two sets of questions arise here about their lack of knowledge. The first set are epistemological questions: How can you genuinely care about something if you do not even know much about it? What even is the thing about which you care? If you do not know much about it, are you even caring about the thing about which you think you care? For instance, if you do not know enough about cats to differentiate them from rodents, how can you identify whether the furry creature you are caring about is actually a cat? The second set of questions are practical: if you do not have a lot of knowledge about cats, how can you adequately take care of one?<sup>79</sup> How much food, play, water, etc. is desirable for its health? If you care about a cat, it is undisputedly a more obvious exhibition of your care to know what food to give your cat, when to change the litter, how often to brush and play with it, what signs it gives off when its well or ill, etc., than if you did not know those things. I suggest in the most minimal case, having enough knowledge to answer the epistemological questions is necessary for care when the object is not possessed. When the object is possessed (being taken care of by the carer), the knowledge to answer the practical questions is also necessary<sup>80</sup>. So, the alleged cat lover, being made to come to terms with their ignorance in the epistemological domain, should thus develop a desire to learn these things, or to

---

<sup>79</sup> The difference between these two questions is that one is about knowledge, while the other is about action.

<sup>80</sup> Neither type of knowledge (epistemological and practical) on its own is sufficient for care, nor does having both necessarily make you a “carer”, as you could know a lot about something by necessity for force (for instance a child could have had an extended science unit in school on bugs but hate bugs), and one could frequently exhibit their practical knowledge of how to care for something but not actually like it; for instance one may know how to take care of succulents because their parents made them do it as a child, but they could hate succulents and find them tedious to work with. My point is that this epistemological knowledge is at least a necessary requirement for what it is to be said to “care” about certain things.

abandon it as an object of care<sup>81</sup>. If the alleged cat lover is also a cat owner, they should also have answers to the practical questions.

There is, however, an alternative kind of person who we might think is impervious to this move. People who deny climate change but also assert they care about the environment may perhaps not be made to feel shame by pointing out that they do not understand the science behind climate change. However, the right move is not to deny their care, as they may otherwise recycle, pick up trash in their communities, compost, etc. In this case, their resistance is due to some knowledge they think they have which they think justifies denying other scientific evidence. In order to make this person feel shame about their ignorance, another preliminary step is necessary. They need also to be convinced that the knowledge one is telling them that they do not have is actually worth having, and that it reflects an observable reality or state-of-affairs. If they can be made to believe this (I make no claims about how easy this may be), they will feel shame about their previous beliefs/blindness to the evidence. There is thus a reasonable expectation that when you say you care about something that you know about it or at least try to learn about it to a reasonable extent<sup>82</sup>.

So, in sum, there are two ways of ridding oneself of the negative self-evaluative belief: changing one's conception of the good or changing their behavior. In the case of the cat lover who fails the knowledge requirement, they ought to change their conception of the good (to not include cats until they adequately discover what they are) or to change their behavior and learn more about what they

---

<sup>81</sup> One could say that a small child could reasonably care about something without knowing anything about it, but in this case, I would say then that if they could be made to understand that they do not know much, they would want to learn more about it (due precisely to this bias I am describing) or they would simply not feel shame because they are incapable of properly understanding the deficiency in their own knowledge. Children who become obsessed with learning about dinosaurs: their names, relevant features/appearances, etc. are a great example of exactly this desire to learn more about that which they care.

<sup>82</sup> This account I am offering provides a different framework for virtue than the prominent articulacy framework (if you are virtuous you can say what virtue is) and allows that one can be virtuous without needing to be able to articulate what virtue is. Instead, what is necessary is some relevant degree of knowledge about something (knowing some qualities of it may be enough). There is a reasonable expectation that one who says they care about something will have to know about it to some relevant degree, and some domains, such as virtue, may have a higher knowledge requirement than others, for instance, liking frogs, which minimally requires you to be able to identify frogs and what you like about them.

are or what they need to thrive. In terms of the individual who rejects climate change, once they realize they have been acting inconsistently, for instance by purchasing products from the most major contributors to climate change, they ought to either reject care for the environment as one of their goods or change their behavior by doing their research to minimize the behaviors (or purchase patterns) that contribute to climate change. Socrates' hope, when he uses the *elenchus*, is that individuals do not abandon their conception of the good but change how they have been attempting to adhere to it.

ii. Brickhouse and Smith's focus on content beliefs

When Brickhouse and Smith explain their own account of shame, they seem to concern themselves mostly with content beliefs, but as I am arguing, these are entirely insufficient to explain the actions taken after an experience of shame. Let us take their flight-considering guard example from earlier and look again at the conversation as they imagine it unfolding:

Do you now plan to run back to your beloved wife and children, marked for life as a pathetic coward? Do you think they will want to be held in the arms of such a worthless specimen? Or perhaps you suppose your parents will have you, and not feel only disgust and shame at their own failure to raise you well enough to be a man instead of a cowering child? Run away, if you like, but do not suppose that when you are done running that you will still have family, or friends, or fellow citizens with whom to consort — for neither will you be allowed even so much as to be a citizen here, if you cannot at least be a man first! (Brickhouse and Smith 2015: 24)

Thereafter in their analysis they say:

If the frightened man can become *aware of the shameful elements in what he is about to do*, he will also become more able to appreciate other reasons why it is not actually in his best interest to run away, in spite of the approach of the enemy. Here *the fact that he will feel shame if he runs away serves a consideration [because shame is painful] that should help persuade him to do the right thing*. But shame may also serve as a mild chastisement [i.e., anticipatory pain] that, for one who has a sense of shame, actually serves to *weaken the inclination* to see fleeing as a great good. When it functions in this second way, as a form of chastisement, shame can help us to control our non-rational capacities and bring our soul into a more disciplined condition. (24, emphasis added).

While there appear to be elements in their description of the scenario that could be read as indicating the person feels ashamed because they are self-evaluating, not only does the emphasis on the perspective of others in the example suggest this is not what shame is doing, but their language

thereafter of making the guard “aware of shameful elements” and “the fact that he will feel shame” suggest mere content beliefs. They fail to say what it is about that awareness or fact that contributes to their action. My discussion earlier of the way that “a mild chastisement” could be interpreted as accusatory comes closest to the kind of self-evaluative response I describe here, since presumably this chastisement could come from oneself or others. But Brickhouse and Smith say the shame is a mild chastisement; for instance, “you are bad”, but this chastisement is also not enough to trigger shame without some evaluation about that claim. For instance, children with no desire to be “good”, will not be swayed by such chastising—in some cases they even take it as an excuse to act in bad ways. This is what Brickhouse and Smith are missing in their account: how this chastisement interacts with one’s conception of their good.

While Brickhouse and Smith do say that “he will also become more able to *appreciate other reasons* why it is not actually in his best interest to run away” (2015, 24), if we assume, as I suggested we should earlier, that it means any reasons that show the action’s external disadvantages, the guard would have new beliefs about the topic at hand. The guard originally thought running away accompanied all those advantages, but now they realize it actually accompanies more disadvantages of varying sorts. It is not clear that it is *shame* driving them, rather than the results of a cost-benefit analysis. Again, these are content beliefs about the matter in question and are not enough to make one feel shame. The fact that one’s family will view them as worthless, their parents will feel disgust, and people will no longer want to associate with them are not enough to make them feel shame *unless they are thinking about how these reflect on them as a person*. The consideration though, that one’s goodness/value is dependent on what one’s family thinks can result in self-evaluative belief, but here Brickhouse and Smith do not pull the two apart. They cite content beliefs alone as one’s reason for acting, when in reality we have to posit self-evaluative beliefs to understand their action. Thus,

Brickhouse and Smith only use content beliefs to explain behavior, but if they want to say it is the shame that causes it, lacking an account of self-evaluative beliefs, their account does not easily explain it.

Let's further look at the whole quote from the *Apology* they use just before their considerations of dishonor in front of others. I take it that this quote shows that there is more at work (in Socrates' mind) than content beliefs when someone is feeling shame. Socrates says: "Wherever someone stations himself, believing it to be best or where someone has been stationed by his commander there he must, as it seems to me, remain there to face danger, not weighing death or anything else more than disgrace (*tou aischrou*)" (*Apol.* 28d5-9). Here, Socrates specifies that it is his own view that disgrace is worse than death for the one stationing himself, but taken in light of Socrates' other commitments, namely that one ought to not care about the opinion of the majority, it is hard to not see that as a contradiction. He must mean something different by disgrace than the mere negative social consequences. Socrates argues in the *Crito* that life is not worth living with a damaged soul (*Cri.* 47e-48a), and one who is unjust is one whose soul is ruined. If we conceive of this act of flight as a harm on the soul, which would make death less weighty than it, then what disgrace must capture, and which I argued in the previous chapter, is one's own fear of becoming vicious. Thus, shame, the natural result of disgrace, is a fear of oneself becoming bad (even independently of what others think about them). When Brickhouse and Smith attempt to use this quote in their examples, they miss the self-evaluation that is critical when one feels shame.

To this, someone might say that what Socrates means is not the disgrace that one feels when they see themselves becoming vicious but rather the disgrace in the eyes of the people whose opinions matter most: the wise. If this is true, it actually supports my point, for one's conception of themselves is based on what those they look up to think is good. In Socrates' case in particular, it is the voice in himself: his *daimonion*, that draws him away from particular courses of action; the *daimonion* always

pulls him away from what is inconsistent with realizing his good, which Socrates took to be living virtuously and helping others to do so as well. This is evidenced when Socrates says:

I have a divine or spiritual sign[...] it is a voice, and whenever it speaks it turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never encourages me to do anything[...] this is what has prevented me from taking part in public affairs, and I think it was quite right to prevent me. (*Apol.* 31d2-5)

When Socrates says it is right to have prevented him, he suggests that he was better able to realize his good to not have done it, and if that is what is right, then his *daimonion* is what prevented him from doing what would have been wrong. The reason why engaging in politics would have been wrong (in the sense of hindering his realization of his good) is that he would not be able to reach people in the same way: one-on-one. Rather as a politician, he would have to speak to large populations but as a result be unable to engage in substantive discourse with them—the *elenchus* would either be impossible or fail horribly. Further because he recognizes that this voice is in accord with realizing conception of the good, he obeys it by pursuing virtue for himself and others through cross-examination.

In the *Republic*, Socrates also confirms that his *diamonion* acts in accord with his conception of the good when he describes how a life in politics (were his *daimonion* not to keep him out of it) would have ruined any chances of him actually making a notable difference:

hardly anyone acts sanely in public affairs and that there is no ally with whom they might go to the aid of justice and save themselves [*sōizōit'*], that instead they'd perish before they could profit either their city or their friends and be useless both to themselves and others. (*Rep.* 496c5-d4, minor modification)

While “saving oneself” is not necessarily Socrates’ good, surviving long enough to make a notable difference is. By not acting in accord with this voice when it speaks, he does something wrong, and this is not merely a content belief, but a self-evaluative one as it is dependent on his conception of the good—being able to make a difference to the virtue of the lives of others. It is not enough that the wise be disappointed in one’s action, one has to value the opinion of the wise, as Socrates does with his wise

*daimonion*. This shows that this passage of the *Apology* is not pointing one to content beliefs as a way to inspire shame, it relies on one's self-evaluative beliefs.

Thus, on my account, I supply a third possibility (outside of the two that Brickhouse and Smith suggest) that explains action when we consider cases of shame. The guard in their example, if he feels shame at the thought of flight, must have been brought up value courage as a virtue of a good citizen. In their own example, they explain that the guard conceives of their guard duties as the best thing and that they owe a debt. Repaying this debt is important for being a good citizen; so, by repaying this debt, they want to be perceived of as a good citizen. Thus, when the guard is chastised for considering flight, they form a self-evaluative belief about the kind of person they would be if they ran away, which generates the feeling of shame that then reinforces their resolve to stay and fight<sup>83</sup>. This is because of concerns about the kind of person the guard is, not merely because of the external consequences. The guard does not want to be a coward who cannot do what they see as best; they want to be a good person, stay, and fulfill their debt. If the guard is merely persuaded by the external considerations, it is not clear that it is the passion of shame that persuades them, rather a rational cost-benefit analysis persuades them.

This view allows us to account for differences in virtuous and vicious action that feelings of shame motivate because the actions one considers after feeling shame are directly influenced by their conception of the good. How they see their good influences what they will do to eliminate the pain associated with their feeling of shame. This differs from Brickhouse and Smith's view because I acknowledge the dependency of the passion of shame on reason, and the fact that shame does not influence our rational beliefs (as they suggest) but is rather influenced by them. This differs also from the standard view that recognizes that passions are influenced by our reason because I consider shame

---

<sup>83</sup> The reason why people believe that this is the right course of action is because it is a belief that is inculcated during their education. Fleeing is shown to be a shameful thing because one shows themselves to only care about themselves. If their feeling of shame is not strong enough from their education, because they really value themselves, or fleeing was not presented as all that selfish, etc., then even though they may feel shame, it may be overpowered by their desire to prolong their life that accompanies the belief that they are more important, cannot withstand the pain, etc., and thus should flee.

to be playing *more* than an informational role in our action. Shame supplies motivation to perform a particular action, one which we might not have deemed necessary without feeling shame to begin with, but because shame is dependent on our conception of the good, I find it more fit to describe its role in our behavior as “functional” rather than “informational” as proponents of the standard view argue, or “causal”, as Brickhouse and Smith would have it<sup>84</sup>. Shame motivates us to preserve our positive self-conception, which usually involves not abandoning what we consider good, but rather ridding ourselves of our negative self-evaluative beliefs by not doing an action that would make us bad, by doing good actions to make up for something bad, or by reinterpreting the evidence that led to that belief.

As I have shown in this section, shame occurs when we consider a course of action or have a belief inconsistent with our values. These self-evaluative beliefs are ones that define us in some way: as someone who is virtuous, knowledgeable, humble, etc. Seeing that we are not this kind of person through private self-reflection or public cross-examination generates a feeling of shame. My view also resolves the problems I raised with Brickhouse and Smith’s view; it gives a place to private shame, for inconsistencies with one’s conception of the good can happen publicly or privately. Then shame helps determine action (positive or negative) not on its own, as Brickhouse and Smith suggest, but in combination with one’s own values. Shame adds additional motivation to beliefs one has, or which were developed during the *elenchus*, and supports the beliefs that help one maintain alignment one’s conception of the good<sup>85</sup>. This may involve rejecting or reconciling the self-evaluative belief or acquiring

---

<sup>84</sup> I chose the word “functional” for a couple of reasons. (1) mathematical functions are intended to capture a dependency relation of x and y, and as I care about dependency here, functional seems quite apt. (2) It does not commit me to any mysterious discussion of causes, such as the objection Brickhouse and Smith face concerning how emotional states “cause” something like a belief. I could have chosen the word “motivational”, but I wanted to emphasize the dependency that did not seem obvious in views where it is referred to as merely motivational.

<sup>85</sup> Our sense of shame, by having this close relationship to our values, is also sensitive to what authorities or people whose opinions we respect think is good, but usually because our values are often derived from or inspired by these others. However, we are sometimes more or less right in valuing their opinions. Socrates thinks we should only take seriously the beliefs of experts when we are considering what we should do and not act in contradiction to these beliefs. Shame makes us want to adhere to these beliefs and keeps us from acting in a contradictory manner or from holding contradictory beliefs. Since shame is responsive to what we consider good/value and what we think we should do, as I have shown, it cannot be responsible for changing our beliefs about what we should do. Rather our beliefs are changed by interactions with others who show us our prior way of acting or thinking was wrong/inconsistent with what we believe and stand for, or by our own self-reflection, and

new content beliefs. They can reject that their belief or action actually reflects badly or inconsistently on them; they can attempt to justify why they had to do the action that appears inconsistent with what they value; or, they can strive for the knowledge that they previously lacked that led to the inconsistency to begin with. In the next section, I will provide a sample *elenchus* from *Laches* and show how this distinction illuminates the role shame has in Laches' behavior.

### Self-Evaluative Beliefs in the *Laches*

In this section, I discuss my interpretation of the *elenchus* in the *Laches*. I am highlighting this dialogue specifically for the non-virtuous response that Laches has following Socrates' *elenchus*. Rather than, as Socrates might have desired, Laches desiring to learn the truth for himself, Laches instead opts to show that his rival Nicias does not know what courage is either. First, I aim to show that what Laches feels following the *elenchus* actually is shame; i.e., a response to a negative self-evaluative belief. Then I will argue that his behavior is the result of this self-evaluative belief. I will then use Laches' response to diagnose what went wrong during this *elenchus*: Laches is motivated by how he appears to others and himself, while Nicias is concerned with the truth. This difference in the driving forces influencing their conception of their good is what generates these different responses. Nicias shows a more desirable response to the *elenchus*, while Laches exemplifies a non-ideal result; however, even the non-ideal result still puts Laches in a better place than he would have been without participating in it, for it did indeed shake him at his very core and show him the undesirability of his current situation.

#### i. Laches' shame

In the *Laches*, Socrates is brought into a discussion about courage by Laches and Nicias, who are two Athenian generals asked to give their opinion on what activities are worth educating in if the children of their interlocutors are to become courageous. After a discussion of different kinds of

---

shame attaches to these beliefs that best conform with our ultimate values and attempts to keep us in line with those beliefs unless better-conforming beliefs replace them.

activities, Socrates asserts that they ought to begin with the question of what courage is, in order to determine what activities will best cultivate it. In this dialogue, we get a few definitions of courage.

Socrates, using only what Laches himself believes and agrees to, shows that Laches, despite his claims, does not actually know what courage is. At 192b8, Laches defines courage as “a sort of endurance of the soul”. The dialogue progresses:

Socrates: [...] I think that you don't regard every kind of endurance as courage. The reason I think so is this: I am fairly sure, Laches, that you regard courage as a very fine thing.

Laches: One of the finest, you may be sure.

Socrates: And you would say that endurance accompanied by wisdom is a fine and noble thing?

Laches: Very much so. (192c2-7)

Socrates always works by hearing what the interlocutor has to say and then examining their current beliefs. Socrates proceeds to get Laches' agreement that when endurance is accompanied by folly it is injurious and harmful, and as a result not something fine. Afterward Socrates says: “Then according to your view, it would be wise endurance which would be courage” to which Laches agrees. So far, Socrates has gotten Laches to reason as follows using his own beliefs: P1) Courage is a fine thing. P2) There are two types of endurance: wise endurance and foolish endurance. P3) Foolish endurance is not a fine thing. C1) So, foolish endurance is not courage. C2) So, courage must be wise endurance. Socrates then presents Laches a variety of cases and asks about whether the people in them are properly called courageous. He then secures Laches' agreement that a man is not courageous whose willingness to stay and fight in battle is based on the knowledge that the odds are in his favor and reinforcements are coming. Rather the courageous one remains to fight without that knowledge(193a3-b1). Their discussion progresses as follows:

Socrates: Now foolish daring and endurance was found by us to be not only disgraceful but harmful, in what we said earlier.

Laches: Quite so.

Socrates: But courage was agreed to be a noble thing

Laches: Yes, it was.

Socrates: But now, on the contrary, we are saying that a disgraceful thing, foolish endurance, is courage.

Laches: Yes, we seem to be.

Socrates: And do you think we are talking sense?

Laches: Heavens no, Socrates, I certainly don't.

[...]

Socrates: But you are willing that we should agree to our statement to a certain extent[...] With the one that commands us to endure[...]

Laches: I am not ready to give up, Socrates, although I am not really accustomed to arguments of this kind. But an absolute desire for victory has seized me with respect to our conversation, and I am really getting annoyed at being unable to express what I think in this fashion. I still think I know what courage is, but I can't understand how it has escaped me just now so that I can't pin it down in words and say what it is. (193d1-194a7)

Using Laches' own words and beliefs, Socrates has shown, at the very least, that Laches is not presently capable of articulating what courage is, though Laches originally thought he was capable of it. Laches indicates the shame he feels after this discussion by describing his annoyance at being unable to express what he thinks. This annoyance can be taken as an anger at oneself which often follows a shameful act, take for instance the story in the *Republic* of Leontius' anger at himself for succumbing to his sexual desire to observe corpses, whose paleness resembled what he finds attractive in young men. After he became aware of his desires, he felt disgusted (*dyscherainoi*) but eventually succumbed: "look for yourselves, he said, you wretched things, be sated by this beautiful sight"<sup>86</sup> (*Rep.* 4.440a2-3). Leontius' is ashamed for even wanting to do an act about which he is disgusted, and he berates his eyes for their desire to look lustfully upon the corpses with the anger of someone who recognizes the badness of the act. The anger here follows the shameful event, and interestingly Leontius tries to separate himself from the part experiencing the lust, but feels shame nonetheless because the action, though he permitted it, is contrary to what he feels is right based on his conception of what is good. Similarly, Laches' annoyance here, indicates to me that he feels shame, specifically retrospective shame. However, he does not just feel shame, but, like Leontius, he feels frustrated at the part failing him (his mind/memory) and attempts to mitigate the pain it causes it by saying "it has escaped me just now", suggesting he had a strong definition before and could possibly find it again.

---

<sup>86</sup> 'ἰδοὺ ὑμῖν,' ἔφη, 'ὧ̄ κακοδαίμονες, ἐμπλήσθητε τοῦ καλοῦ θεάματος.'

Of course, one could alternatively argue that it is just as plausible to interpret what Laches says as a kind of general frustration that one is not able to do something; i.e., in a way that does *not* signal that they think they *ought* to be able to do/know something. For instance, when children cannot reach something like a door knob, they may become frustrated, but their frustration does not necessarily mean they are mad at themselves or that their frustration is because they think they *should* be able to reach it. On this alternative interpretation then, Laches is simply frustrated at the situation that his desire for victory is unmet due to his present inability to articulate his thoughts. To this, I say that there is evidence that Laches *does* take it as something he *should* know. For instance, at the beginning of the dialogue he is invited there to discuss the education of Lysimachus and Melesias' respective children due to his status as a general, and courage is undisputedly one of the most important qualities for a general to recognize and cultivate (*Lach.* 179b-180a). Notice also how in this passage he seems to treat his ignorance it as a temporary lapse with the words "it has escaped me just now", which suggests he may want people to think he will be capable of answering correctly later. Later on, too, Nicias also points to the fact that it is a subject about which they both should know (200a3-7). His desire for victory in the discussion mentioned at 194a6 actually supports this interpretation too, for he desires victory because of the kind of person he is—a general. These points suggest that his frustration is an anger at himself because he *should* be able to articulate it, since victory is one of his goals. Courage is also one of the most essential means to victory, and Laches is the just kind of person who would be most likely to possess such knowledge.

So, Laches feels shame at saying something contradictory that revealed his ignorance about courage. The shame that Laches feels is because he believes that he needs to have consistent beliefs about what courage is due to his status as a general. Thus, when Socrates proves him wrong, Laches feels ashamed that it is he himself that cannot say what courage is—he is shown to be (at least presently) ignorant about something for which he cares and should be expert in, given his military

background. Thus, this shame is not responding to his content beliefs but to his self-evaluative belief about what he should know to be the kind of person he thinks he is.

ii. Laches' non-virtuous response to mitigate his shame

Laches seems to begin his strategy for dealing with shame with the phrase: "it has escaped me just now". He has admitted to his inability to define it, but with these words he is also feasibly attempting to explain his inability, and if that attempt is successful, he will at least temporarily be able to avoid believing that he is insufficient and thus avoid the shame Socrates is attempting to make him feel. The success of this attempt will be contingent on no one else being able to articulate what he could not.

His beliefs about what courses of action to take, then, are not changed by the fact that he felt shame, rather by his other beliefs that were changed by Socrates' questioning, as evidenced by his agreement to Socrates' claims, which revealed his contradictory beliefs during their discussion. He now acknowledges that he cannot express what courage is (and is frustrated by this fact). In later dialogues, such as the *Sophist*, we get a characterization of the *elenchus* that will support my view that Laches has developed new beliefs through the *elenchus*, especially the negative self-evaluative belief that results in shame. The passage of the *Sophist* goes as follows:

Visitor: So, they [cross examiners] set out to get rid of the belief in one's own wisdom in another way [than those who scold or gently encourage].

Theaetetus: How?

Visitor: They cross-examine someone when he thinks he's saying something though he's saying nothing. Then, since his opinions will vary inconsistently, these people will easily scrutinize them. They collect his opinions together during the discussion, put them side by side, and show that they conflict with each other at the same time on the same subjects in relation to the same things and in the same respects. The people who are being examined see this, get angry at themselves, and become calmer to others. They are freed from [*apallattontai*] their inflated and rigid beliefs about themselves that way[...] The people who cleanse the soul, my young friend, likewise think the soul too, won't get any advantage from any learning that's offered to it until the one cross-examining, having brought the one cross-examined into a state of shame [*prin an elenchōn tis ton elenchomenon eis aischunēn katastēsās*], after removing the opinions impeding the teachings [*tās tois mathēmasin empodious doxās exelōn*], and exhibits it cleansed, believing

that it knows only those things that it does know, and nothing more. (*Soph.* 230b1-d3, minor translation modifications)<sup>87</sup>

There are some very important key parallels between this explanation of the *elenchus* and what Socrates did to Laches. Socrates collected Laches' different opinions and showed the conflict in his beliefs. In the beginning, Laches asserted he knew what courage was, but after defining it as "wise endurance", Socrates made him recognize that his beliefs about when someone is courageous conflict with this characterization, since he also holds the contradictory belief that we would call "courageous" those who are also foolish when they endure. Further, Socrates did free Laches from some of the opinions that he had, namely that he was certain about what courage was, and that courage was a kind of wise endurance (at least as he previously characterized it). However, he was not successful in ridding Laches of all his beliefs, for Laches still wants to hold onto some claim of knowledge, that presumably, because he claims he still does know what courage is, he will be able to articulate what courage is later.

It is worth noticing that the refutation in the *Sophist* is described as *resulting in* shame: "until the one cross-examining, having brought the one cross-examined into a state of shame (*eis aischunēn*), after removing the opinions impeding the teachings" (230d1-3). It is only after the refutation and the recognition of the ignorance that they are brought into a state of shame.<sup>88</sup> Then, the Visitor hopes, the individual will seek learning. The refutation consists in not only showing that the beliefs are inconsistent at the level of content beliefs, but in having a belief that one was wrong about it, and, thus, that it

<sup>87</sup> Ξένος: τῷ τοι ταύτης τῆς δόξης ἐπὶ ἐκβολὴν ἄλλω τρόπῳ στέλλονται.

Θεαίτητος: τίτι δῆ;

Ξένος: διερωτῶσιν ὧν ἂν οἴηται τίς τι πέρι λέγειν λέγων μηδέν: εἴθ' ἄτε πλανωμένων τὰς δόξας ῥαδίως ἐξετάζουσι, καὶ συνάγοντες δὴ τοῖς λόγοις εἰς ταῦτόν τιθέασι παρ' ἀλλήλας, τιθέντες δὲ ἐπιδεικνύουσιν αὐτὰς αὐταῖς ἅμα περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ κατὰ ταῦτ' ἐναντίας. οἱ δ' ὁρώντες ἑαυτοῖς μὲν χαλεπαίνουσι, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ἄλλους ἡμεροῦνται, καὶ τούτῳ δὴ τῷ τρόπῳ τῶν περὶ αὐτοὺς μεγάλων καὶ σκληρῶν δοξῶν ἀπαλλάττονται[...] νομίζοντες γάρ, ὧ παῖ φίλε, οἱ καθαίροντες αὐτούς, ὥσπερ οἱ περὶ τὰ σώματα ἰατροὶ νενομίκασι μὴ πρότερον ἂν τῆς προσφερομένης τροφῆς ἀπολαύειν δύνασθαι σῶμα, πρὶν ἂν τὰ ἐμποδίζοντα ἐντός τις ἐκβάλῃ, ταῦτόν καὶ περὶ ψυχῆς διενεοθήσαν ἐκεῖνοι, μὴ πρότερον αὐτὴν ἔξειν τῶν προσφερομένων μαθημάτων. ὄνησιν, πρὶν ἂν ἐλέγχων τις τὸν ἐλεγχόμενον εἰς αἰσχύνην καταστήσας, τὰς τοῖς μαθήμασι ἐμποδίου δόξας ἐξελέων, καθαρὸν ἀποφήνη καὶ ταῦτα ἠγούμενον ἅπερ οἶδεν εἰδέναι μόνα, πλείω δὲ μή.

<sup>88</sup> They are brought into a state of shame because they say they care about something and believe it is good to have knowledge about that thing but are shown instead that they do not have the knowledge they believed themselves to have had and thus the implication is that they must not really care about that thing (per the minimum knowledge requirement bias). To be shown not to have this knowledge, despite recognizing its importance, is shameful.

reflects on them in a negative way: this is the removal of the opinion impeding one's teachings and the acquisition of the self-evaluative belief. The acquisition of this self-evaluative belief then immediately generates the feeling of shame. There is no description of a new belief about what to do after they feel shame, rather the *elenchus* is successful if one has been cleansed of their false beliefs and only believes what one actually knows, which involves the new content beliefs about what one does not know. What one decides to do afterward would be based on this: the knowledge they have and already accept.

There are no *new* beliefs generated from the shame response itself; any change in belief happens at a higher level as a response to other beliefs<sup>89</sup>. The interlocutor's possible variety of responses to shame are typically the result of their current character and other beliefs they might still have that were not attacked by the *elenchus*<sup>90</sup>. The fact that the *elenchus* examines their lives and reflects on their character shows that the shame that it results in is due to our self-conception, and that their decisions on how to act follow from other beliefs the agent already has.

However, it is interesting to note that Socrates' *elenchus* in the *Laches* did not have the anticipated effect the Visitor expects in the *Sophist*. Socrates' cross-examination was supposed to make Laches angry at himself and calmer to others, though he seems to become more aggressive toward Nicias. After Nicias gives his own definition of courage, Laches immediately begins asserting that Nicias is talking nonsense and attempting to undermine his view (*Lach.* 195a6). Nicias notices this somewhat

---

<sup>89</sup> I am not denying that some, if not most, of our beliefs come to be had through experience, but it is not just any experience; the novelty of a particular experience (or set of experiences) generates belief, and shame is not always a novel experience, and though it may be felt in novel situations (one has never been proven wrong about this topic before) it is not this experience of shame that changes one's beliefs about how to act, since the feeling of shame always motivates the same kind of response: to pursue the activity that best helps align us with what we see as good. But all it does is add motivation, it does not determine our action by itself, since, in the case of competing goods, desire can overpower shame, such as in the case of the warrior who flees from battle. Though they feel shame at their action and knew it was wrong, desire attached to a competing good (one's own life) which ultimately won out.

<sup>90</sup> This view accounts for the diversity of responses to the *elenchus*. It maps especially well with the fact that Socrates' most receptive interlocutors are typically young men who do not yet have fully established characters and virtually immovable beliefs. Older people tend to be less receptive due to the beliefs they have about their reputation. A response that the Athenian in the *Laws* attempts to mitigate through drinking games. Through drinking games, he intends to mitigate the shame response of those drinking that would attach to their belief about how they ought to act to preserve their reputation. But the shame response is not entirely inactive, for there are some behaviors in which one, even when drunk, would refuse to participate.

malicious behavior, and his description of it clearly shows that Laches' behavior is the result of his shame resulting from a self-evaluative belief. He says, "it strikes me, Socrates, that Laches wants to prove that I am talking nonsense *simply because* he was shown to be *that sort of person* himself a moment ago" (195a7-b1, emphasis added). Nicias suspects that Laches' behavior is about the kind of person he was shown to be, not merely a belief about what he knows or what others think of him, but a belief about *how* what he knows reflects on him. Laches immediately agrees to Nicias' understanding of the situation: "Quite so, Nicias, and I shall try to demonstrate that very thing" (195b2). Importantly, the action he chooses after feeling shame cannot be explained simply at the level of content beliefs, since, as I argued in the previous section, content beliefs are not enough to generate shame. Rather, the action Laches decides on is influenced by his self-evaluative belief; he needs a solution that will rectify the contradiction and eliminate or at least minimize his shame, (not all the solutions being entirely virtuous). Laches is motivated to endorse the solution that best allows him to maintain alignment with his conception of his own good; i.e., being a courageous person, which involves being knowledgeable about courage.

Because Nicias' new definition is so different from his own, I interpret that if Nicias is right, Laches' excuse about his inability to articulate it will not win over others as easily. I propose that he then decides that he needs to take down Nicias. I have shown by Laches' response that he thinks he should be able to do something but was unable. Following that, he has attempted to dodge the shame (the move is not yet successful), but if Nicias can give an account whereas Laches cannot, this will make his dodge less successful, for he will appear less of an expert than Nicias and perhaps even unworthy of his title as a general.

In this case, the action Laches pursues is intended to maintain consistency (that he can be both a good general and not be able to define courage) by showing that Nicias does not know the definition either. At this point, it is important that I deal with the objection that Laches' behavior could be the

result of envy (rather than shame). The thought is a simple one: Laches envies Nicias whose reputation is still untainted. This, however, is clearly not obviously envy in the sense that the Ancient Greeks would have understood it. Plato, for instance, describes people who are overly spirited as envious (*phthonōi*) due to their love of honor (*Rep.* 9.586c6-d2). Destrée, who provides an excellent study of the Greek conception of *phthonos*, implies however, that they want what others have, especially honor, for themselves (Destrée 2019: 170). In this situation, however, (1) Nicias does not currently have the honor that Laches is supposed to want (for what Laches ultimately wants is to give a definition of courage that satisfies Socrates) and (2) Laches cannot have the honor he wants, for taking down Nicias does not make Laches any more knowledgeable about courage. Yes, Nicias is his rival, but spoiling the object of desire for them both (for the mere sake of preventing Nicias from having what he himself cannot have) does not get him the honor that he wants<sup>91</sup>. So, if Laches is feeling envy, it is unclear how shaming Nicias would get him closer to the object of his desire. By understanding Laches as feeling shame, what is perceived as a “desire to spoil the object of desire for both of them”, however, actually just becomes a consequence in the grander picture of reconciling his negative self-evaluative belief with his desire to be viewed as a competent, knowledgeable general. That is his desire, and it just so happens that taking down Nicias seems like the best way to preserve the appearance of his competency.

So, Laches aims to eliminate his feeling of shame (due to the painful contradiction his lack of knowledge poses when confronted with his previous positive self-evaluation), and this can be done by showing his ignorance is not shameful, but this can only be done if *no one* present knows the answer.

---

<sup>91</sup> People who maintain the “if I cannot have X, then no one can” mentality are motivated to spoil the object of desire because it gets them something they want even if it’s not the direct object of their desire. People in this case want either (1) control over the object of desire—which they can claim by destroying it, or (2) to rid themselves of the anticipation of the future pain of seeing someone else enjoy the object. Laches’ concern is not that he is afraid of Nicias’ enjoying the object he cannot have, but as Nicias later indicates, Laches’ fear is that he will be alone in his ignorance. It is not clear to me that people who destroy an object of desire want to commiserate with the person from whom they take the object.

The fact that Laches does not want to be alone in his ignorance points to something about the loneliness that is particular unsavory, and I am suggesting it is because the loneliness shows that Laches does not know about his own business, when he could have and should have. Laches wants to show that the knowledge cannot be articulated (though presumably they both have it).

So, while it might look like a case of envy, it is actually a case of self-preservation brought on by shame.

So, it looks more like Laches' desire to go after Nicias is supported by the "minimum knowledge requirement bias" that I mentioned earlier<sup>92</sup>, namely that he ought to know his own business. Laches shows himself as having this bias when he says:

Whenever I hear a man discussing virtue or some kind of wisdom, then, if he really is a man and worthy of the words he utters, I am completely delighted to see the appropriateness and harmony existing between the speaker and his words[...] producing the most beautiful harmony[...] actually rendering his own life harmonious by fitting his deeds to his words in a truly Dorian mode. (*Lach.* 188c6-e6)

Laches here emphasizes his enthusiasm about when people's claims about virtue are exemplified by their actions. However, Laches shows *himself* not to be a person who can fit his deeds to his words in the way described, for if he could not properly describe courage, how can he be certain that his "courageous actions" (or the ones he teaches his men) are genuinely courageous? As a general though, he ought to be able to know his business: courage, which would involve exemplifying genuine courage and correctly telling others how to become courageous. So, through this *elenchus*, what has actually happened is that Laches' status as a general may appear unearned, for if anyone could say what unifies all courageous acts, it would likely be a general, who is considered an expert on courage. However, showing that Nicias, a fellow general, does not know as well would perhaps show that this is a common phenomenon among generals and thus not problematic; the thought being that if all the experts cannot define courage, but they have been thought courageous by others and somehow been able to produce recognizable courage in others, it may not necessarily be a problem that they cannot define courage, for it may be possible that they can have this knowledge without the ability to articulate a definition. This would have the result of allowing Laches to eliminate the shame brought on by his previous admission of his current lack of terminology to express his knowledge.

---

<sup>92</sup> Page 121 of this document.

When Socrates showed Laches that he was wrong, he felt shame because his self-esteem had been injured (he is someone who is supposed to know about courage but cannot even define it). Further because Laches sees Nicias as a rival in the discussion<sup>93</sup> and wants to preserve his own esteem as someone who is courageous (rather than acquire what he cannot have or prevent another from acquiring what he cannot have), shame adds additional motivation to his belief that he should contribute to Nicias' refutation, as this partly excuses his ignorance.<sup>94</sup> Why he has this belief, however, is because Laches knows he will look even worse by not only being ignorant himself, but also by appearing inferior to his presumed equal, if Nicias turns out to be right<sup>95</sup>. Laches' beliefs about his own prowess and similarity in expertise to Nicias drive him to feel that he cannot allow Nicias to be right about courage<sup>96</sup>. For both Nicias and Laches are distinguished Athenian generals and were approached by Lysimachus and Melesias on equal terms. Since Laches still thinks that he knows, in order to ensure that this is believable, he needs to show that Nicias, whom he takes to be intellectually on par with himself, cannot articulate it either<sup>97</sup>. If even Nicias is ignorant of how to describe courage as well, then it would

---

<sup>93</sup> The first expression of the rivalry occurs at 180c-d, where Nicias asserts that he "no less than Laches" is aware of the fact that Socrates would be good to ask.

<sup>94</sup> Socrates discussion, if it were not getting at the truth of the matter, would fail to make Nicias ashamed. So, when Laches wants Nicias to feel shame, he agrees to work with Socrates because he believes that Socrates will also prove to Nicias that Nicias does not know what he claims to know. In other words, Laches will give Nicias the new belief that he himself has, that he does not know what he thought he knew, since what he thought he knew results in contradictions.

<sup>95</sup> One might ask at this point, "why does Socrates himself seek to take people down"? Does he have the same motivations that Laches has? (Some of his contemporaries (e.g. Thrasymachus) would certainly say he seeks to satisfy his love of honor (*Rep.* 336c3). However, I say the answer would have to be no. A big difference between someone like Socrates and someone like Laches, is that Laches has a kind of double ignorance; not only does Laches *not know* something, but he also *thinks that he knows it* when he does not. Socrates, on the other hand, knows that he does not know something and does not feign intelligence. As a result, when Laches feels a lack in his own knowledge from being shown not to know something that he had confidence about knowing, it is no surprise (and no source of shame) to Socrates if he is shown not to know something, for he never reported to have knowledge of it to begin with.

<sup>96</sup> In the *Philebus*, the nature of malice is mixed, for it includes unjust pain and pleasure (*Phlb.* 49d). When one laughs at the misfortune of their friends (such as their friend's ignorance) they take pleasure in it, and malice is a pain of the soul (48b) because it includes injustice of the form of laughing at one's friends who don't deserve this treatment, and this injustice is bad for the soul.

<sup>97</sup> What is interesting is that Socrates did think that Laches was on to something. This is evidenced by when Socrates reassuringly says: "if you are willing, let us hold our ground in the search and let us endure, so that courage itself won't make fun of us for not searching for it courageously—if endurance should perhaps be courage after all" (*Lach.* 194a1-4). Socrates' suggestion to continue this line of thought seems to suggest that he finds it promising. In fact, if it were pursued, we might find a definition of courage that looks something like the following: courage is enduring in agreement with what one believes is best. Or enduring in accord with one's conception of the good. This actually looks like how courage is defined in the *Republic*,

likely show that Socrates' request of being able to provide a definition of courage is too high a requirement, even for generals. This strategy, if successful, would defeat any self-evaluative belief that he is not genuinely courageous or unworthy of his title by showing he is as knowledgeable as could be expected about such a difficult subject. The knowledge he has does not prevent him from acting courageously or instilling some degree of courage in others, but it is not so great that he can describe what unifies all courageous deeds. By undermining Nicias' argument, Laches shows that he can *both* about care about courage *and* be ignorant about it to a certain degree if two generals, the people most likely to have such knowledge, do not have it. Laches' goal was to show Nicias to be the same kind of person as him: someone who cares about courage, but who does not know *exactly* how to define it. The reason he acted as he did was because he himself was being shown not to care about something about which he should care. This emphasis on himself and that it is he who does not know, with the expectation that he should know, generates a belief about the kind of person he is; i.e., a self-evaluative belief that inspired his shame and also this non-virtuous response.

### iii. Aftermath

After Socrates' cross-examination has refuted Nicias, Laches says that he had hoped that Nicias would have turned out to have solved their problem (a complete change in attitude from earlier, but in fact, it is easy to see Laches as just being facetious, for he did not want Nicias to be right, but now he has to pretend to be disappointed at not gaining from Nicias the knowledge he did not show himself to have had earlier). Nicias says:

That's a fine attitude of yours, Laches, to think it no longer to be of any importance that you yourself were just now shown ***to be a person who knows nothing about courage***. What interests you is whether *I will turn out to be a person of the same kind*. Apparently, it will make no difference to you to be ignorant of those things which *a man of any pretensions ought to*

---

i.e., as a preservation of belief, but especially the beliefs given by lawmakers about what is to be feared and not; namely the good and bad. (*Rep.* 429b7-c2). Chapter 6 also deals with this conception of courage in more detail.

*know, so long as you include me in your ignorance.* (200a2-6, bold and italics added for emphasis)<sup>98</sup>

Nicias' response here reaffirms my interpretation about Laches' strategy, for he is calling Laches out on exactly this point. Laches wanted to cover up that his lack of knowledge is an insufficiency. Including Nicias in Laches' own ignorance satisfies Laches because it creates the perception that knowledge of courage's definition is elusive for generals too. If even the generals who should know do not know, it is now an open possibility that the standard for knowledge (being able to define courage) is too high, and whatever knowledge they have as generals is sufficient for inspiring some kind of courage, even if they cannot define what makes every act courageous. It turns out that Laches is indeed satisfied by the overall result, but interestingly, Nicias appears to be attempting to point out what was wrong with what Laches did and attempts to re-shame Laches by pointing out that *he still ought to care about his own ignorance on the matter*, rather than about whether he is alone in it or not. Nicias thinks there is more they both need to know about the matter and should not be content with what they know now. Nicias' new attempt to re-shame Laches appears unsuccessful, as Laches does not indicate any plan to do as Nicias reports he will do after the discussion with Damon. Nicias will, in fact, need to acquire the knowledge they both lack in order to be able to shame Laches with this point in the future. Further, Laches, as Nicias pointed out, will be satisfied so long as Nicias stays the same kind of person as him (unknowledgeable about the definition of courage). At this point, Laches, believing his tactic successful, suggests they move on and leave the training of the boys of their interlocutors to Socrates.

These two different responses from Laches and Nicias, I suggest, are the result of two different conceptions of their good. Though they both were victims of the *elenchus*, Laches chose to bring down Nicias to his level, while Nicias made plans for the future to increase his knowledge. Laches' goal was to

---

<sup>98</sup> White translation. εὖ γε, ὦ Λάχης, ὅτι οὐδὲν οἶει σὺ ἔτι πρᾶγμα εἶναι ὅτι αὐτὸς ἄρτι ἐφάνης ἀνδρείας περὶ οὐδὲν εἰδώς, ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ ἐγὼ ἕτερος τοιοῦτος ἀναφανήσομαι, πρὸς τοῦτο βλέπεις, καὶ οὐδὲν ἔτι διοίσει, ὡς ἔοικε, σοὶ μετ' ἐμοῦ μηδὲν εἰδέναί ὧν προσήκει ἐπιστήμην ἔχειν ἀνδρὶ οἰομένῳ τί εἶναι.

preserve his conception of his own knowledge to himself (and perhaps save face among any onlookers), as he considered himself wise on the matter. He could not allow only Nicias to be correct, because Nicias' failure would allow him to preserve this conception of himself by being evidence that Laches' ignorance was due to the difficulty of the problem rather than to his own shortcoming. Nicias, on the other hand, accepted his defeat rather gracefully and instead intends to seek knowledge from someone he considers to be wiser (considered wiser because, as is mentioned at the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates himself recommended Damon as a music teacher for Nicias' son (180c7-d3)). Nicias' reconciled the negative self-evaluative belief (that he's a poor excuse for a general by being ignorant about that which he is supposed to care) by aiming to gain more knowledge (in order to fulfill the minimum knowledge requirement that he (as opposed to Laches) thinks he has not yet met. However, even the non-ideal result still puts Laches in a better place than he would have been without participating in it.

Even though Laches did not have the exact response that Socrates may have wanted, it still showed him that he does not know how to define courage, despite thinking he could. Additionally, Laches is still a bit on the hook, for he said he could not do it "at this time". Even though Laches did not indicate he would pursue further answers from others like Nicias, there may still be knowledge to be gained if he critically reflects; so, the fact that Nicias will pursue answers might suggest that Laches, as his rival, might too pursue answers on his own time. It would look bad for him if Nicias were to actually come back with the answers, so he may still likely motivated to work out an answer, despite all his trickiness prior to Socrates' departure. That nagging thought in the back of one's mind that 'there is more to learn' is one of the major benefits of the *elenchus*, and surely though Laches may have dodged shame currently, being able to do this in the future might rely on finding the knowledge he has committed himself to re-discovering.

In this section, I argued that the reason that Laches decides to attempt to bring down Nicias in the discussion in the *Laches* cannot be explained merely on the basis of Laches' content beliefs; i.e.,

what he knows or does not know with regard to his own beliefs. Rather it can be better explained by looking at what his content beliefs tell him about his character. Socrates' refutation ends up calling Laches' status as a general into question, so in order to make it look like he is not just unjustifiably ignorant, Laches cannot allow Nicias to be correct in his own account. This motivates Laches to take down Nicias in a way that will preserve his conception of himself as someone who is concerned with courage and as knowledgeable as possible. The shame here is driven by his conception of his own good which shows how shame is dependent on reason. It also shows how it plays a role in motivating his action, thus making shame's role in behavior functional rather than causal.

### Conclusion & Elenchus' Rationale

I explained that the shortcomings of Brickhouse and Smith's view (explained in the previous chapter) are the result of mischaracterizing the nature of shame by not seeing that motivations like shame work on beliefs in two stages. During an *elenchus*, one first develops what I referred to as a "content belief" about a subject matter. Then, if this is a subject in which the agent has a considerable stake, the agent then recognizes that this content belief reflects badly on the kind of person they are. This content belief then generates a negative self-evaluative belief such as "I am ignorant despite thinking myself wise" or "I must not actually care about X virtue". This negative self-evaluative belief then generates a very closely associated passion called "shame", and the person's reaction to this shame will be to rid themselves of this negative self-evaluative belief because it undermines their commitment to their conception of the good. However, the way they rid themselves of this belief, I argued, comes as a suggestion from *reason*, and if one's reason is already partly corrupted, or they have a non-ideal conception of their good, I explained that they will likely engage in non-virtuous or even vicious means to rid themselves of this negative self-evaluative belief; if virtuous, they will choose a more virtuous way of eliminating that belief. I also argued that that shame does not work on beliefs in a

causal way, but rather is functionally dependent on reason; so, what one sees as good while feeling shame already reflects one's (corrupted or uncorrupt) conception of the good.

Lastly, I exemplified my interpretation with a sample *elenchus* from the *Laches*. I chose to work with this dialogue in particular, as it excellently exemplifies a case of non-virtuous behavior resulting from shame. I showed that the emotion that Laches feels following Socrates' *elenchus* is shame and argued that his behavior is the result of a self-evaluative belief. I then used Laches' response to the *elenchus* to diagnose what went wrong with this *elenchus*. On my interpretation, Laches was motivated by how he appears to others, while Nicias' was concerned with the truth. This difference in the driving forces influencing their own conception of the good was what generates these different responses. Nicias showed the ideal result of an *elenchus* while Laches exemplified a non-ideal result.

The *elenchus* is an important tool for Socrates because of the way it marshals one's reason-dependent emotions. So, even though Laches did not have the exact response that Socrates may have wanted, it still showed him something important about himself: Laches still does not know how to define courage. Even though Laches did not indicate he would pursue further answers from others, there may still be knowledge to be gained, so the fact that Nicias will pursue answers might suggest that Laches, as his rival, would be motivated to also pursue answers on his own time.

In the next chapter, I am moving from the individual to the societal level by looking at the origins of political society in Protagoras' myth in his eponymous dialogue. The gifts Zeus gave to humans to allow for civil society and how they operate, I will argue, make the most sense if we keep in mind the complex collaborative efforts of spirited motivations and rational beliefs for action. I argue that a Platonic reading of Protagoras' myth sheds light on how we should understand Zeus' gifts of *aidōs* and *dikē*. I suggest that these gifts necessarily come together because each depends on the other in ways similar to how spirited motivations and rational beliefs depend on each other in the *Laws* and that by

reading the myth in this way provides an explanation for the role of spirited and rational motivations in terms of obedience to law and large-scale political harmony.

## Chapter 5: The *Protagoras* through Platonic Lenses: Interpreting the Myth of the *Protagoras* Through Plato's Later Dialogues

### Introduction

In Plato's *Protagoras*, Protagoras uses his skills in oratory to regale his audience with a myth that characterizes Zeus' introduction of *aidōs* and *dikē* to humans which is intended not only to later explain why people accept that virtue is teachable, but to elucidate how the introduction of these gifts allowed for the art of politics, which ultimately contributes to humankind's ability to live together in organized political communities. The terms *aidōs* and *dikē* capture a lot of possible translations, which makes pinning down their distinct meaning and role in the art of politics somewhat challenging. For instance, *aidōs* captures reverence, shame, awe and respect, while *dikē* could capture everything from social customs, to lawsuits and even penalties. While understanding that perpetual human community is impossible without these gifts, there is a question about what *specifically* they are intended to contribute that humans do not already have so that they can accomplish the goal of community that Zeus intends.

In this chapter, I will describe the relevant parts of the myth, then discuss some possible alternative interpretations of what *aidōs* and *dikē* contribute. I address Wilburn's interpretation that Zeus introduced the potential for *spirited* motivation and activity by providing humans with his gifts. Thereafter, I discuss another possible interpretation that takes *aidōs* and *dikē* to be the same thing or at least not worth distinguishing. I will give reasons why both of these views are unsatisfactory and then offer an alternative which is that *dikē* is the rational capacity for forming law, while *aidōs* is the spirited respect for these laws, and further that both of these are necessary for the proper functioning of society. I further argue that the value of the myth is not in exhibiting a new category for our social natures (as Wilburn supposes), but that *aidōs* depends on *dikē* and vice versa. I would like to suggest

that Plato recognizes this dependency, agrees with it, but finds Protagoras' explanation of it lacking a lot of detail. I would like to suggest that by taking the parts of the myth to be Protagorean in nature, we can understand this myth through Platonic lenses (by which I mean with additional explanation Plato could have offered) which allows us to recognize what Plato liked in what Protagoras said and recognize how he expanded upon it in later dialogues. I suggest that Plato recognizes that the proper execution of *dikē* relies on rational capacities and motivations, and that the experience of *aidōs* is something spirited and relies on one's reason for how to feel about different things. Given what I have just argued in previous chapters about the dependence on one another of spirited and rational motivations, we are in a position to see if such an analysis works here as well, and I believe the features the *Laws* highlights about these motivations shows up in this dialogue as well. One's reason relies on the experience of *aidōs* in order to execute and stay true to one's rational goals. Thus, on my view, this myth also highlights the importance of the dependence of spirited motivations on reason for securing rational ends; one without the other cannot amount to a safe and stable society. This has the result of showing that Plato does not take himself to be doing something new when he shows that spirit is dependent on reason in later dialogues, rather he is clarifying and detailing that relationship, which comes out not only here, but in the previous dialogues we have examined.

### The Myth

At the beginning of the myth, Protagoras discusses Epimetheus' distribution of powers to all earthly creatures. Epimetheus gave all the traits beneficial for survival, such as claws, fur, swiftness, etc. to all the other animals, the consequence of which was that nothing was left for humankind. Prometheus, however, seeing that the human race would be ill-equipped for survival, stole fire from Hephaestus and wisdom in the practical arts from Athena and provided them to the humans so that humankind might have a fighting chance (*Prt.* 321c6-d3). However, even these gifts would not be enough to prevent humans from being destroyed, for they encountered other problems. Human beings

were not physically strong enough on their own to beat out other animals with which they were competing for resources. The described reason why they were unable to was because early humans did not possess the art of politics, of which the art of war is a part (322b4). Lacking the art of politics made it impossible for humans to band together reliably and prevent their own destruction.

The second problem was that when humans tried to form cities together, the cities inevitably disbanded and were destroyed because the members of it would harm one another. The reason for this was *also* because they lacked the art of politics, which allowed for the promotion of stable society for perpetual communal living (322b2-7). So, the art of politics, which was guarded by Zeus, could do two things for humans: (1) provide proficiency at fighting bigger/stronger enemies and (2) promote unity and harmony in their city which would allow for long-term preservation of the city. One seems to be an external consideration (needing to fight against others), while the other appears to be an internal consideration (needing to fight against their own desires). How these two are ultimately unified under the “art of politics” should be answered by Zeus’ response to these problems.

Zeus, in response, says he “sent Hermes to bring justice (*dikē*) and a sense of shame (*aidōs*) to humans so that there would be order within cities and bonds of friendship to unite them” (322c1-3). There is a lot one can ask about this short passage. For instance: are justice and a sense of shame two things or two different names for the same thing? One can also further ask about whether order and bonds of friendship are two things or just one, whether one might be entailed by the other and in what way they follow from the gift(s) provided. Whatever justice and shame are however, this passage indicates that they lead to order and unity in friendship, presumably in the way they resolve the problems (1) and (2) mentioned above. I will look specifically at Wilburn’s account of *dikē* and *aidōs* because he tries to give a very specific account of what these two are, arguing that they appear to be capacities for experiencing spirited motivations; I will then explain why I take his view to be unsatisfactory. Thereafter, I will instead argue that Zeus provides something rational *and* something

spirited; the two being necessary together since a stable city will rely on a set of standards to govern human action and justice-abiding inclinations of spirited motivations like *aidōs*.

i. Wilburn's interpretation

Wilburn provides a unique reading of the myth. He claims that “when Zeus grants ‘the art of politics’ to human beings, he turns them into spirited creatures with distinctively spirited feelings and sensitivities” (Wilburn 2021: 99), by which he means “the art of politics allotted by Zeus consists of capacities for experiencing spirited motivations” (99). Wilburn thus sees Zeus as granting humans social capacities for gentleness, receptiveness to others, and capacities of this sort which promote civic unity. Importantly, Wilburn interprets that *thumos* has two sides: a side which exhibits aggression against one's enemies and a side devoted to gentleness towards one's friends. The ‘art of politics’ is intended to accomplish both these ends. Wilburn interprets:

The art of war represents, or develops out of, **the capacity to experience feelings of spirited anger and aggression that are conducive to effective fighting**, and **shame and justice** represent (or prominently include) **capacities for experiencing spirited emotions and desires conducive to friendship, cooperation, and the stability of communities**. Shame and justice endow human beings with sensitivities they did not previously possess. Because of those sensitivities, people care about and respect fellow members of their communities, and they are responsive to others' behavior toward, and opinions about, them. The motivations associated with the art of war and shame and justice, moreover, make it possible for citizens to acquire civic virtue and become law-abiding through moral education. (99, emphasis added)

So, on Wilburn's interpretation the gift of the art of politics must allow for two things to develop: a capacity for feeling anger and aggression that allows for effective fighting, which would solve the first problem for humans. Secondly, Zeus provides shame and justice, (the terms Wilburn translates for *aidōs* and *dikē*) which allow for friendship, civic cooperation, and ultimately a stable community, which would resolve the second problem. These motivations then, further allow for citizens to develop civic virtue and become law-abiding, which they could not achieve before. There are a couple worries I have about this account, so I will go through each next.

One worry is that Wilburn seems to take this interpretation to exemplify Plato's view on the matter. However, why should we think that Plato is using Protagoras as a mouthpiece to espouse his early views? This move makes assumptions about Plato's intentions at this stage in his life, which we cannot know for certain. What we do know, however, is that Plato frequently uses his interlocutors to express opinions with which he actually *disagrees*, and it is just as likely in this situation that he might disagree with Protagoras here. The fact that Plato does not have Socrates refute the myth itself could easily say more about Socrates' piety than about Plato's own views. Plato does, however, take issue with how Protagoras understands the relation among the virtues, which comes out only after he finishes the myth. This part of the dialogue I will not focus on.

The second worry I would like to raise about this account is that it does not seem to map exactly with what Protagoras describes as happening in the myth. I would have imagined that the art of war was somehow related to the gifts of *dikē* and *aidōs* given that these two were the things explicitly mentioned *being given* in the myth. Humans achieved the ability to live together in cities via these two gifts, which I took by themselves to constitute the 'art of politics' which included the art of war. In other words, the problem is that Wilburn says that the gifts of Zeus solve the problem of ineffective fighting for humans, and yet *anger*, not *aidōs* and *dikē*, was described as the solution. However, even if Wilburn thinks that *aidōs* and *dikē* do contribute to the art of war, he never clarifies the specific relation they have to it.

It seems, as Wilburn characterizes it, that the art of war is separate from the introduction of *aidōs* and *dikē*, which only provide the aspect of gentleness and responsiveness to others. He would need to connect *aidōs* and *dikē* to spirited anger and aggression in order for this view to be plausible. What Wilburn seems to do in his account is assimilate *aidōs* and *dikē* to perform this role of providing capacities for gentleness, sensitivities to praise and blame, and things of this sort, while not necessarily contributing to the motivations required for the art of war. However, it is possible that Wilburn might

mean that the art of war actually develops out of “desires that are conducive to friendship, cooperation, and the stability of communities”. Recall when Wilburn says the following:

The art of war represents, or develops out of, the capacity to experience feelings of spirited anger and aggression that are conducive to effective fighting, and shame and justice represent (or prominently include) capacities for experiencing spirited emotions and desires conducive to friendship, cooperation, and the stability of communities. (99)

If we understand this to mean he is trying to say the inclusion of capacities for spirited emotions such as *aidōs* and *dikē* entails the aggressive motivations like anger against the things that are not conducive to these (or that threaten them) such as hostility, sabotage, and instability/disorder, then we can better see how they might connect. On this interpretation of his view, the “capacity to experience feelings of spirited anger and aggression that are conducive to effective fighting” just is *an example* of spirited emotions and desires (arising from *aidōs* and *dikē*) that are conducive to friendship, cooperation, and the stability of communities. So, he would actually be trying to say that shame and justice are *necessary* for spirited anger which has the effect of bringing members of the community together, (as anger at injustice frequently brings communities together under a single cause). The aggressive desire then can clearly be seen as developing out of justice. Justice then both contributes to anger and the desire to fight against a potential threat to their community but also conduces to friendship among those who share the cause. In this way, they do not necessarily have to be distinct. I would be satisfied with this explanation, but he never explicitly connects *aidōs* and *dikē* to spirited anger in this way.

Even if we accept the reading of his view that does not identify the spirited anger and aggression as *separate* from shame and justice (perhaps because he can say that justice involves anger at those who try to take more than their due, which threatens the order of their society), the final concern I have against Wilburn’s interpretation is that it is *not* obvious that both these gifts are *spirited* in nature, which is an essential aspect of his account. Protagoras takes his myth to accomplish his goal of explaining why people take virtue to be teachable. His reasoning is that during Greek debates on political excellence, advice from anyone is accepted (*Prt.* 323a2); presumably because the citizens all have a share of some

same knowledge; i.e., “justice and civic virtue (*dikaionē te kai... politikēs aretēs*)” (323a6). In other words, Protagoras is saying that the knowledge people have is knowledge of “justice” and of “civic virtue”. Now, Wilburn’s idea, then, is that *aidōs* and *dikē*, both being spirited in nature, help people follow the conventions. The knowledge of “justice” to which I assume *dikē* correlates, is not obviously spirited; the common conception of justice that Greeks commonly accept refers to the judicial process<sup>99</sup>, which would help people follow laws in the sense of also including penalties for violating the agreements. But this judicial process, or the rationality involved in crafting appropriate punishments, is not obviously spirited, and appears more rational, as it takes into account rectification of wrongs. It is clear the early human communities did not have this idea for developing enforceable laws out of their conventions prior to the gifts, as people wronged each other without punishment (though retaliation, which I think is different from punishment, may have been involved). So, if the gifts are merely spirited in nature, then the gifts from Zeus would not give humans one of the most essential things for political communities: the ability to enforce the conventions they agree upon! So, these gifts cannot just be receptive of the conventions, one of them has to be rational, so that the conventions can be developed into enforceable laws.

At this point, one may respond that it is not necessary that the gifts from Zeus allow humans to make laws. Instead, the individuals may have had the intellectual resources to make laws already but lacked the spirited resources to be motivated to obey them. After all, the text says that they did “try to band together and survive by founding cities” (322b5), which may suggest that they did already have the rationality to attempt to develop conventions. But Zeus says: “for cities would not come to be if only a

---

<sup>99</sup> See the section on punishment and society below for a more detailed analysis of the poetry from which Greeks at this time are deriving their concept of justice.

few possessed these [gifts]<sup>100</sup> (322d2-3). So, the aforementioned cities were never properly founded, as he says they would wrong each other when they would come together (322b6-7).

However, if these gifts did give individuals the ability to make laws, then it is necessary that they gain from these gifts at least some understanding or way of understanding what is essential for communal living (i.e., justice and civic virtue), which Plato describes in the *Republic* as a harmonious condition that is good for the whole. Since laws are established by a group, without at least seeming to aim at something that is good for the whole (as Plato in the *Laws* argues that they ought), and without punishment to secure the obedience of even those who are most reluctant to obey, it is difficult to see how any mere convention could command the allegiance of its subjects. My point is that early people needed some way of making their conventions enforceable, and this is what *dikē* gave them, the capacity to establish law and develop a judicial process that supports it. Presumably the individuals did not have this capacity before, because if they did, they would have had no difficulty in punishing those who harmed others, which would encourage obedience to their laws. This capacity for developing law, however, cannot be understood as spirited. Protagoras point that virtue must be “taught and carefully developed in those whom it is developed” (323c5-6) supports that at least one aspect can be spirited, but Protagoras himself is also clear that the knowledge in question is “of what is just and unjust” etc. (325d2-3). This further supports the above thought that this knowledge will result in making laws which have associated judicial consequences. Understanding what is just and unjust allows humans to live in communities. This would imply that either *aidōs* or *dikē* are that knowledge or at least a capacity for attaining that knowledge, and further that these capacities would not be merely spirited; at least one of them may have to be rational in nature.

---

<sup>100</sup> οὐ γὰρ ἂν γένοιτο πόλεις, εἰ ὀλίγοι αὐτῶν μετέχοιεν

My own view accepts that the gifts from Zeus must allow for the conventions that enable stable communal living. So, I will argue further in the next section that what Zeus gave is a capacity for forming law, in other words, the gift of *dikē* refers to the capacity for forming and maintaining law, which is essential for establishing a society where people exhibit *dikaionē*. *Aidōs*, then, will be what allows us to remain obedient.

*My Interpretation: Aidōs Depends on Dikē (& Vice Versa) for a Stable Society*

I should preface this section by saying that I do not think that Protagoras was thinking of the different categories of motivations implied by his view when he gave it, but I would like to suggest that Plato understood them when hearing his view. I would also like to suggest that Plato builds off of what Protagoras says and interprets it in a way which would allow him to say more about each capacity and explain, where Protagoras did not, how they are linked together. In Plato's own terms, *dikē* may in fact be a rational capacity, whereas *aidōs* is not. Since Protagoras saw *dikē* as something that allowed for the development of standards of society, which according to Plato could be rational in the sense that they are aimed at the good of the whole, it is possible that *dikē* itself may itself be a rational capacity or offer a new way of thinking to an already existing one. Since Protagoras "place[s] considerable emphasis on advantage; he believes that the laws and customs of a city are a conventional arrangement designed to secure the advantage of the citizen-body as a whole" (Cairns 1993: 359). I am calling this utilitarian reasoning "rational" insofar as this pursuit of the common good is the task that Plato gives to the *logistikon* (i.e., the rulers of the city in the *Republic*), though I also accept that Protagoras himself may not have accepted it into that category. A further reason to accept *dikē* as a rational capacity is that the association of *dikē* with reason is supported by the fact that Plato thinks that law is *intentionally* determined by people who are aiming at our overall advantage/good of the community, and the people who see this are the wise ones.

Reason is necessary to be able to calculate what is overall best for the community and securing it through the formation of laws that have been determined (through calculation) to achieve that good. Thus, I propose that we view *dikē* as the capacity for developing human law (which importantly involves some insight into society's good and deterrent punishment) and as for *aidōs*, I would like to preserve its meaning of respect and awe for what is superior. This is in line with the common conception of *aidōs* being a condition of reverence as it involves the behavior appropriate to one given their social standing. So, when the punishment associated with law is in some way social, it could inspire *aidōs* in the individual. However, Protagoras says shockingly little about *aidōs* and *sophrosunē*, which, at 323a1, he seems to take as synonymous. Plato, however, does not take these two to be synonymous, so I will speak mainly here about *dikē* and say some general things about *aidōs*, for it is not Protagoras that links *aidōs* cleanly to *dikē*, but rather Plato in later dialogues, being perhaps partly inspired by the story he has Protagoras providing here. As I explore *dikē* here and the possible connection with *aidōs* as Protagoras presents it, I will first look again at what situation individuals had pre-politically and re-describe the deficiency that needs to be filled. Then I will discuss the evidence for viewing *dikē* in the way that eliminates that deficiency, and then I will discuss how the common conception of *aidōs*, which Protagoras likely adheres to, supports this conception of *dikē*. Through this discussion it will become clear why both are necessary, but in terms of how they allow for stable communal living, this I suggest is something Plato works out in more detail in later dialogues looking at these Protagorean pieces through his own lenses.

i. Punishment and Society

In pre-political society, humans attempted to band together for convenience and safety, but the result of such communion without the art of politics was that they would harm one another. Without an established society made stable by laws, I suggest Protagoras thinks we cannot properly understand these harms as injustices. It is true that Protagoras does say “they [the people in pre-political societies]

injured (*ēdikoun*) one another seeing that (*hate*) they did not have the art of politics<sup>101</sup> (322b6). This does not mean, however, that people in pre-political societies themselves likely understood these acts of injury (*ēdikoun*) as acts of injustice or wrongdoing in the same sense as the Greeks did at Protagoras' time. By this I mean as the poets Homer, Hesiod or Simonides would have described. In the *Greek Concept of Justice*, Havelock describes that in the *Iliad*, "Justice, whatever it is, can be seen as something exchanged between two parties, or added to both, in the course of a settlement; or, alternatively, as symbolizing the process of exchange itself" (Havelock, 133-34) and in sum "the 'justice' of the *Iliad*, is a procedure, not a principle or any set of principles. It is arrived at by a process of negotiation between contending parties and carried out rhetorically" (137). In Solon's poems, Solon similarly uses "justice" in its preliterate sense as a procedure for resolving disputes (252-3). In the *Republic*, Polemarchus explains that Simonides' view, which he holds as correct, is that "the just thing is giving to each the things owed<sup>102</sup>" (*Rep.* 331e3). On this understanding of justice then, without proper laws, early communities would have no method for resolving disputes, as exhibited by their scattering rather than resolution of conflict. This reading is supported by the use of the Greek word "*hate*", which seems to suggest that the individuals did this harm *because* they did not have this art, and if the art of politics is (even in part) having laws that organize behavior, then it cannot be that their acts are injustices in the sense of being moral wrongs, but rather unjust in the sense that they do not follow a proper procedure. I suggest they are not intentionally ignoring an established procedure, but rather they are not following a procedure because one does not yet exist. These harms, thus, should not be understood as injustices in the moral

---

<sup>101</sup> ἡδίκουν ἀλλήλους ἅτε οὐκ ἔχοντες τὴν πολιτικὴν τέχνην.

<sup>102</sup> τὸ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα ἐκάστῳ ἀποδιδόναι δίκαιόν ἐστι. On this passage in the notes, commentator James Adam says, "The words [Polemarchus attributes to Simonides] do not profess to be a definition of justice: if they did, τὸ would appear before δίκαιον. It is not likely that Simonides himself explained this particular saying as Polemarchus does, although he would not have disapproved of the explanation" (Adam 1963). What we should take from this is that we are not yet at a proper definition, though Plato may be interpreted as attempting to give one through the *Republic*. Further, we should understand that the popular Greek conception of justice was not specifically about not causing injury but was conceived of as a process. So, injustice is about *not* going through this process of negotiation and rectification, not about the harms in particular, and without laws they would obviously not have had this form of justice.

sense, but rather in this procedural sense, so now we can clearly see what the art of politics would give them: a procedure for dealing with these acts.

Without these harms being moral injustices, punishment is also not an appropriate, or even plausible, response. I will speculate next, in a way that needs to go beyond the text at certain points, that this is part of Protagoras' revisionary vision for punishment. First, let us remind ourselves that Protagoras himself seems to believe that the people in his described pre-political society do not have customs to govern themselves, because custom requires a community of norms that individuals perform together, and the individuals prior to Zeus' gift, without the art of politics, are unable to form a cohesive community. But even if they do have customs, they are not proper laws in the sense of being accompanied by a penalty for disobedience, or enforced by procedural courts. Further, without law to set and enforce expectations for communal behavior, any harm the citizens do to one another would not have been explicitly forbidden, as the behavioral norms, which would forbid certain behaviors, lack incentive to not disobey when individuals can get away with it.

While retaliation among people in such a group is certainly possible, such retaliation should not properly be considered "punishment". Rather, Protagoras seems to believe that there must be established expectation in the form of a norm or law that people not harm one another in these ways and the explicit communication about these expectations for proper conduct (i.e., *the law*), before one can properly *punish*; i.e., enforce the consequences of divergent behavior. If there is no established norm, the retaliation is simply the result of one's anger, but punishment does not have anger as its driving force, but rather is more forward looking toward the good of the whole society because this is what one points to when justifying the punishment. Without norms that govern civil behavior, there is no room for punishment because retaliation is focused more on the feelings of the harmed than the correction of the one who harmed, or the signaling to the whole of the society that the norm is being upheld. As evidence for this claim that laws are a prerequisite to punishment, before humans are in the

city, Protagoras says the individuals harm each other (*ēdikoun*), but when he is giving his discussion about virtue being something that is taught, this is presumably in established cities. It is in this latter discussion where we see the first appearance of the verb for punishing (*kolazei*) and its cognates.

Protagoras first says that:

[F]or the things by which men are respectively led to be bad by nature or chance, no one is angry nor rebukes them nor instructs them nor punishes (*kolazei*) them for being like this for the purpose of making them not such as this, but they pity them. (*Prt.* 323c7-d2)<sup>103</sup>

Here Protagoras makes clear that the proper attitude to have toward people who are bad as a result of nature or chance is not to rebuke, to punish, nor to instruct, as none of these things will ultimately make any difference, especially for those who are bad by nature, as they are less sensitive to the norms.

Rather it is when people have had access to good resources and many benefits such as teachings etc., and are still bad, that they can properly be admonished and punished. Protagoras says on this point:

[A]ll of the good things that men think arise from diligence, practice, and teaching, that whenever someone does not have these things [traits], but rather the opposite bad ones of them, in these cases no doubt that anger, punishments, and admonishments arise<sup>104</sup> (323d5-e2)

In the pre-political society, it is obvious that the individuals do not have these things: communal teachings, set practices, expectations, etc., and so for the people who commit harms (harms that would be criticized by others and discouraged by teachings if they had them), punishment is not appropriate. It is precisely because they do not have communal expectations, customs or norms (or sensitivity to them) that punishment and admonishment are *not* the right responses. Anger, in the form of retaliation, may occur, but punishment, with the forward-looking deterrent rationale that Protagoras imagines, serves to preserve society. The retaliation in this case would not be for the good of society but for that of the individual, and thus should not properly be called punishment. This is why Protagoras draws out the

<sup>103</sup> ὅσα γὰρ ἡγοῦνται ἀλλήλους κακὰ ἔχειν ἄνθρωποι φύσει ἢ τύχῃ, οὐδείς θυμοῦται οὐδὲ νοθετεῖ οὐδὲ διδάσκει οὐδὲ κολάζει τοὺς ταῦτα ἔχοντας, ἵνα μὴ τοιοῦτοι ᾦσιν, ἀλλ' ἐλεοῦσιν:

<sup>104</sup> ὅσα δὲ ἐξ ἐπιμελείας καὶ ἀσκήσεως καὶ διδασχῆς οἴονται γίγνεσθαι ἀγαθὰ ἄνθρωποις, ἐάν τις ταῦτα μὴ ἔχη, ἀλλὰ τάναντία τούτων κακὰ, ἐπὶ τούτοις που οἷ τε θυμοὶ γίνονται καὶ αἱ κολάσεις καὶ αἱ νοθετήσεις.

difference between those who are bad by chance and those who are bad despite knowing and having been educated in the communal norms; it is because Protagoras' revisionary view of punishment is that punishment properly occurs in established societies. Punishment is intended to act as a motivator that inspires right conduct in a city for the sake of the city, rather than for self-satisfying retribution.

A group without laws and established consequences is thus, on Protagoras' view, not punishing when they retaliate against those who harmed them. In this pre-political society people do not have much individual incentive *not* to commit these harms, for there are no customs that establish the norms and punishments that can be anticipated upon violating the norms. Thus, the deficiency that needs to be filled for society to become orderly in Protagoras' myth is twofold: (1) they need an established set of laws or customs that describes orderly conduct and who can be punished for what, (2) as well as the capacity to be deterred by these considerations; for if one is not moved by the prospect of punishment, it is not likely they will be deterred from the action if they still see it in their personal best interest, and without this second aspect, attempts at social unity would continue to be undermined.

Further, I do not think that it is plausible that punishment is decided first and then the norms follow thereafter. A view that says that we punish first as a way of communicating the norms, seems to get wrong exactly what Protagoras thinks is the important job of punishment, namely getting people to realize that certain behaviors are desirable for society as a whole, not simply for oneself by avoiding punishments. Punishment is also, in fact, insufficient for having one recognize a *convention* because it does not focus on the right thing, namely the simple fact that *there is a convention*, which allows one to make reliable assumptions about what others will do. I mean that conventions generate expectations about what others will do, whereas punishment alone does not communicate about the social good, rather it, in absence of a norm, simply communicates about an individual to an individual alone. Punishments, Protagoras thinks, are for the good of the community, so even if we were to punish everyone in a group in order to get them to stop stealing, for instance, such that the result is that all of

them no longer steal, this misses the community-oriented purpose of the punishment, namely the reason they should not be stealing is that stealing is bad for the whole society. Punishments also allow others to securely have the expectation that others will also not steal. Instead, however, the recognition that everyone who was punished would have is simply that stealing gets them hurt and that if they want to steal, they should simply not get caught. Thus, a society that does not communicate about the norms prior to punishing sets the wrong expectations for the individuals in the community and does not allow them to see the more general purpose of the practice. Further, it creates an instability, for if the individuals find out that they can get away with the desired crime without getting caught, they will certainly do so, whereas if it is engrained that the purpose of doing something a particular way is for the good of the whole, people may be less likely to steal even if they have the chance.

ii. *Dikē* as the capacity to establish law

Some of the most basic meanings of *dikē* are “custom” or “what is right”, which includes penalty for wrong-doing. Penalties for wrongdoings in a society are typically made transparent through the law. So, I suggest that *dikē*, as it is discussed in the *Protagoras*, can plausibly refer to the capacity to establish these laws, which, if the laws are to be good, would involve knowledge about what is in the interest of the group coming together. It is clear how this conception of *dikē* would enable people to live stably together, for they were harming one another before and separating as a result. With a custom of punishment, norms of justice can be upheld, and the city can be maintained because people are not getting away with their injustice nor exacting revenge themselves which can lead to a vicious cycle of harm. I will show that it is this conception that Protagoras is working with. He says:

[R]easonable punishment is not vengeance for a past wrong—for one cannot undo what has been done—but is undertaken with a view to the future to deter both the wrong-doer and whoever sees him being punished from repeating the crime. This attitude towards punishment as deterrence implies that virtue is learned. (324b-c)

Let us deconstruct this. Protagoras asserts people have an attitude about punishment that is oriented toward others, as it is focused on deterring both the offender and would-be offenders. So, he thinks this

attitude shows that virtue is learned because we punish when someone who knows the norms violates them, and the punishment also recommunicates the norms. The fact that he thinks that, in these societies, when citizens are taught about what it takes to be virtuous and further that if they act against them that these norms will be reinforced through punishment, shows that people think one can learn virtue both from the law and the punishment. In order to punish, then, one needs the laws first, from which the punishments will follow. This corresponds perfectly with the interpretation of *dikē* as the capacity to establish customs for governing behavior and punishing wrongdoing<sup>105</sup>.

The education Protagoras specifically mentions that people have is designed to show one that:

[T]his is just, that is unjust, this is noble, that is ugly, this is pious, that is impious, that he should do this, he should not do that. If he obeys willingly, fine; if not, they straighten him out with threats and blows as if he were a twisted, bent piece of wood. (325d3-6)

Through education people learn what society deems is right and wrong, or desirable or undesirable kinds of behavior, and if they fail to accord with these norms, they are beaten. This shows how certain principles are internalized. First members of society are educated and know the norms, then if they diverge from them they receive punishment, for the language of straightening one out provides the imagery of the lessons being literally imposed on them if they do not accept them initially (just as punishments are), and then these beatings straighten them out, which is a metaphor for internalizing the norms after which they are unlikely to act wrongly; thus, the standards are internalized even by the people who are not naturally receptive of them. The beating can also be replaced with admonishments

---

<sup>105</sup> Hesiod's *Works and Days* may also support this point. The myth is somewhat recapitulated there: "But you, Perses, lay up these things within your heart and listen now to right, ceasing altogether to think of violence. For the son of Cronos has ordained this law for men, that fishes and beasts and winged fowls should devour one another, for right (*dikē*) is not in them; but to mankind he gave right (*dikē*) which proves far the best. For whoever knows the right (*ta dikaia*) and is ready to speak it, far-seeing Zeus gives him prosperity" (*Hes.* 274–81). In this quote, Zeus gave *dikē*, which made it such that humans do not devour, or harm each other, but rather work together. Zeus rewards those who know the right things, namely who are activating their capacity for *dikē*, but the reward might not be something Zeus gives over and above *dikē*, but rather it is the prosperity that is a consequence of *dikē* properly used—in other words in a city with good laws aimed at the benefit of the people therein.

which trigger their sense of shame, so at the time when they are being beaten or admonished, they could be cultivating their *aidōs*.

It seems however that all that people learn on Protagoras' view is the literal content of "what is good". His examples do not persuade them, rather their souls are imprinted with the law's dictates of what is right, often through force or compulsion. He says: "when they quit school, the city in turn compels (*anankazdei*) them to learn the laws and to model their lives on them" (326c5-7). The people learn the laws (i.e., the prescription for what behavior is acceptable or not) and model their lives on this. Further when Protagoras says "She (Justice) punishes anyone who goes beyond these laws, and the term for this punishment in your city and others is, because it is a corrective legal action (*tēs dikēs*), 'correction'" (326d6-7), it becomes clear that individuals also learn, along with the literal content of what is expected, the punishments for disobedience. Here in this second quote, we also see the same term as the one I have argued also suggests the capacity for establishing the laws. The corrective legal action is just the term for punishment, but the punishment is just the consequence of disobeying the law, which further enforces the idea that Protagoras has in mind here an association between the capacity that enables one to decide to punish in this corrective way<sup>106</sup> and the gift of *dikē*; the gift of *dikē* gets us laws which includes a punishment for disobedience. Because the law "compels them (*anankazdei*) [individuals in the city] to govern and be governed by them" (326d4-5), they thus act on the basis of these laws and further are governed by them because if they do not obey, they will be punished. This is also the same word for compulsion that we see in the *Republic* that makes the philosopher rulers govern. The difference is that the punishment in the case of the philosopher rulers is that they are ruled by someone worse than themselves, which is tantamount to allowing one of the

---

<sup>106</sup> "in this corrective way" is an important caveat. Not any desire to punish may be rational. For instance, one may want to punish for the sake of causing pain, or to make oneself feel better after a perceived wrong. This is not why the state punishes. The state punishes in order to deter both the wrong-doer and others from committing this action in the future. The fact that deterrence and this future-oriented motivation are what drives the act of punishment is what makes it rational.

greatest injustices to befall oneself because they cannot then properly exercise their virtue on the city. So, the philosopher rulers, in this case, are afraid of the right kinds of things (injustice), while everyone else might feasibly be afraid of the wrong things: punishments that cause pain, loss of wealth, etc. It is not clear here how Protagoras is thinking about the compulsion to govern, but punishment is one option for why they might consent to obey certain prescriptions.

Looking at the laws through Platonic lenses, however, we see that a view that punishment is the reason why people obey the law is *not sufficient* for political stability. This is the way in which the account Plato attributes to Protagoras is insufficient for the goal Protagoras actually wants to achieve. Further, this is why in the *Laws*, Plato recommends dual laws which contain preambles to the law, which are prior to the explicit content of the law but provides reasons to make people more inclined to follow the content of the law before they are told the penalty of breaking the law. So, the preamble is what persuades people to obey, not the fear of the punishment, and this is similar to the idea that the purpose of establishing the laws is to get people to see the benefit to society, while the punishments are necessary for those who still value their own advantage higher. Thus, the other way Plato might assent that law could compel an individual is through their sense of *aidōs*, which makes them afraid of punishments and wrongdoing but not because of the material harm, but rather due to the harm to their social status and character. This is the way that *aidōs* is supported by *dikē*, for the laws and their associated punishments create the desire to avoid disobedience and wrong-doing. However, Protagoras does not make this explicit connection himself, but it is one that Plato could support on his understanding of *aidōs*, specifically the conception for which I have argued so far, that it is sensitive to self-evaluative beliefs, as discussed extensively in the previous section.

This interpretation about the corresponding relation of *dikē* and *aidōs*, however may also be agreeable to Protagoras himself, as he believes that all humans have a share of justice and the rest of civic virtue (323a). At 323b2-c2, he says:

[W]hen it comes to justice or any other social virtue, even if they know someone is unjust, if that person confesses the truth about himself, they [everyone] will call this truthfulness madness[...] they will say that everyone ought to claim to be just, whether they are or not, and that it is madness not to pretend to justice, since one must partake of it (*autēs = dikaiosunēs*) in some way or not be among humankind (*en anthrōpois*) (minor translation modifications).

The reason then, that one must claim to be just, is because justice is required to live among other humans, for if one does not have justice, they may be ostracized from the community. Thus, when an individual reveals their injustice in such a truthful manner, they show no regard for their reputation or position in the community. This is referred to as madness because they benefit from community involvement, and if they reveal their injustice, they show they are unfit to live in such a community, and thus will no longer receive the benefits. They also open themselves up to punishment which seems to defeat the purpose of committing the “beneficial” unjust act to begin with. Reputation of the kind that opposes injustice is the kind of thing that makes the city stable. So, if one has justice and the rest of virtue because they have a communal conception of what is right, they (1) feel a desire to punish wrongdoers, and (2) they have the rest of civic virtue which also includes the *aidōs* which would make them opposed to wrong-doing. Then the city can maintain its stability. In this way, we can see that *aidōs*, or at least a part of *aidōs*, relies on one’s *dikē*. In order to feel opposed to wrong-doing on this picture, one must recognize that wrong-doing will always be disadvantageous.

So, *dikē* and *aidōs* can clearly give us a stable society, but we can also derive the art of war from them as well, which is where we saw the possible deficiency in Wilburn’s view earlier. Now that humankind has the capacity to establish a set of rules that govern the behavior among its internal constituents, they can also develop rules that govern outside relations as well. In this light, the art of war develops out of the idea of managing these external relations by punishing those who have wronged you, but on a larger scale, the ultimate intention of which is to eliminate the harmful party or

restore harmonious relations<sup>107</sup>. A society can opt to punish outside countries for wrongs they perceive against them, such as threats to their own freedom, resources, etc. While *dikē* makes declarations of war possible (the proposed norm to be followed between communities has been violated and consequence of violating those norms is now applicable), *aidōs*, if we look at it through a Platonic lens, is what allows for military victory, for *aidōs* (i.e., a fear of punishment or the negative opinions of others that might reflecting one's own character) makes it such that warriors will stand their ground and not flee, which Plato says in the *Laws*. When the army is willing to stick together, cooperate in a coordinated manner, and fight at the cost of their lives, victory is more likely assured than if they are willing to flee<sup>108</sup>. So, it is in this way, by looking at what Protagoras says through Platonic lenses and using interpretive resources from later dialogues, we can see how *dikē* and *aidōs* allow for the art of war.

So, what Zeus ultimately gave humans was the capacity to develop law, along with a desire to avoid wrongdoing. It is obvious how these two gifts, understood with some interpretive help from later Plato, resolve the problems presented to early humans. A good city needs more than just cooperation, it needs sustained cooperation, which can be ensured if people do not wrong each other. The amount that people are wronged is lessened by two factors: (1) being willing to punish what they conceive of as wrong-doing and (2) being unwilling in general to commit wrong-doing. The unwillingness to commit wrong-doing is based on the existence of the law which gives guidance not only for what to do but what will happen if they do not abide<sup>109</sup>. The punishment associated with law also serves this second end via

---

<sup>107</sup> It is possible that a moral conception of having been "wronged" is not essential for the art of war, as people may want to build up an army for the purpose of acquiring more land or resources (which is not necessarily morally imbued). However, regardless of whether the current occupants have wronged them, what is important is that war seems to exist for the purpose of bringing a larger group under one power, most often on the basis of moral reasoning (e.g. "this is what we deserve", "these people will be better off with our interference", "their activities undermine us", "we are the stronger and therefore it is right that we exercise our power and be obeyed", etc.)

<sup>108</sup> Cooperation is essential to the art of war. In *Rep* 1.352b-c, we are reminded that without justice there can't even be a band of thieves, as there is no internal cohesion to a group that does not have some justice.

<sup>109</sup> The desire to resist wrongdoing, I would argue, was given by Zeus when he gave *aidōs*, which is the fear of punishment or the negative opinions of others that might reflecting one's own character. They are motivated to follow the law due to the social implications of disobedience. The physical punishment is bad, but the fact that people who the person respects might see that person undergoing the punishment, which is an indication of their wrongdoing, is worse for social creatures.

its deterrence-oriented aim. They solve the problem of weakness in the face of other humans, for humans have now acquired the art of war because they can set boundaries with one another and punish outside enemies for breaching any of their agreements or threatening their way of life. They also trust one another to fight along-side them and to not be willing to run away. In other words, their *dikē* and *aidōs* allow them to fight productively *together* and overcome enemies stronger than their individual selves. *Their aidōs*, on the one hand, makes them unlikely to flee because it makes them reluctant to be seen fleeing (because they conceive of as wrong and punishable by chastisement or other undesirable consequences). Further, their ability to punish on the basis of their established laws allows them to maintain a stable society by ensuring requital from and punishment of those who have wronged them (324c2-3). In other words, their desire to avoid wrong-doing, coupled with their ability to punish what they perceive of as wrong-doing, allows them to maintain a stable society by correcting certain wrong-doers and using a sense of shame to keep citizens virtue-oriented.

While the sense of shame may be spirited, it is not at all clear to me, as I said at the outset that *dikē*, the ability and desire to punish, is, as Wilburn claims, also spirited. Protagoras says, “no one punishes a wrong-doer in consideration of the simple fact that he has done wrong, unless one is exercising the mindless vindictiveness of a beast” (324a5-b1). Here is saying that no one punishes simply because one has done wrong, rather the kind of punishment he has in mind is not retributive, and the further reason why it is worth correcting is for the sake of society; one wants to deter so that this wrongdoing is not committed again. As argued earlier, this is a rational consideration, as it is aimed at the good of the whole. It is not clear to me that one is motivated to pursue the good of the whole by spirited motivations alone for what one’s spirited motivations care about is that the violation is contrary what it wants to preserve: reason and its judgments. So, a spirited interpretation of the desire for punishment would not care about the “why” but simply with the “that”, namely “that someone went against reason”; since spirit is concerned mainly with preserving the edicts of reason, it would punish on

the sole basis that one has done wrong; i.e., the mere conflict with reason can generate this response, just as how in the *Republic*, the spirit exercises force on the appetites when the appetites suggest behavior contrary to reason. However, Protagoras clearly says that the punishment that is learned “favors the future (*tou mellontos charin*)” (324b3). This means it is taking into account the benefit of the whole. The person’s punishment is not only intended to correct the individual, but also to benefit the whole of society by deterring other would-be wrong-doers. Because then, the aim of the punishment is corrective and reformatory, then the motivation to punish is rational. Spirit, desiring to fulfill reason’s aims, then develops the desire to punish. So, the reason one punishes in a deterrent way is due to rational motivations, but the actual execution of the punishment comes from a spirited desire to fulfill the rational order. So, what Zeus provided was both something rational *and* something spirited which follows along with the rational.

So, in summary, the plausible reconstruction of Protagoras’ view that I offer is that Zeus provided something rational and spirited. I understand *dikē* as the rational capacity to form law on the basis of what is good for the whole and *aidōs* as the aspect of spirit that cares about what those above them have to say and acts accordingly through proper respect and fear. While Protagoras does not explain the connection himself, using Plato’s help, we understood that *dikē* assists with the proper channeling of one’s already existing rational thoughts and aggressive inclinations, while one’s *aidōs* allows them to hear the commands of the law and generates a propensity to obey them because of the law’s authority and their desire to present themselves as good. Thus, without both *aidōs* and *dikē*, a stable society cannot be promoted.

I believe that Plato himself recognizes that others also saw this reliance of the spirited on the rational (and vice versa), even if Plato did not have Protagoras put this in the terms that Plato utilizes later on. Thus, this suggests that Plato’s main innovation in some of the dialogues is not to show spirit’s reliance on reason but rather to refine our thinking on the hows and whys involved in this question, as it

seems that even Protagoras himself was suggesting this connection. One of the main things that comes out of Protagoras' story is how jumbled and confused he is about the virtues and how little he says about their interrelation. For instance, Plato, I believe, thinks that *aidōs* is much more complicated than Protagoras has characterized here and gives it a much fuller treatment in later dialogues *Leg.* 647a, for instance).

Further, the way in which the law is internalized on Protagoras' view is not ideal by Plato's standards, for in the *Laws*, Plato sees the importance of laws *persuading* individuals rather than compelling them, and the laws frequently do so in ways that influence non-rational motivations (as opposed to the very physical "straightening-out" asserted by Protagoras' view). Plato is able to more clearly draw out this connection to law in ways that Protagoras does not and in a way that allows for a more rational internalization that also makes it more stable and less liable to change over time. He also relies less heavily on the compelling powers of punishment, for even if punishment has a deterrence-oriented aim, Plato recognizes that the punishments have to be reformative as well, for the punishments alone do not articulate the lessons that are necessary for the person to reintegrate into society and maintain its stability. I have attempted to show some of the advantages of supplying this Platonic interpretation to Protagoras' view in this chapter, by drawing on some of the resources of later dialogues.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I considered different interpretations of the myth in the *Protagoras*. Wilburn's account that Zeus grants distinctively spirited feelings and sensitivities with his gift of the 'art of politics' meshes well with his understanding of the two sides of *thumos* but does not give adequate attention to the "justice" instilled. Further, it seemed that Wilburn thought the 'art of war' is isolated from what *dikē* and *aidōs* contribute to humankind, which was problematic for a number of reasons. I argued instead to read the myth through Platonic lenses to understand the specific contributions of each to a stable

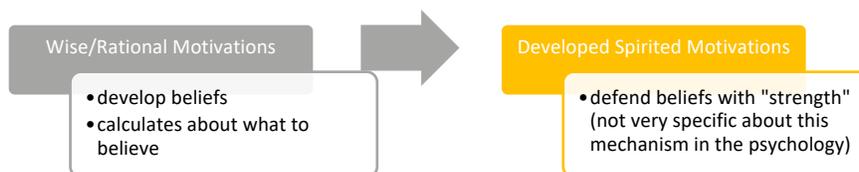
society. By doing this, I argued that *dikē* can be understood as a rational ability to establish law and punish what society deems unjust while *aidōs* was a supporting spirited capacity making one more likely to follow the law due to fear of the consequences of breaking the law, which could be corporeal, social, material, or psychological. So, Protagoras' myth is ultimately better understood and more plausible by looking at it through the Platonic lenses of the moral psychology of the *Laws*, which made clear how essential spirited motivations are for advancing rational goals, and that a reliance of the spirited on the rational (and vice versa) is necessary for the promotion of virtue and the maintenance of a political community. I, then, argued that *aidōs* and *dikē* understood in the ways I suggested can also give us the art of war, which is a larger-scale application of using these capacities at the city-level. Protagoras' account, without the additional intellectual interpretation or resources, is unable to deliver on its promise for what will truly secure stability, but Plato, by locating the deficiencies, allows us to connect the rational creation of law, with the spirited obedience of it, and in a way that is intended to really secure obedience; i.e., by being persuaded so that every part of them sees that it is best. This persuasion, when successful, would theoretically make resistance or disobedience practically impossible for the vast majority of individuals. Thus, Plato's resources allowed us to see the deficiencies and lack of detail in Protagoras' own account and offered the details necessary to make his story about Zeus' gifts, and their connection to stable communal living, plausible.

## Chapter 6: The Exceptional Courage of the *Republic's* Philosopher Ruler

### Introduction

For this dissertation, my intention was to emphasize what other dialogues have to say about spirited emotions but doing so does raise questions about what I have to say about the *Republic* and how it fits in with my analyses of the other texts. As this dissertation has primarily been about spirited motivations (as opposed to the spirited part of the soul), my discussion of Plato's *Republic* will also be intentionally limited in this way as well. Already, I have done the following: I have shown my agreement with the following well-accepted picture of spirited emotions (as a one-way dependency where reason tells spirit what to do and believe and spirit acts on that basis) as depicted here in figure 1.

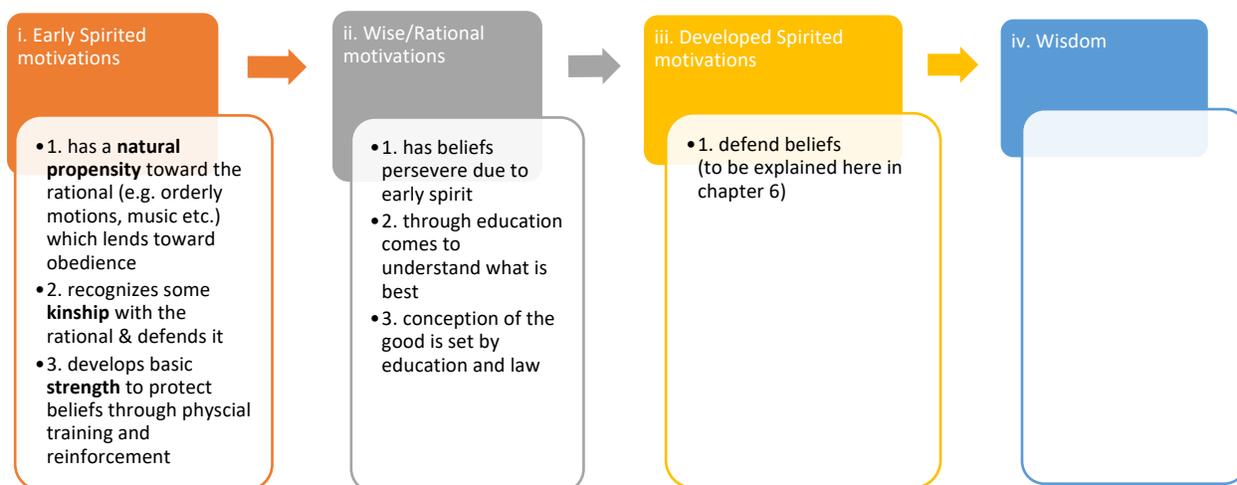
**Figure 1**



In particular, I argued in chapters 2, 3, and 5 about what this looks like in specific circumstances and how it works. However, I acknowledge that this one-way dependency is also radically impoverished. I spent earlier versions of this dissertation developing a more sophisticated account as shown below in figure 2. I added an interpretation of the role of i) early spirited motivations (i.e., the spirited motivations one has when they are young) and how they can encourage (and sometimes make difficult) virtuous action [ch. 4], as well as fleshing out ii) how one's rational capacities are supported by these initial spirited capacities [ch. 5]. In this chapter, I am especially concerned with expanding on the initial picture filling in details of how developed spirited motivations defend beliefs in order to allow for the development of wisdom and iv) with the account of what wisdom can now accomplish due to spirit's

executive function, which will ultimately show an interweaving interdependency between spirit and reason.

**Figure 2**



In Plato's *Republic*, the guardians who will rule the city are selected from among the best of the auxiliaries. While secondary literature tends to focus on the rational capacities of these rulers, such an approach underemphasizes the importance of the essential spirited capacities that they have. The selection process of the guardians, when we look at it critically, actually sends the message that it is *not* their intellectual prowess that makes them good candidates for ruling but rather their *refined spirited capacities*; i.e., perseverance and commitment to certain beliefs that is essential. The point Plato is emphasizing with this process is that courage is actually essential for success in dialectic and is also good evidence of their commitment to virtuous action. In fact, the proper execution of rational orders derived from wisdom, I suggest requires the spirited virtue: courage. This first became apparent to me upon reading the *Laws*, where it appeared, as I argued in the first chapter, that spirited motivations are the foundation for the execution of what one's reason determines to be good<sup>110</sup>. However, since we already saw how this goes wrong in the chapter on the *Laches*, we are in a better place to appreciate more how

<sup>110</sup> As we also saw with Reshotko's view, appetites can do this as well, *however*, due to the strength that spirited motivations can develop along with their intimate connection to reason, I argue that they are uniquely positioned to assist reason and reliably execute what reason wants without compelling reason to change its judgments.

it can go right by looking at those whom Plato takes to be the best in the city. For these individuals, not any spirited capacity is active when they receive their prescriptions from wisdom, but courage in particular.

In this chapter, I will first discuss courage (a developed spirited motivation) in the *Republic*, arguing that courage is primarily about belief, but relates to action in an important way; i.e., that the preservation of the belief is revealed by one's action. I specifically argue that courage performs an executive function and so is precisely what allows for virtuous action when one holds wise beliefs, for without it, appetites interfere with one's conception of the good, or reason becomes inactive. In doing this I show the relation between spirited motivation and action. In the second section, I will discuss the auxiliaries' tests in a bit more detail to show how courage contributes to success at these trials; from this, the way courage performs its executive functions of courage will become clear; i.e., by employing a refined strength to new orders. Thereafter, I consider the virtues of would-be philosopher rulers more closely and argue that courage is a prerequisite for the development of many of these virtues and ultimately wisdom. Finally, I end by considering the dangers of dialectic and argue that courage at this stage is essential for the development of argumentative skills and resistance to dialectical challenges, and that those who are best able to overcome dialectical challenges will have the right combination of the prerequisite spirited strength *and* an equally necessary *flexibility*. My core idea is that the acquisition of wisdom requires courage and two associated aspects of this refined spirited motivation: strength and flexibility, which develop from the "tests". I also show that flexibility is posterior to the development of strength.

### Courage as Selection Criteria

This section will first discuss how courage in the city is subtly different from courage in the psyche but show that in either case it is about belief rather than action. Thereafter, I discuss courage as a selection criterion for guardians and expand upon the interpretation of courage being primarily about

belief rather than action, and courage is linked with action in the sense that actions also tend to result from said beliefs.

The first thing to discuss is courage in the city and how this differs from courage in the psyche.

With respect to the city, Socrates says the following:

[Courage is the P]reservation of the belief that has been inculcated by the law through education about what things and sorts of things are to be feared[...] And by preserving this belief “through everything,” I mean preserving it and not abandoning it because of pains, pleasures, desires, or fears. (*Rep.* 4.429b7-d1)

This power to preserve through everything the correct and law-inculcated belief about what is to be feared and what isn't is what I call courage. (4.430b2-3)

In both quotations, Socrates points out the importance of courage preserving the beliefs would-be guardians have due to law, specifically beliefs about what they ought to and ought to not fear.

Presumably, one who is courageous will thus maintain the belief from the law that certain things are to be feared and avoided/prevented, while other things are meant to be pursued or endured. Courage is specifically the virtue of the auxiliaries in the city, but what differentiates auxiliaries from those chosen to be guardians is that guardians have wisdom; i.e., when the faculty of reason is in its best possible condition: seeing and being able to calculate about what is objectively best for the whole and not being swayed by subjective considerations that do not contribute to this good. However, while these auxiliaries may have the natural capacity of reason, being capable of instrumental reasoning about more subjective goods (i.e., money, honor, etc.), they will lack reason's accompanying virtue: wisdom. These auxiliaries are simply told about what is best and perform on the basis of that order alone. Their actions of obedience, then, are the preservation of the *ruler's* wise belief about what is best, not their own subjective beliefs. When talking about courage in the soul, Socrates says the following things:

(1) [I]n civil war in the soul, it [spirit] aligns itself far more with the rational part. (4.440e3-4)

(2) Isn't the individual courageous *in the same way* and in the same part of himself as the city? (4.441d1-2)

(3) Therefore, isn't it appropriate for[...] The spirited part to obey and be its ally? (4.441e4-5)

(4) Then, wouldn't these two parts [spirit and reason] do the finest job of guarding the whole soul and body against external enemies—reason by planning, spirit by fighting, following its leader, and carry on out its leader's decisions through its courage. (4.442b5-8)

From these four statements, we can see that in the courageous individual, spirited motivations defer to their more developed rational capacities and its accompanying wisdom for planning and deciding on what is best. The second thing to notice about all these different things said about courage is that in an individual courage is primarily about *belief* rather than action. By “about” I mean the spirited part “obeys” *by preserving* the belief *about* the goodness of what reason has planned; spirit is an ally in terms of these shared beliefs and is courageous in the same way as the city. This means that just as how in a city the auxiliaries preserve the law, which was established by others outside of themselves, so too one’s spirited capacities defend one’s law-inculcated beliefs and reasoned plans, where this just means the beliefs of their own reason. And finally, we see action verbs like fighting and following and carrying out decisions, but it is described as “through its [the person’s] courage” (*tēi andreiai*), which means it is by using one’s own courage that one is able to carry out these decisions. So, if courage is preserving these beliefs, it is because the beliefs are preserved in the first place that one acts. I would like to suggest that aside from actions driven by impulse, that one’s spirited capacities plays an important role in the execution of virtuous actions, for it would be hard to act on wisdom or knowledge alone, without the preservation of the belief that not acting in accord with them is something to be feared. Thus, I suggest the following picture: In one’s soul, the carrying out of the rational decisions (i.e., the action) is the natural result of the preservation of the belief, perhaps even identifiable with the act of preservation itself<sup>111</sup>.

---

<sup>111</sup> It is also quite feasible that the ancient Greeks themselves understood the necessary connection between a certain kind of wisdom and courage, and this can be most easily seen in which individuals are called courageous. For instance, people are not courageous on this picture simply in response to their external action (for instance enduring in war) but due to how well they preserve beliefs (that they must stay and fight and endure war for the good of the whole—or disastrous consequences will ensue). When people call the one who they observe enduring in war “courageous”, I think Socrates means to suggest that such people *automatically assume* they have a belief about the goodness of the action—for if they found out the person was merely enduring for honor, or out of bloodlust, they may no longer call that person courageous, as perhaps in the case of Ajax. This is all because they assume that those who endure in war, or do other such courageous actions, do it for a noble cause.

When we look at courage as a selection criterion for guardians, it is precisely this interpretation of courage (i.e., that it preserves the dictates of reason and such preservation results in desirable action) that Socrates has in mind when he says:

Then we must choose from among our guardians those men who, upon examination, seem most of all to believe throughout their lives that they must eagerly pursue what is advantageous to the city and be wholly unwilling to do the opposite. (3.412d8-e2)

These individuals must believe throughout their lives, i.e., preserve the belief about what is advantageous, a belief they must have gotten from reason's wisdom. However, the preservation is not just acknowledging the belief but acting on its basis. Thus, the act of these spirited motivations preserving what is advantageous to the city is one of the most important criteria for guardianship because it is the one that allows for reason's decisions to be carried out.

The same sentiment about the importance of courage in terms of its preservation of belief is expressed at 413c4-d1 as well:

Then, as I said just now, we must find out who are the best guardians of their conviction that they must always do what they believe to be best for the city. We must keep them under observation from childhood and set them tasks that are most likely to make them forget such a conviction or be deceived out of it, and we must select whoever keeps on remembering it and isn't easily deceived and reject the others.

Again, we see the emphasis on being a guardian of *conviction* or *belief*, with particular emphasis on the strength of their conviction as well, which is determined by being unlikely to forget or be deceived out of these beliefs. Now, if we specifically remember, it was not just any belief to be preserved, but preservation about beliefs concerning what is to be feared and not. What is described here as the belief to do what is best for the city can easily be interpreted as preserving this kind of fear. The reason one would always want to do what is best could feasibly be out of a fear of what would happen to a city without what is best being done for it. Specifically, we needed guardians to promote virtue in the city, so their acts of preservation would seek that end. If they were not to seek virtue, which is considered best

for the city, vice would reign, or at least be significantly more prominent, and this would certainly be a consequence worth fearing.

A point where I may depart from other scholars who recognize that courage is defined by belief preservation, particularly the beliefs given to it by one's reason, is that I think any kind of virtuous action is very difficult without spirited motivations that respond to our rational beliefs. There are actually two forms of courage that allow for this, a natural courage that preserves reason's judgments whether they are wise or not, as can be observed when one judges on the basis of subjective reasons that they ought to take someone to court (and perhaps this is not the wise decision as there is some lack of knowledge about the circumstances or people involved) but nonetheless one is motivated to do it on the basis of their natural courage to follow through with what they think is best. The second form of courage is the virtue proper and prioritizes beliefs which are the results of wise calculation. This point is partly supported by how courage was described as that through which one carries out a ruler's decisions (a ruler which would ideally be wise, but auxiliaries would nonetheless also preserve a sub-optimal ruler's decisions).

The necessity of spirited motivations becomes intuitive if we imagine a city without auxiliaries and expand from there. In the city without auxiliaries, the rulers could know what is best, and yet it is clear in such a city that the craftworkers would be the ones running the show. The voice of the ruler would fall upon deaf ears, and any correlation between what the ruler prescribes and what the craftworkers do would be merely coincidental. The reason is that one who is in control cannot easily stay in control without either force or the consent of the ruled, and the ruler cannot execute force without an auxiliary force (being as limited as it is in size), and I suggest it cannot also gain consent of the ruled because the good that the ruler has to offer has a weaker force against the appetitive goods desired by the ruled, which are goods they can obtain without obedience to the ruler. In this same way, in an individual person, reason cannot rule without the spirit, due to the overwhelming strength and

differing interests of appetitive forces. The purpose of the auxiliaries was to not only provide the aid needed for the ruler to rule, and thus also prevent the ruler from being forced to change their mind about what is best, but also to prevent the ruler from secluding themselves, refusing to rule the city, etc. This suggests that spirited motivations such as courage function in an executive way; “executive” in the sense that you need it to do *something*, but only as an “executive virtue” when it is preserving reason’s wise judgments. In this way, it does not *just* depend on reason, but one’s reason *also critically depends* on these motivations.

This role of spirit as an executive virtue also comes out when Plato analyzes the effects of a just education, or lack thereof, on a person following his allegory of the cave. Socrates says:

[D]oesn’t it follow necessarily from what was said before—that they [those who are uneducated and have no experience of truth] will never adequately govern a city? But neither would those who’ve been allowed to spend their whole lives being educated. The former would fail because they don’t have a single goal at which all their actions, public and private, inevitably aim; the latter would fail because they’d refuse to act, thinking that they had settled while still alive in the faraway Isles of the Blessed. (7.519b7-c5)

It is clear from this passage that a lack of education is harmful for the individual because it produces no unified vision of what is truly good, but also that a life of nothing but education is harmful for the overall good, as it makes one not want to engage with the city. It is clear that some intermediate between these two is necessary, and this is the education that Socrates described that focuses not just on truth but on feeling. On my interpretation of courage as an executive virtue, it is clear why the one without education will fail to govern a city: they lack the commitment to the beliefs that would inspire governance, and instead pursue a myriad of other goals, so there is no particular goal/belief for courage to stick with and try to preserve—the person will instead act haphazardly as they preserve different, but also incorrect, beliefs about what is best. On the other hand, the one who has cultivated only reason will not have cultivated any spirited feelings or commitment to beliefs about what is best for the city. Without any such beliefs, they would fail to govern the city because they would refuse to act. This suggests that the education that develops one’s spirited capacities is also responsible for action. In the

former case, unrefined spirited motivations attach to anything, and in the latter case, nothing, so in the former one acts chaotically, and in the latter, not at all.

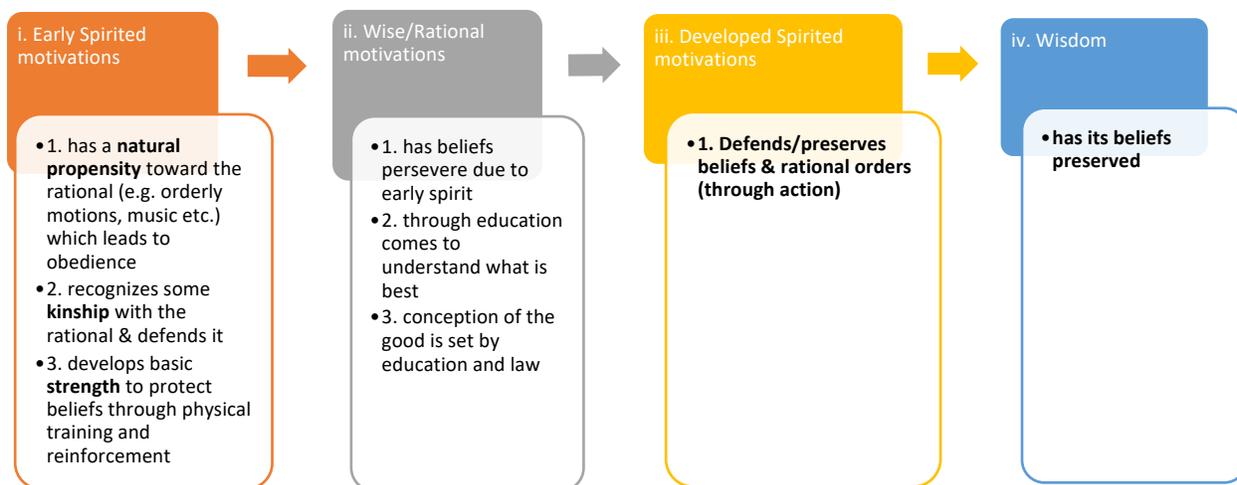
Alternatively, even if one thinks they know what is best, they may be driven, usually by their rampant appetites, to change the belief they hold about what is best. This is another case in which the executive function of courage is essential. For instance, one might know that it is not to their advantage to stream videos all night long, and yet the pleasure or desire to know what happens next turns casual watching into a bingeing situation. One's belief about what is best, then, is too easily overturned. The motivations that preserve one's belief are thus essential for acting in accordance with your rational beliefs. 'Could one reason themselves out of their bingeing situation with only rational motivation,' someone might ask. I do not think that Plato would think so. The dye analogy at 4.429d4-e5 suggests that without something (e.g. spirit) to absorb the dye (i.e., good/rational beliefs), the dye will simply be washed away in the water and detergents, and so similarly we need rational beliefs to stick to us; i.e., become internalized as spirited motivations and preserved in order for us not to change our minds when a temporary pleasure tempts us. When Socrates also says, "Every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake" (6.505d9-e1) and further that one's soul often fails to "acquire the sort of stable beliefs it has about other things" (6.505e1-3) with respect to the good, this suggests not only that one acts for the sake of the good on the basis of the belief they have about the good, but it also suggests the malleability of one's conception of the good. The text is, thus, consistent with the above picture I presented on how one can end up acting sub-optimally if one has nonstable beliefs about the good; i.e., beliefs that have not been taken up as spirited motivations for action. It also shows that having certain beliefs internalized assists with the good actions we rationally want to perform both in the case of when appetitive motivations are present, but also when they are not, as rational beliefs alone are not enough; spirited motivations lead people to preserve their beliefs in action, and without such "preservation" the individual merely pleasantly ruminates on their beliefs, thus leading to inactivity.

Recall again that a belief's stability, or its being preserved about what things to fear or not, was previously described as the job of courage. And, if courage really is one of the contributing factors for belief preservation, it would follow from what I have been suggesting above that the belief best preserved is the belief we act on, and so our spirited motivations, the ones connected to our conceptions of the good, are key for our action because they will lead to the belief being put into action. So, on my view, the relation between courage as belief preservation and courage as action is that, in a way, they are one and the same: the action occurs naturally as the evidence of the belief preservation. In other words, the action could even perhaps be described as the "physical instantiation" of said psychological preservation. When the belief is effectively preserved, one acts accordingly. For instance, if one believes their good is wealth, they will perform the action that pursues wealth when this belief is preserved, as when one has the chance of taking a bribe vs. not. When taking a bribe, one is preserving their belief about wealth being the good. We can see this process occurring also in the case of philosopher rulers, and is indicated when Socrates says:

Then do you think that those we've nurtured will disobey us and refuse to share the labors of the city, each in turn, while living the greater part of their time with one another in the pure realm? It isn't possible, *for we'll be giving just orders to just people*. Each of them will certainly go to rule as to something compulsory (*hōs ep' anankaion*). (7.520d6-e2, emphasis added)

Socrates states that it is essentially impossible that the rulers they have chosen will act against them. If we recall, justice just is the harmony of the three parts which allows individuals to have the virtues of courage, moderation, and wisdom, and when one's orders are determined by wisdom, via the harmony and interplay of the virtues when they are possessed, one, then, naturally preserves them through their courage. Because such a person is naturally spiritually motivated to obey reason's dictates, and further that through education they have been exposed to a consistent view and developed consistent views about what is right, when reason issues the order: "we must rule", one, then, preserves that belief, and the only possible way of preserving that belief is not just to think: "I must rule", but proper belief preservation comes in *actually ruling*. It is especially important that these individuals are said to have

this belief “to do what is to the advantage of the city”, as their core motivation, which is developed and preserved through actually doing what is to the advantage of the city, hence why all guardians started out at some point as auxiliaries! If they had that belief but never preserved it through action, as Socrates suggests is what happens when people spend their whole lives in education, they would fail the test for rulership by failing to actually rule, as we saw earlier, as they would not have developed the courage necessary to preserve the belief in action. This fact is likely why Socrates often emphasizes the importance of action being in accord with an individual’s beliefs about virtue, as when one acts badly, it shows that they are adhering to the wrong sort of belief or have the wrong conception of the good. The actions tell you what beliefs these individuals hold because individuals naturally act in accord with what they think is best, but it is virtuous only when the mandates are determined by wisdom and not anything else, as one can think many different things to be best. This shows why the right education about what is actually best and physical education in practice are tantamount. But it also emphasizes the additional kind of dependency I have been arguing for: our spirited motivations get ideas for what to follow from reason (this is the undisputed dependency), but the more important and interesting dependency I am bringing to light goes in the opposite direction, our reason depends on our spirited motivations, such as courage, to preserve its beliefs by executing its wise judgments in action, as exemplified by my additions to iii and iv below.



In this section, I brought to our attention the primary definition of courage in the *Republic* being that of belief preservation. Belief preservation highlights the close ties of our spirited motivations to our rational beliefs. The act of preservation, I argued, is exemplified through action. I emphasized the executive function of courage by considering three main examples: the city and soul without spirited motivations, what happens to dye without a cloth, and why the philosopher rulers are said to be “compelled to rule”. My response was that it boils down to an often-overlooked dependency not *only* of spirit on reason, as is frequently discussed, but rather of reason on spirit to execute its wise judgments. In the next section, I will consider how “tests” are testing one’s courage, and this will highlight interesting roles that courage is playing in terms of belief preservation, and ultimately one’s candidacy as a guardian.

i. The tests of courage

In this section, I want to highlight how the tests that one undergoes during their training highlights additional and interesting facts about courage. I argue that courage plays three important roles that all would-be guardians tested for: (1) allowing for one to hold onto and remember the important lessons, (2) providing one the strength to endure physically difficult situations, and (3) ensuring proper action even when reason is hindered or absent. An interesting fact that will come out of this discussion is that “courage” seems to be used as an overarching term for two possible sets of actions and beliefs. The word “courage” seems to be used in a way that covers both perseverance concerning what we ought to not fear (what we colloquially recognize as “courage”) and also sometimes what we ought to fear (what we colloquially recognize as a “sense of shame”).

In making his first proposal for tests of the would-be guardians, Socrates highlights the sorts of things that can cause the would-be guardians to get rid of their current beliefs:

[W]e must observe them at all ages to see whether they are guardians of this conviction and make sure that neither compulsion nor magic spells will get them to discard or forget their belief that they must do what is best for the city. (3.412e5-8)

In addition to the compulsion and magic spells Socrates mentions which can cause one to lose their conviction, Socrates also adds “theft” (3.413b4). He explains these three below; processes which we must expect are used to draft tests for the guardians:

- (1) By “the victims of theft” I mean those who are persuaded to change their minds or those who forget, because time, in the latter case, and argument, in the former, takes away their opinions without their realizing it.
- (2) By “the compelled” I mean those whom pain or suffering causes to change their mind.
- (3) The “victims of magic,” I think you’d agree, are those who change their mind because they are under the spell of pleasure or fear. (3.413b4-c2)

Thus, there are a couple main things we can pull out of the above claims that have the power to make one lose their convictions: argument, time, pain, suffering, pleasure, and fear. Time is perhaps one of the easiest to test with, but argument clearly sets itself apart from the other four and is thus my focus later on in terms of dialectic. Here, I want to focus on the latter five and the role that courage plays in helping us to maintain our convictions in light of these challenges. As Socrates goes on, he discusses labors and pains very explicitly as well as pleasure and fear:

Then, as I said just now, we must find out who are the best guardians of their conviction that they must always do what they believe to be best for the city. We must keep them under observation from childhood and **set them tasks that are most likely to make them forget such a conviction or be deceived out of it**, and we must select whoever **keeps on remembering** it and isn’t easily deceived and reject the others. (3.413c5-d1, emphasis added)

Now, this preservation of the belief to always do what they believe is best for the city might look different from the preservation of beliefs about what is to fear and not be feared that typically characterize courage. I will now argue, however, expanding on what I said in the previous section, that this kind of belief preservation can be about what is to be feared. The right kind of things to fear can take a couple of different forms, but one that captures most of them is: *fearing what will make you or the city worse* (and of course what makes the city worse by extension should also be understood to be worse for you). The philosopher rulers actually preserve such a belief when they go to rule as evidenced when Socrates says:

Now, the greatest punishment, if one isn't willing to rule, is to be ruled by someone worse than oneself. And I think that it's fear of this that makes decent people rule when they do. They approach ruling not as something good or something to be enjoyed, but as something necessary (*hōs ep' anankaion*), since it can't be entrusted to anyone better than—or even as good as—themselves. (1.347c4-d2)

Presumably, being ruled by someone worse than oneself is a punishment because one would likely be worse off under such conditions. And, in the context of Plato's city, where the goal of the ruler is to make the citizens virtuous, if you are ruled by someone who is less capable of promoting virtue than you are, you will likely be worse off than if you had adopted the ruling role yourself because, for instance, your virtue may be marred or hindered under the prescriptions of the new ruler. Thus, the person in this case fears the right kind of thing: becoming less virtuous, or being prevented from becoming virtuous or exercising virtue, and such a fear, and maintaining that belief is consistent with also maintaining a belief about what is best for the city. Thus, my point here is that whereas people might mostly think about the temptations as something that needs to be overcome, or that having temptations in general may require fixing, Socrates seems to suggest a different model than how strongly one is pulled by bodily appetites. Instead, we are beginning to see that even if you experience these temptations, a certain degree of fear about pursuing them is necessary. Thus, considerations of shame here play an important role for these would-be guardians to resist temptations.

Now, I want to address an interpretive question I see arising at 3.413c5-d1: what such tasks are Socrates talking about setting out that **would make someone forget such a conviction or be deceived out of it**, especially since what comes after that quote deals very explicitly with labors, pains, pleasure, and fear, and he seems to think they are two separate sets of things. One interpretation is that it could possibly just be tasks in relation to "time", namely tasks that take a long time to accomplish. This passage cannot be referring to "argument" as argument is not to be experienced by children while they are young. A reason to think it is not just referring to pains, pleasures, and fears is the fact that when he discusses magic, the competitions to oppose those are a "third kind" (*tritou eidous*). One could say that

perhaps these are just three ways of testing for the same sort of thing, but I suggest that the mention of “forgetting” above is most closely linked with interpreting this as relating to time. So, the first tasks the tester may set out are in respect to time that might make individuals forget their convictions. For instance, a task might take a long time to complete, so just in virtue of the length of time, one might forget, or the task might be so involved that accomplishing it properly leads to mental strain, and one forgets due to cognitive overload; i.e., trying to do too much in little time, which thus makes them forget perhaps what they might subconsciously deem least important. Or, it could present too many other competing goods which could also deceive the individual out of their initial education about what was good.

Does courage play any role in our ability to resist forgetting things over time? I argue that yes, but perhaps only insofar as one recognizes that their forgetting will result in negative consequences, which reveal something negative about the individual’s character. This can make one feel motivated to overcome the things that might make one forget: time, stress, competing goods, etc.<sup>112</sup> If one fails to remember the crucial lessons they have been taught, they will undoubtedly act against the interests of the city, and further they are taken out of the candidacy for guardianship because it reveals that they are not ready for the job nor committed to it enough. So, if one recognizes the consequences of forgetting, one is more likely to hold onto this belief. In this way, courage can hold onto important lessons through a long time, in cases of stress or cognitive overload, or when presented other tempting goods. If reason is having to attend to too many things without the aid of courage, or the courage is not linked up to defend the right kinds of beliefs, it would be easier to forget or abandon important beliefs

---

<sup>112</sup> It is possible to view forgetting as neutral and not morally valenced; i.e., not as something to invoke shame. For instance, one might have forgotten to tie their shoes when they were rushing out the door in the morning, or one might have been too busy to take out the trash one week, and these things might not be viewed as shameful. But in particular, Socrates is not talking about forgetting these sorts of things, he is talking about forgetting important things about your values. For instance, not hanging out with a friend because you “forgot” it was important to keep your commitments or telling someone’s secret because you “forgot” it was confidential or talking back to your parents because you “forgot” they were to be respected. Surely these things are shameful to forget, not just because they involve bad consequences but because it reveals something bad about the individual as well, for instance that they do not value their friends, or confidentiality, or their superiors, etc.

as the alternative beliefs vying for one's attention may become dominant. However, if one is courageous, by properly defending the judgments of reason due to being fearful of the consequences, one will not be likely to forget either over time or due to stress. For instance, if one has been considering a lot of different things: the good of oneself, of the city, etc., even if one has been taught that the most important thing is the defense of the city, they may forget it when presented with other ideas, lessons, or experiences. Success at this test thus depends on one's spirited and rational capacities being properly linked up, so that courage can preserve the belief amidst pressures that lead to forgetting.

The second set of trials is described as "labors, pains, and contests" (3.413d4). This seems to be a trial of one's physical prowess, as the physical implications of these words are much more explicit than the other kinds of tests. "Labors" implies strenuous physical action, "pain" reflects the result of that action or perhaps general physical or psychological discomfort (psychological pain also often manifests physically), and "contests" require stamina. So, my thought is that these tests are intended to gauge how strong one's emotional and physical endurance are in the face of physical pains. For instance, if one is without emotional strength to endure, they will not be able to overcome the labors, pains, and contests, but crumble under pressure. If one is without the physical strength to endure, even if they want to, feel that it is right, etc. they will be unable to accomplish the trial, and in this case their body gives out. Thus, this tests how well one has integrated the strength of their physical and emotional counterparts, as one who can be easily be physically or emotionally subdued will not make for a good guardian. Further, if we recall, the development of physical strength was to occur in tandem with courage, for it is difficult to develop the will to preserve anything if one is poor at preserving their body in difficult situations.

Let's turn to the third kind of competition next. What Socrates says is:

Then we must also set up a competition for the third way in which people are deprived of their convictions, namely, magic. 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 apparently gracious in everything, **is a good guardian of himself and the music and poetry he has learned**, and if he always shows himself to be **rhythmical and harmonious**, 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; he is to be honored in life and to receive after his death the most prized tombs and memorials. (3.413d6-a3, emphasis added)

The third way of testing is to lead individuals into fearful situations or pleasant situations and observe their reactions. The idea is that those who have internalized the right beliefs will endure painful situations when appropriate and avoid pleasurable temptations. This idea shares clear parallels with the test of the fearful potion and of drinking in the *Laws*. I will argue that this test actually shows that courage is more complicated, and perhaps serves as one name for the collection of courage as “facing fears” (recognizing what is *not* to be feared) and shame as “avoiding pleasures” (recognizing what *is* to be feared).

In Plato’s *Laws*, the Athenian wants to describe the importance of using wine as an educational tool (*Leg.* 1.649a5-b5). In order to motivate this, he discusses the desire for the lawgiver to test and train people with respect to their courage, suggesting that if there were a potion that could induce the same kind of fear as in actually dangerous situations, it would be a powerful teaching tool, and further allow for such tests to be performed in a safe environment (1.647c6-648c4). Of course, such a potion for inducing fear does not exist, but there are other parallels such as mock battles that could indicate whether one succumbs to fear or not. However, he does suggest that there is such a potion to introduce fear’s counterpart: fearlessness, and it is wine (1.649a5). What is particularly interesting about drinking is that it is thought to be a good test of one’s sense of shame (1.649c7-d2). It not only induces fearlessness but also suppresses reason, such that only one with well-trained dispositions could resist the temptations placed before them in this state; one would not have access to new rational dictates about what to do. Thus, wine would be a good test to see who has internalized certain dispositions and who has not. By “internalized”, I mean that they are trained and engrained in an emotional, rather than

rational, way. These dispositions characterize themselves as feelings rather than as reasoned beliefs as they can be maintained even without the activity of reason and can be encouraged at an early age through education. Further, they respond directly to reason, which is why I take them to be spirited.

If one has internalized a “sense of shame” or other dispositions, then when the alcohol suppresses their reason, they will act in accord with the rational orders that their sense of shame is sensitive to; i.e., the beliefs they have *already* internalized. If they lack such a sense of shame, then, without conscious reason, they will act however their appetites desire. For instance, imagine two sorts of people at a drinking party, both who know rationally that it is socially unacceptable to make romantic advances on their friend’s partner, but only one of the two has internalized this belief and actually feels deeply that it is wrong and is afraid of acting in that way, such that when both become drunk, what we would see is one who keeps to themselves, feeling that it would be wrong to make such advances due to the internalization of that belief, while the other, without their usual rational inhibition, would act very inappropriately on the basis of that desire. Since the second person has not internalized any beliefs about its badness, there is nothing to get in the way or suggest otherwise when the desire arises and attempts to usurp the role that reason would have (if it were present). Thus, the interpretation of the “magic” of pleasures and pains, I propose, is their ability to inhibit our reason, but they do so under the guise of appearing, at the time, as what is best.

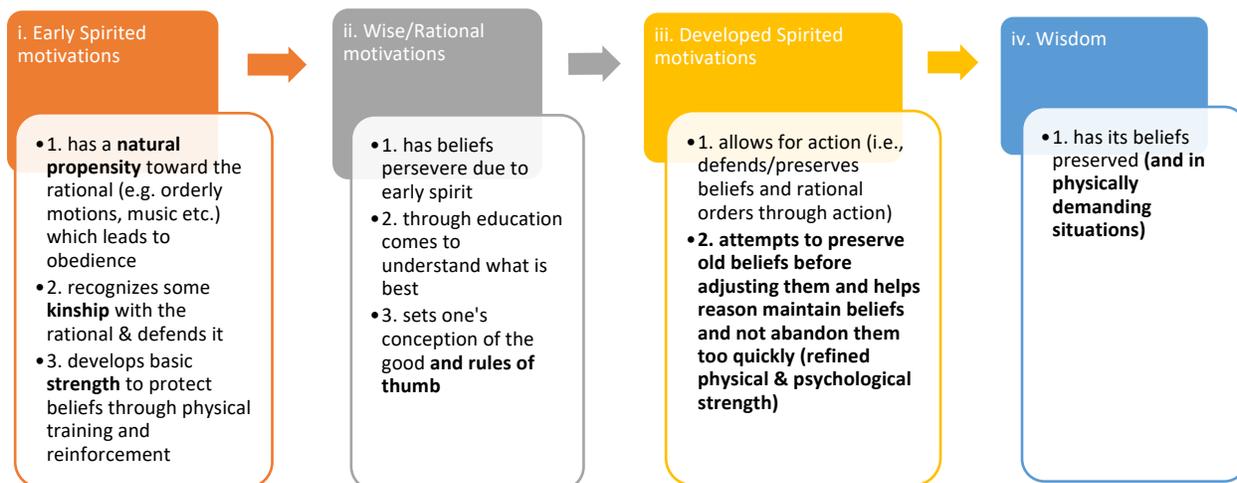
So, it is the internalization of beliefs to endure what is not to be feared (courage) and to avoid what is to be feared (sense of shame), both which are captured under the definition of courage as preserving beliefs about what is and is not to be feared, which are important in this case. Below, I intend “rational orders” and “rational/law-inculcated beliefs” to include what “is and is not to be feared”. In the drinking case, the one who has internalized rational orders as spirited motivations is able to feel what the right thing to do or not do is and behave properly, despite the reason-hindering effects of wine. So, what the examiners really want to test with the third kind of test is precisely whether the beliefs from

reason about what to fear or not have in fact been internalized, rather than believed merely at the surface level or when it is convenient. In these cases, even under the pressure of alcohol, one may still feel it is wrong to vandalize something, even if reason is not actively opposing it, and even if there are more reasons to do it; e.g., it seems fun, friends are doing it, they might not get caught, etc. Similarly, one may be better able to resist the magic of possible belief-inducing effects of praise, or fear, by holding onto their law-inculcated beliefs.

Thus, what is essential is a commitment to certain kinds of beliefs; e.g., what is right, the kind of person one is and wants to be, etc., which can be maintained even without reason being completely active. Further, to be “rhythmical and harmonious”, a key description of those who have internalized beliefs, is often just a way of describing the correlation between one’s actions and one’s beliefs, and the chief things that typically infringe on this relationship are pains and pleasures that hinder the oversight of reason. But the one who passes this test will be able to endure pains and resist pleasures that attempt to pull them away from what they feel is good; without strong enough internalized beliefs, they will be easily swayed by what looks like reason or fall into disarray without it. Thus, as I argued, this final set of tests actually tests whether one’s internalized beliefs are actually linked up to the right kinds of things to fear and not fear. So, for instance, this test is intended to weed out those who may have passed the first test by just simply recognizing and accepting what the right things to fear and not are under reason’s guidance and pass the second test due to their strength being utilized with the oversight of reason; however, many will fail at this point because their adherence is tested without reason. Without reason, if the beliefs are not internalized, one will forget it, and further, when presented with pleasures and pains, they will be incapable of resisting or pursuing them appropriately, or they will too easily pursue something that is incompatible with the belief they ought to have about the benefit of the city. Only those who have truly internalized the importance of pursuing the good of the city and what is to be feared or avoided will be able to pass the test of endurance of these pleasures and pains. Thus

courage, in both senses (avoid what is to be feared and endure what is not to be feared), is essential to pass these important tests of the would-be guardians.

In this section, I attempted to show how the tests are specifically tests of courage and explain the different role courage plays in belief preservation in the face of these challenges. It turns out that firstly the right connection with certain rational beliefs is essential, meaning that courage will need to be fearing deviation from them; secondly, one then needs both internal and external strength to ensure that in physically difficult situations, one still perseveres in their beliefs; finally, the internalization of rational judgments is essential so that they can be acted on naturally as rules of thumb, even when reason is hindered or inactive. I argued that these are all acts of courage understood as preserving the belief about what is to be feared and not, though the word “courage” in this sense also captures some degree of a “sense of shame”. At this point, I will fill in the chart with these additional details:



In the following section, I plan to transition to a short discussion about the virtues of the philosophers and further explain why spirited motivations are among most important qualities necessary for philosopher rulers.

### Virtues of the Philosophers

In this section, I will be considering the other virtuous characteristics that the philosophers are described as possessing. I suggest that, foundationally, many of these characteristics are spirited in

nature and act as a foundation for rational development. Thus, the main point that I aim to make in this section is that spirit is essential for the philosopher rulers not only as a necessary condition for guardianship, but also as a necessary condition for the development of wisdom, which is the final determinant of guardianship.

Socrates describes that the philosopher must have are a love of learning (*Rep.* 6.485a9), be without falsehood (6.485c3) be moderate (6.485e3), not slavish (6.486a4), nor cowardly, but just and gentle (6.486b3-7), a fast learner (6.486c3-6), have a good memory (6.486d1-2), and be measured and graceful (6.486d4-5). Socrates sums up these qualities when he says:

[I]s there any objection you can find, then, to a way of life that no one can adequately follow unless he's by nature good at remembering, quick to learn, high-minded, graceful, and a friend and relative of truth, justice, courage, and moderation? (6.487a2-5)

Later on, when Socrates describes the two kinds of people at 6.503c2-d4, it is very reminiscent of those who are described at 2.375 as having a spirit that is too soft, and another whose spirit is too unyielding. We should note the similarities between these people and those described earlier on in education during his description of the cultivation of the spirit. Let's look at these two types of people:

- (1) You know that ease of learning, good memory, quick wits, smartness, youthful passion, high-mindedness, and all the other things that go along with these are rarely willing to grow together in a mind that will choose an orderly life that is quiet and completely stable, for those who possess the former traits are carried by their quick wits wherever change leads them and have no stability at all. (6.503c2-6)
- (2) On the other hand, people with stable characters, who don't change easily, who aren't easily frightened in battle, and whom one would employ because of their greater reliability, exhibit similar traits when it comes to learning: they are as hard to move and teach as people whose brains have become numb, and they are filled with sleep and yawning whenever they have to learn anything. (6.503c8-d4)

Here, we see it is undesirable to be either kind of person. Those who have no stability and so seem to change every which way/are too easily influenced and those who are stable but unyielding, would fail to be good guardians. At 2.375a5-b2, a guardian is described as needing "keen senses, speed to catch what it sees, and strength in case it needs to fight what it captures" (2.375a5-6), to which Socrates concludes that "it [spirit's] presence makes the whole soul fearless and unconquerable" (2.375b1-2). This has clear

parallels to the second quote above, as both share the quality of fearlessness. In the quote, being unconquerable also suggests that they may hold rigidly to their own beliefs and not be open to others; this quality is specifically what would make these people dangerous to their fellow countrymen.

Socrates also says:

[B]esides being spirited, [our future guardians] must also be by nature philosophical[...] it [the quality of being philosophical] judges anything it sees to be either a friend or an enemy on no other basis than it knows one and doesn't know the other. (375e-376b)

This seems to be reminiscent of the first quote above, as the quality of “philosophical” too readily accepts things on the basis of their familiarity, but they are familiar due to the ease of learning of those who are by nature philosophical, and the good memory they have for remembering them. It is also possible that those who are “too philosophical” in this sense can lack stability by being willing to accept too many (and perhaps even false) things; i.e., they may become victims to their own cognitive biases derived from their familiarity with topics. For instance, they might be too willing to accept certain ideas from biased research because they sound familiar or confirm what they think they already know, without investigating their sources fully.

Socrates says, “Philosophy, spirit, speed, and strength must all, then, be combined in the nature of anyone who is to be a fine and good guardian”. While “guardian” here covers both future rulers and auxiliaries, it is important to note how in the 2.375a5-b2 passage, being a good auxiliary is *a necessary prerequisite* for being a good ruler. So, we need both the combination of the spirited and the rational, but the philosophical is still pre-rational. And this, along with the beliefs about how reason will come later in life, shows the importance of developing spirited capacities *first*. However, I want to argue that reason, and thus wisdom, cannot be achieved if someone has not properly developed their spirited motivations in accord with the right things.

The above point will be the most salient if we look at early education. The purpose of the early education in poetry is to begin to mold children and their spirit in the desired way (i.e., in accord with

certain rational beliefs they want them to adopt when they are older) by giving good moral exemplars.

Thus, when they begin physical training it is clear to them for what purpose they are training, emphasized by the fact that they should be given good paradigms for imitation (3.394e1-396b8), which allow these qualities to become more engrained character traits; i.e., strength, perseverance, etc.

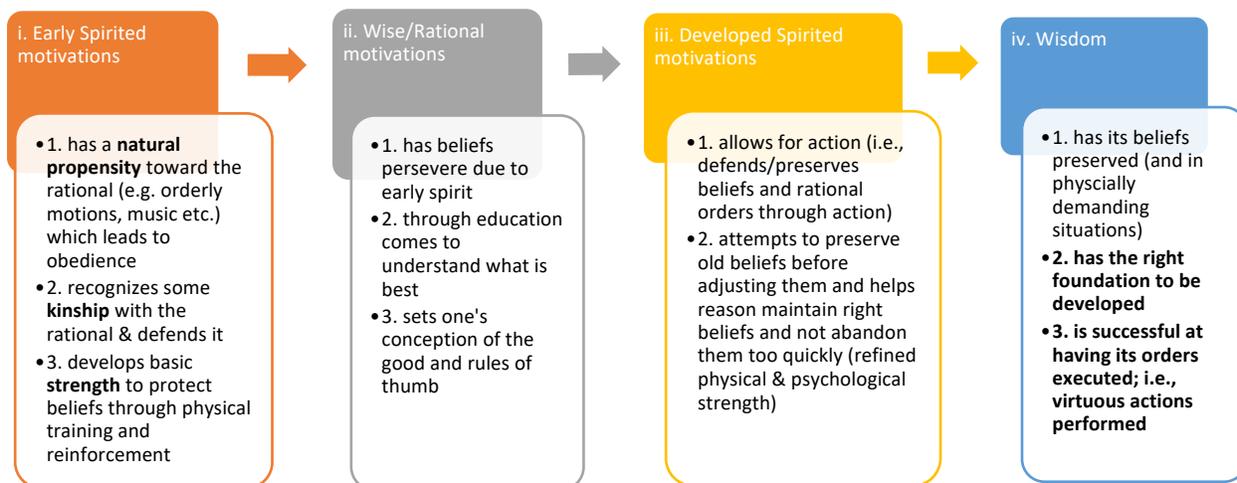
Education in music is thereafter important because it creates harmony, allows for the recognition of what is fine, and eventually for reason to be welcomed (401d5), and ultimately wisdom to be put into practice, by providing paradigms of the desired virtuous behavior. Thus, one who has already begun developing spirited strength can also latch onto new beliefs about what is good before they have the reasons for why they are good, or wisdom about nuances in situations. That is, one develops spirited motivations at this stage which will later link up with and be refined by one's wisdom. Music allows spirit to see what rational belief will be best to latch onto when such reasons come, like a magnet, they click together. In fact, I suggest that such reason will not be able to come at all for those who are too rigid in non-compatible beliefs to accept them, as when such reason comes, if that belief is not compatible with any of the non-rational beliefs, it will not be easily accepted.

Thus, a majority of the traits important for the guardian ruler are traits they ought to have before reason comes and are specifically spirited traits; i.e., preservation of the right beliefs, and resemblance, friendship, and harmony with reason. The resemblance of spirit and reason is clear, for Plato even saw the need to disentangle the spirited and rational parts of the soul. The friendship that spirit has with reason is also often emphasized, as well as the harmony involved in spirit's subordinated position to reason. This education is clearly a spirited education, as the development of spirit is essential for the eventual development of right reason<sup>113</sup>—without this, right reason cannot be accepted by the individual and without the acceptance of the right reasons, wisdom cannot be developed. One will

---

<sup>113</sup> I differentiate what I am calling "right reason" (that which aims virtue and sees one's place in the whole) from basic reason (that which aims at some good for the individual).

instead develop faulty reasoning and ignorance. Thus, without a good education and spirit, it would be impossible to be a good guardian because they would be unable to grasp the right reasoning when it comes—it will simply be propelled away.



Someone might say it is also impossible to become a guardian with only the right spirited capacities, thus reemphasizing the role of wisdom for guardianship. I want to be clear I do not deny the importance of wisdom, but my point is that because of the dependency I am drawing out between spirit and reason, there will never be a wise guardian who lacks these spirited capacities. Wisdom, then, is at least partly dependent on possessing these spirited qualities.

In the next section, I will turn back to the tests and look at the test of dialectic. Of all the tests provided, this seems like the best test to be a genuine test of reason. However, I also think that courage plays an important role in helping one pass the test of dialectic as well.

## Dialectic

This section concerns the purpose of dialectic, its dangers, and the role that spirited motivations, especially courage, play in helping one successfully navigate those dangers. Earlier we saw the importance of other kinds of tests for indicating the strength of one's courage, but there is still need for yet a further kind of test. In this section, I will first explain why there is need for a further test beyond the ones mentioned in previous sections. Then, I will argue that before one can even begin to argue

dialectically, the foundation of courage to preserve one's already-learned beliefs is critical. Then I will argue that given this strong foundation, dialectic not only tests whether one has a unified vision but also importantly the flexibility/adaptability of one's adherence to beliefs caused by courage to defend that vision in action. I then discuss the ways in which one can fail the test in dialectic. Some failings are rational, while others are distinctly spirited, and the right combination of both are necessary to conquer the challenges of dialectic. Thus, I suggest that the ideal psychic disposition for a guardian includes the right combination of strength and flexibility of one's courageous inclinations to pass this test, as dialectic requires, in some cases, not only strength to preserve the beliefs (which was tested previously), but also spirited flexibility to change one's beliefs when appropriate. This all points to the importance of not just the right rational beliefs but also the spirited motivations that support them.

#### i. Motivation

To the question as to why further tests beyond the ones that measure courage are necessary, something Aristotle says in his *Nicomachean Ethics* nicely explains the motivation that Plato likely had in mind. Aristotle says:

Some men hold their opinions with absolute certainty, and take them for positive knowledge; so that if weakness of conviction be the criterion for deciding that men who act against their conception of what is right must be said to opine rather than to know the right, there will really be no difference in this respect between Opinion and Knowledge; since some men are just as firmly convinced of what they opine as others are of what they know. (NE 1146b20-25)

Here Aristotle observes that strength of conviction does not have a necessary connection with knowledge nor ultimately virtue, as people can have false convictions. Plato's point with the earlier tests is to show that some strength is important and meaningful when connected with the right kind of belief. But to distinguish virtue from stubbornness, it cannot be the stubbornness alone, even when connected with the right kind of belief, that is virtuous, but rather virtue requires genuine knowledge which I suggest requires the flexibility to adapt one's prior beliefs to new situations and accept new evidence. Likely considering just this sort of thing, Socrates says:

Therefore they [the would-be guardians] must be tested in the labors, fears, and pleasures we mentioned previously. But they must also be exercised in many other subjects—which we didn't mention but are adding now—to see whether *they can tolerate the most important subjects* or will shrink from them like the cowards who shrink from other tests. (*Rep.* 6.503e1-504a1, emphasis added)

I read this as Socrates suggesting that dialectic is the final test for those who have proven themselves resilient and skilled at belief preservation, which suggests that doing this alone (i.e., preserving beliefs with strength) is not enough for genuine virtue. Instead, they will be tested on the most important subjects; so, next I will discuss more about what exactly this means and what it means for the final development of spirited capabilities.

## ii. Goal of dialectic

Dialectic is a process of definition-testing and consists of two important skills: (1) being able to achieve a unified vision (i.e., have a consistent “definition”) or unified conception (of some concept, virtue, etc.), and (2) being able to defend, adjust, or improve one’s unified vision, when necessary, in accord with new evidence to come to a new and refined unified vision. With respect to the tests of dialectic, Socrates explains the goal of it when he says the following:

(1) You’ll have to look out for the ones who most have all this ability in them (i.e., one who can achieve a unified vision) and who also remain *steadfast* in their studies, in war, and in the other activities laid down by law. After they have reached their thirtieth year, you’ll select them in turn from among those chosen earlier and assign them yet greater honors<sup>114</sup>. Then you’ll have to

---

<sup>114</sup> This passage parallels the passage at 3.412: 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; he is to be honored in life and to receive after his death the most prized tombs and memorials (3.413e4-14a2). One question one might have: Why so much talk of honors? Below are a couple of explanations:

- Option 1: to motivate young people to endure the tests and to become steadfast. But, doesn’t this give them the wrong motivation? That is, won’t they will be motivated by what is good for them vs. what is good for the city? Well, maybe them being honored is good for the city because it does inspire more people to be good. Nonetheless, this is still not for the right reasons such as the importance of virtue. But it is true that everyone in the city can’t become virtuous. However, it is the ruler’s job to do the best they can at this. So, option 1 does not seem like the best candidate as it presupposes the wrong set of motivations.
- Option 2: Such prizes award these people the main object of spirited desire, but at a time when it can’t influence said desires. With this option, I just mean to suggest that, due to the importance of spirited motivations, one wants to reward people who had the right motivations and worked hard in tandem with reason throughout their lives by presenting a good that would please the person operating with those motivations, but not actively pursuing them (like how philosopher rulers give up time in the pure realm, those with obedient spirited capacities give up other honors). Further, just like how rulers eventually get time in the pure realm when their job of ruling is over, so does one get honors after exercising those capacities and fulfilling the job of obedience to reason. However, for those who

test them by means of the power of dialectic, to discover which of them can relinquish his eyes and other senses, going on with the help of truth to that which by itself is. (7.537c8-d6, emphasis added)

So, we see first those that only those who are *steadfast* in studies, war, etc. are chosen to undergo the tests of dialectic. Dialectic will require them to go beyond their senses to “that which by itself is”; i.e., the definition or genuine truth through the use of their reason. Some of these people, when presented with dialectical challenges, will be able to overcome them by accessing the truth. The goal is essential to find the people who are capable of finding their definition because, due to their courage, as I have argued previously, their acts of preservation are in the actions that the belief is about; so, if they can achieve this definition, the courage they already have will allow them to reliably become virtuous people.

To test someone via dialectic is to question one’s belief with counter arguments and counter evidence to see if they will become squeamish or stick with what they believe and to what extent. So, in the first case, when one does not have some stable commitment to some overarching belief or value, it becomes difficult to reconcile these different arguments in a way that develops or defends this one common conception, and, in these cases, the person’s adherence to certain judgments will vacillate quickly and often result in uncertainty and confusion.

I suggest, in these cases, when one with spirited flexibility is trying to follow along with reason’s changing judgments about what is best (i.e., the “definition”), what ends up happening is that, without an adherence to an overarching belief or value, none of the new beliefs get reconciled, and then, if reason winds up no longer sure about the good is, the one with more flexible spirited capacities will be

---

are most influenced by reason, would it even matter to them if they received these honors while alive, given that these people would have given up desires for social honor?

- Option 3: It’s not to motivate them or others by means of the goods/honors, but to exhibit the right kind of honor and respect to be provided to these people; so, it is thus an exercise in humility and a sign of what is to be valued. This is perhaps the most attractive option as it does not presuppose suboptimal motivations for the virtuous, nor promote sub-optimal motivations. This is not to say it may not have this effect, but I’m suggesting it is not the intended effect.

forced into confusion about the matter. Due to this confusion, the agent becomes disconnected from their previous rational beliefs, thereby refusing to accept them—if any part of those beliefs even survives the dialectical process. Socrates identified a similar problem earlier when he was claiming that not every soul can “adequately grasp what it [the good] is or acquire the sort of stable beliefs it has about other things” (6.505e1-3); namely, if reason is confused about something, it will be difficult for it to become stable, which suggests that spirit, which is in charge of this stability, is unable to fulfill its role as ally. Spirited motivations are driven by a stable foundation in order to supply the right support. When Socrates further asks, “will we allow the best people in our city[...] to be so in the dark about something of this kind and of this importance?” (6.505e3-a2), he suggests the importance of the right beliefs to inspire stability. Additionally, however, the length of training, testing, and further education is also required to develop this stability in tandem with flexibility. Thus, when one’s reason is not strong enough to adequately identify or defend what is good, it will leave us nonplussed, and we will fall to the danger of dialectic.

### The Dangers of Dialectic and the Importance of Spirited Flexibility

Since the purpose of dialectic is to develop a coherent definition (or defend the one they might already have), the dangers of dialectic occur “[W]hen they’ve refuted many and been refuted by them in turn, they forcefully and quickly fall into disbelieving what they believed before” (7.539b7-c2). The details concerning how this happens is explained by Socrates when he says:

And then a questioner comes along and asks someone of this sort, “What is the fine?” And, when he answers what he has heard from the traditional lawgiver, the argument refutes him, and by refuting him often and in many places shakes him from his convictions **and makes him believe** that the fine is no more fine than shameful, and the same with the just, the good, and the things he honored most. What do you think his attitude will be then to honoring and obeying his earlier convictions?

Of necessity he won’t honor or obey them in the same way.

Then, when he no longer honors and obeys those convictions and can’t discover the true ones, will he be likely to adopt any other way of life than that which flatters him?

No, he won’t.

And so, I suppose, from being law-abiding he becomes lawless.

Inevitably. (7.538d5-539a4)

So, the main danger of dialectic is that it can shake someone from their convictions, essentially undoing the training of their courage from the previous tests, and this situation would not befall them if it were not for the strength and cleverness of the arguments involved in dialectic. In order to get the best outcome out of dialectic, being a good rational thinker is not enough. I'll argue that a degree of "spirited flexibility" is necessary.

i. The significance of "spirited flexibility"

"Spirited flexibility" is one of the main, but underrecognized, features that I believe dialectic must test and which was not tested by any of the previous tests described in earlier sections. I am using "spirited flexibility" simply to refer to one's ability to emotionally adjust to/develop beliefs associated with new rational considerations. One can also think about this as its "temper-ability"; i.e., how spirit is capable of being adjusted or tempered by reason in order to be useful to it. Because the temper-ability leads to "flexibility", I refer to this quality simply as "flexibility" from here on (but I mean flexibility that has been developed; so, my focus is also on those who have this quality developed in them through education). So, spirited flexibility allows for one to respond to different considerations, revise or defend their views, or adopt newer views, if the evidence adequately supports it. This may initially sound like I am talking about something *other than* courage, but in fact, I intend this to be a way of describing the strength/rigidity of courage's belief preservation, which comes in degrees. For instance, consider when Odysseus becomes enraged at seeing suitors attempting to seduce his wife, and Homer says: "He [Odysseus] struck his chest and spoke to his heart" (*Hom. Od. 20.27*). This suggests that it is reason quelling one's spirited drive with new considerations/orders, but in order to for this be successful, the heart must also *listen, as it does*, immediately upon his speaking to it. When Odysseus does not blow his cover by bursting into the room, it is clear that the courage by which he preserved the old orders was just malleable enough to accept the new orders/information, instead of continuing to believe something

like “I ought to defend my honor” he may instead come to believe “defending my honor is important but not at the cost of the exposure that will prevent me from achieving my other goal”. In this way, his belief has not drastically changed but adjusted in accord with the new evidence and old values. This does, however, result in a new motivation because bursting into the room no longer appeared best to him, despite how disrespectful the scene was. In this way, for the moment, one’s feelings about what is important to fear adapt to the new information reason provides.

We could also just as easily imagine the above situation as an engagement in dialectic. Imagine: someone says, “Odysseus, you believe that you ought to defend your honor and that doing so is right, but your view of honor entails that you would defend it at great cost to yourself; for instance, you would burst into a room to fight off suitors seducing your wife, and that this would only be to your detriment”. To this, Odysseus should not immediately say: “by Zeus, you’re right, I should abandon this conception right away”, rather he does believe defending his honor is right, but there is a way in which this is consistent with some rational information, such as the possibility for him to get revenge later and preserve himself now. So, then he says, “I do believe that, but it does not entail what you think. I would instead hold off, so as to exact my revenge later”. Thus, he rationally shifts with new information, but his behavior shifts as well. If his beliefs about sticking to his previous unrevised beliefs were too strong, he would instead be compelled to barge in despite thinking it would otherwise be good<sup>115</sup>.

Take another example of how a dialectic might go: first, one has a certain set of convictions; for instance, like a guardian’s belief that “it is best to do what is good for the whole”. The questioner then

---

<sup>115</sup> A further example of this same phenomenon is when someone might be angry that someone is insulting them, but then find out that the person they thought was insulting them is not a native speaker of the same language as them and was not able to express in exactly the right words what they wanted to say. In this case, it was appropriate before on the basis of initial feelings to become slighted when one is insulted/perceives an injustice being done to them (i.e., fearing the damage to their reputation or sense of self), but after rational consideration and reevaluation of the situation, one’s anger may be quelled by new considerations, namely that there is no longer a threat. On the one hand, in this situation, there was actually nothing of the relevant sort to fear, and on the other hand, retaliating upon this person for a wrong they did not commit would be shameful. If courage too rigidly preserved the belief about the wrongness of insult, one might attempt to retaliate, but this shows no flexibility to changing or nuanced situations. The general rule one has internalized does still apply, but this is a specific instance to which one changes their feelings given newly introduced rational information, for which this flexibility is necessary.

asks him pointed questions about his understanding of it or shows that the guardian's belief can lead to unsavory conclusions, and if the one being questioned is incapable of explaining or defending his view, ends up being shown that this is impossible, or is persuaded that what is the good of the whole is something contradictory to virtue, he loses his trust in that belief and is described as "shaken from his convictions", meaning that what he believes is no longer secure and may be abandoned. The actions he did previously were on the basis of the feeling and connection to rational belief that he had, but now with that foundation shaken, there is no rational belief for the spirited motivations to latch onto and one feels disheartened, betrayed, or at a loss. Let's take another example: one may have been persuaded that what is good for the whole will critically damage one's own virtue, and as this person's own virtue is tied to the good of the whole, they end up confused about what to do and may feel like performing the action good for the whole will harm themselves, but then they will become worse and thus more likely to harm the whole, and, as a result, they may fall into confusion about what is right and best to do. So, one does not obey one's convictions in the previous way, and if they cannot discover the true ones, then it is no surprise that they become motivated to pursue that which brings honors and pleasures—something that can be defended, on the basis of one's own experience, as good. Having lost sight of what is actually good, one's courageous motivations, due to its degree of flexibility, turns to preserve beliefs about what other things are possible candidates for what is good. In this way, the individual who has lost sight of their correct rational convictions about the good becomes "lawless", which is still responsive to rational, but wrong, convictions, and hence why such a person's behavior can become so erratic.

The importance of both of these characteristics then, strength (to resist quickly abandoning beliefs) and flexibility (to adapt to new ones), is also why the person who is selected as a ruler has to be "most stable, the most courageous, and as far as possible the most well-shaped (*eueidēs*)" (7.535a9-10, minor modification). Most stable does not mean "as stable as humanly possible" but rather the most stable in

a way that also permits for the highest possible degree of grace, which is exemplified by the harmonious dance spirit and reason engage in together. This also describes the importance of the spirited stability, adherence to beliefs, and unity with reason. People with these qualities will be able to sufficiently argue for their view when necessary, without abandoning it too quickly. But they are also described as “well-shaped”, a property which alludes to beautiful proportions, in this case of strength and flexibility; so, they will also have the flexibility to adjust as reason requires. Staunch belief is not sufficient, but rather, it is important to possess spirited flexibility to allow reason to do its thing and affect our spirited motivations along with it. But we cannot be too easily swayed or eventually we will be forced into a position of contradiction and be forced to abandon some beliefs or chose non-optimal ways of holding onto them.

To give a final example of the ideal kind of spirited flexibility I am referring to, and where it is supported in Plato, we can look to the *Laches*, which we discussed in detail in chapter 4. In this dialogue, we see Laches exhibiting one particular vice, namely he is too “courageous” which in the context of our understanding here means he is too staunch in his beliefs and being unwilling to change them. Instead Laches suggests he will find a way to defend his views. This strength could perhaps be beneficial if he could prove his view, as one should not be willing to abandon what they think too easily, but after some lack of success, he should be willing to seriously revise his view. However, Laches only suggests doing something like this facetiously. Nicias, on the other hand, seems like a paradigm example of courageous strength and flexibility. Nicias exhibits this when he says:

As far as I am concerned, I think enough has been said on the topic for the present, and if any point has not been covered sufficiently, then later on I think we [Laches and myself] can correct it both with the help of Damon, and with that [help] of others. And when I feel secure on these points, I will instruct you too [Laches]. (*Lach.* 200b2-6)

Here, Nicias has not yet completely abandoned his view, but he at least believes that he needs to think about it more, and to do so with guidance. Thus, he still holds onto his thought for the time being but seems open enough to change if, in fact, all the other evidence points in a different direction. Even

Socrates himself suggests that their next natural step is to find a teacher, to which Nicias asserted he would. While perhaps this suggestion of a teacher is mostly for Laches' benefit, to prevent him from remaining so staunch in his belief, the fact that Nicias takes it up suggests the right combination of strength and flexibility/openness to other alternatives, but by only being willing to change his opinion on the basis of well-reasoned judgment. Thus, I suggest that Nicias represents the kind of open and spirited flexibility one should have, and such qualities are tested by dialectic as they were tested during Socrates' cross-examination. In the next few sections, I want to delve into a bit more detail about where one can go wrong in a battle of dialectic. There are some problems specific to reason and spirit respectively.

*a. Problems for reason*

There are a couple of problems with reason that might make someone unable to overcome dialectical challenges. This is a way in which they could fail the first part of the dialectical challenge, that is developing the unified definition. Because these are a bit more obvious, I won't discuss them at length but mention what a few main ones are and why they are problematic.

One main reason is that one's education may have been bad to begin with. By this, I just mean that they were not taught to value the correct things or that the correct lessons were not well-enforced. This is likely not the issue with the guardians, who would have received some of the best education the city has to offer; but for others, if they believe something to be true that is in fact easily refutable by the evidence at hand, then they may have a hard time figuring out what to believe, given that what they were taught was true turned out to be false. This means they will easily fall into frustration or confusion when posed with dialectical questions.

A second reason is that the individual might not be ready to engage in such intellectual discussion, for instance by being too young or not being cognitively developed in the required ways. In this way, time or much more care would be necessary to instill the right beliefs, but they need to also understand the connections among the topics to argue well about them, and that might not always be

possible to teach these groups. In this case, even if they have the right beliefs, they would fail to defend them, and the pressure of dialectic would cause them to abandon those beliefs.

Lastly, they might rely too much on their senses rather than on their intellectual acumen; that is, they might not be willing to believe that which they cannot directly experience. Since developing a coherent definition involves going beyond the sensible, these people would be wholly unable to develop such a definition, and, without such a definition, they would be unable to do the intellectual labor required in dialectic to show that they have such a unified view.

Again, these problems occur mostly for those who are young or have not received a full education; so, would-be guardians, who received a full education and are being tested as young as age 30, would be unlikely to have these sorts of rational deficiencies. The bigger problems occur after one has identified the right beliefs and which I believe are found in the spirited motivations, which were developed prior to when the tests in dialectic will be issued.

*b. Problems with developed courage*

After one has passed the tests intended to develop one's courage, they can face a couple new challenges when having to defend their beliefs in dialectic. While many more problems can occur if one has not passed the previous tests that encourage spirited strength, and since we are presuming that tests in dialectic occur after one has passed the other tests, I will mainly focus on those who have passed the previous tests and developed strong courage, namely those who believe what reason advises with strong conviction and reliably defends those beliefs in action. The main way that this goes wrong is that one's spirited commitment to old rationally-endorsed beliefs may be too strong; i.e., one's courage too rigidly defends the beliefs about those fears. So, even if one is able to achieve a unified vision of what is true, the new beliefs may not get spirited uptake; i.e., it will be blocked by the courage that too rigidly defends previous beliefs. This is where one's beliefs are so rigid and dogmatic that even under the pressure of dialectic, one refuses to abandon their old beliefs, even if said beliefs are wrong or cannot

be rationally defended. This kind of person could perhaps be described as “anti-dialectical” and or will continue to act in a way that is inconsistent with their current beliefs and with new rational information. Such a person would be a version of Odysseus who, after speaking to his heart, did not have it listen. In this way, reason can then be led to rationalize the wrong thing, that is, even in spite of new information the individual may rationalize the old ways in a way that in the end rejects the unified vision in favor of what is more comfortable. This might be a version of Odysseus whose spirit speaks back and says “but I was always advised to not let this dishonor occur”, and reason, being unable to persuade spirit and in recognition of spirit’s strong feelings, might say “yeah, this is okay; we should do this because we need to defend our honor now. It won’t have as much impact if I wait. It might be more cowardly for me to wait, etc.” This kind of rationalizing undermines what was more in accord with the Odysseus’ overall good. Thus, this kind of spirited rigidity is not optimal and will come out in cases of dialectic, such as with Laches as we saw earlier, and these people will be removed from the running for guardianship.

On the other end of the spectrum, there is an issue with too much flexibility. Someone at this stage may have successfully passed the strength test only because they are good at preserving their beliefs in the absence of defeaters. When presented with defeaters or counter arguments in a dialectical argument, if they are too flexible and adjust too quickly to every new consideration, they will end up in confusion or with an undesirable conclusion.

Since one with spirited flexibility is trying to follow along with reason’s changing judgments about what is best (i.e., the “definition”), what ends up happening in these cases is that one vacillates too quickly or tries to reconcile everything in unsuccessful ways. Then, without a stable adherence to an overarching belief or value, none of the new beliefs get properly reconciled, and further, if reason winds up no longer sure about the good is, the one with more flexible spirited capacities will be forced into confusion about the matter. Due to this confusion, the agent becomes disconnected from their previous rational beliefs, thereby refusing to accept them—if any part of those beliefs even survives the

dialectical process. Socrates identified a similar problem, which I discussed earlier, when he was claiming that not every soul can “adequately grasp what it [the good] is or acquire the sort of stable beliefs it has about other things” (6.505e1-3). This nicely identifies the two goals of dialectic I presented earlier; i.e., the definition and the stable support. This has the implication that if reason is confused about something it will be difficult for any belief about it to become stable, which suggests that spirit, which is in charge of this stability, is unable to fulfill its role as ally, since it wants to support everything reason says; but if it accepts new reasons and evidence too willingly, it can start to disrupt the stability of beliefs it should have been defending. Spirited motivations are thus driven by a stable foundation in order to supply the right support.

One important passage to look at that represents the importance of this spirited flexibility for adopting certain beliefs is at *Rep.* 3.411a6-10, where Socrates is discussing how education of the spirited part makes it moderate and courageous through “tempering”, a process that spirit is described as undergoing in particular. Socrates explains:

[W]hen he [the future guardian] spends his whole life humming them [the sweet, soft and plaintive tunes] and delighting in them, then at first, whatever spirit he has is softened, just as iron is tempered, and from being hard and useless, is made useful”<sup>116</sup>

Here, spirit is likened to iron due to its raw strength; strength I believe it has because in the early stages of our education, we have strong basic motivational instincts that are either stamped out or refined through education; for instance, selfishness, fear of novelty, etc. The sweet, soft, and plaintive tunes easily refer to the myths or stories with positive lessons that are sung to young children to exemplify certain good qualities; e.g., generosity and trust, and these lessons gradually weaken these initial spirited inclinations and make the child more willing to accept these new lessons, and, for instance, behave generously (later on when they are able). When children are in this accepting and curious stage,

---

<sup>116</sup> Here we should notice that the spirit is likened to iron in the *Republic*, further suggesting that label “iron” is not meant to capture appetitive motivations alone.

their spirit is described as soft and useful, and then after some repetition, “spending his whole life humming them”, we must presume that spirit is hardened again to a degree but in accord with one’s rational inclinations. The communication of reason and spirit, however, should keep spirit a bit soft, as it is in its most useful state, as presumed by the quote, when it is more malleable rather than completely hard. Of course, the analogy with tempering does presume it will become harder than before, though harder, on this picture, just means more devoted to those beliefs. It is not assumed that reason can be tempered in this way, as rigidity or strength is not desirable for reason. Reason needs to remain flexible in order to accommodate new incoming beliefs, new evidence, analyze changes with the times, etc. What is best can change, and reason needs to be ready to change with it. Flexibility is reason’s main excellent quality, but for spirit, it is both its strength and its flexibility<sup>117</sup>; flexibility it requires because one’s reason can change.

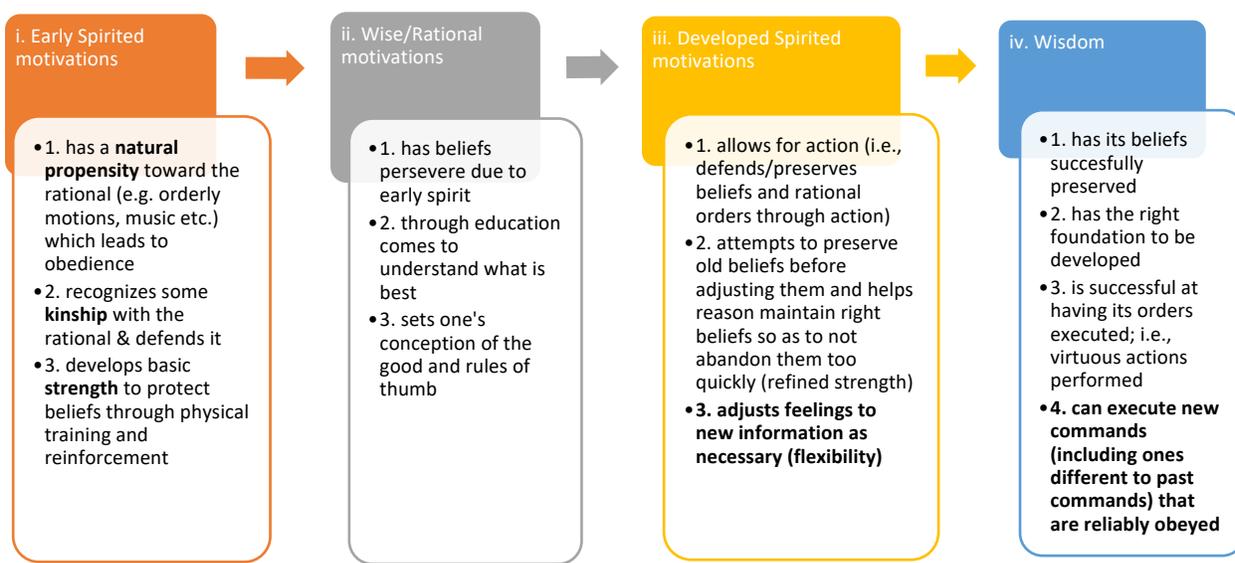
The way that spirit is considered “useful” then, is in its ability to encourage action on the basis of these inclinations and thus reinforce these beliefs through their action. For instance, a child with the right kinds of feelings toward generosity will share their toys, and further after sharing the toys, they will have the feeling that ‘this is noble’ reinforced through their positive feelings, praise, or some other means, which then will have the effect of making the child a better defending this rational belief. Thus, the stability of the rational belief relies heavily in the early years on spirited motivation to generate action in accord with them. Without this foundation, having the belief but not the feeling will result in weaker adherence and cause reason to rationalize spirit’s desires rather than spirit supporting reason as

---

<sup>117</sup> In *Republic* 10, Socrates suggests that the appetites can also be strengthened: “The part of you that wanted to tell the jokes and that was held back by your reason, for fear of being thought a buffoon, you then release, not realizing that, by making it strong in this way, you will be led into becoming a figure of fun where your own affairs are concerned[...] And in the case of sex, anger, and all the desires, pleasures, and pains that we say accompany all our actions, poetic imitation has the very same effect on us. It nurtures and waters them and establishes them as rulers in us when they ought to wither and be ruled” (606c-d). Here, Socrates only speaks about how the appetites can be strengthened, not reason. In fact, he states they need to wither in order to be ruled by reason, which likely suggests reason stays at about the same strength or cannot be made stronger itself. For the solution to ornery appetites is not to strengthen reason but to find a way to weaken or overcome the appetites.

it should. But one also needs the right belief and not just the feeling/stability for any belief because without it, they could come to the wrong conclusions and thus not act in consistently good ways.

So, while the scholars I have previously considered believe the dependency is one-way, I argued that the relationship is actually importantly inter-dependent: Without spirited motivations, we cannot develop stable beliefs; without stable beliefs, we cannot develop our reason and thus our wisdom; without our wisdom, we cannot know what is best; without knowing what is best, we cannot guarantee we act virtuously. Further, knowing “what is best” is not enough for acting virtuously. Thus, my picture interweaves the two, and I can now present the fully developed chart:



I have shown that the items on the right depend on the motivations to their left. For instance, our wise motivations are going to depend to some extent on the successful development of early spirited motivations. Our more developed spirited motivations are going to depend on the wise orders issued from reason (internal or external), and our developed wisdom will rely on our developed spirited motivations to execute one’s internal wise commands in action. This kind of interweaving dependency is a novel but necessary perspective if we are to see the importance of spirited motivations at multiple stages for virtuous actions.

### c. *What about strong reason?*

Now, one might wonder: “could not an individual with strong enough reasoning do without the strength of spirit and spirited flexibility during bouts of dialectic? This objector might think that strength and flexibility of spirit are perhaps only required when one is incapable of reasoning about it for the moment; otherwise it is reason and reason’s own flexibility with respect to truth that is doing all the work. I reply that spirited strength and flexibility are utterly essential, as such a person without both would be unable to engage in dialectic at all. In order to engage in dialectic successfully, you need a view that you are committed to, and such commitment in those views develops over a long road; so, at the stage when one is engaging in dialectic, one has at least some degree of spirited adherence to views already. Thus, this kind of flexibility and strength acts as a natural precondition given the relationship of spirited motivations and rational beliefs. But it is also essential during the actual process of dialectic that after one’s reasoning has decided something new, that one’s spirited motivations also follow in tow to act on that belief, and spirited flexibility is essential for this, otherwise people’s beliefs might change, but they might be physically unwilling to go along with them. The city is a complicated, evolving, and nuanced body, and the ability to reason about these things and execute accordingly is essential, and, thus, so are both the ability to reason about it and the ability to adjust to new beliefs. Thus, success at dialectic also deeply relies on spirited strength and flexibility.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I was concerned with expanding and making clear my picture of the interdependency of spirited motivations and rational beliefs. I argued that that courage is one of the more essential qualities for guardianship, and that spirited strength, which allows for stable adherence to beliefs, is tested by many of the initial tests described in the *Republic*. Without this stable adherence to beliefs, it would be impossible for one to develop the stable set of beliefs from which wisdom can develop.

The final test, that of dialectic, I described as dangerous for the guardians due to the close link of spirit with reason and described how deficiencies in either spirit or reason will result in failing the tests of dialectic. I also argued that courage is also essential for resisting the initial pull of persuasive argumentation and sticking to what one believes, but that these traits are not enough, for one also requires spirited flexibility to adjust to new beliefs introduced by reason but only when they have been properly considered. This has the effect of not causing would-be rulers to abandon their positions too quickly while also giving time and space for reason to do its rational work. If it is too strong, there is no purpose to this work, but if it is too flexible, one will be unreliable in their beliefs and actions. Thus, I have shown that spirited motivations not only depend on reason, but that reason, and ultimately wisdom, also depends on spirited motivations.

## Overall Conclusion

Spirited motivations, and terminology closely associated with such motivations, have permeated Platonic dialogues. From the *Apology* and *Crito* all the way to the *Laws*, their influence can be seen in the virtuous or non-virtuous actions to which people commit themselves. In this dissertation, I had one main goal: to show that spirit is much closer to reason than scholars have presumed. I argued for an interweaving dependency that is absolutely critical for virtuous action.

I attempted to take the reader on a journey, first through the *Laws*, which provided our signposts, namely what we were looking out for, because I tried to show that the *Laws* offers us a clear, but complex image of the way spirited motivations engages with our rational beliefs. In the *Laws*, we saw that spirited motivations play auxiliary roles as helpers to our rational impulses and in a way that makes consistent virtuous action possible. I argued that the iron-y cords presented in the famous “puppet passage” can be taken to represent spirited cords, and when we do that, it becomes clearer the kind of help they can supply in assisting a whole body to go along with rational calculation. They have the right strength, but also the right degree of “temper-ability”, which I refer to as “flexibility”, that can make them useful to reason.

I then took my reader through some of the Platonic dialogues, showing as early as the *Apology* and *Crito* that Socrates is concerned with how spirited motivations influence people’s decision-making and that it is similar in a lot of ways to how the *Laws* spell out that relationship. In the *Apology*, we saw a non-ideal form of this relationship where the jury members rationalize the desires of their strong anger, which drive them to vote against Socrates and saddle him with a death sentence. In the *Crito*, we saw the more positive spirited motivation of shame making Socrates be self-reflective about how his flight will make him a better or worse person, how his actions reflect the kind of person that he is, and how such an action, being inconsistent with his beliefs, can change the kind of person he claims to be. This showed not only that Socrates recognizes non-rational forms of motivation but also that they can

contribute towards virtue, in this case, his virtue, as I showed him to want to avoid the shame of being a hypocrite and becoming vicious when he proclaims to care for virtue.

I then spent considerable time arguing that Plato's view recognizes two kinds of beliefs, which I called "content beliefs" and "self-evaluative beliefs", the latter of which I saw as distinctly spirited and critical for action. In the *Laches*, we examined cases in which shame goes wrong and causes vicious, or at the very least clearly not virtuous, behavior. There, I showed that many spirited motivations are concerned deeply with one's self conception and form the aforementioned "self-evaluative" beliefs, which have a motivational force that drives one to action. Important to my view was that one strives to preserve their positive self-conception as much as possible, and people who lack a more virtuous education or care too much about the opinion of others, etc. will be prone to preserve this self-conception in more vicious ways, such as through counter-shaming, deception, and even the silencing of their opponent.

We then went to the *Protagoras* to look at how these spirited motivations, aside from being useful for individual action, can be extended to a larger scale. There, I argued extensively that Protagoras' analogy of the gifts of Zeus very easily represent spirited and rational motivations respectively and that the spirited motivation of *aidōs* was an essential foundation for the development of *dikē*. Because of the lack of detail in Protagoras' own account, I thought we ought to look at it through Platonic lenses, where Plato can fill in the detail of this account to make it more plausible. The reconstruction of Protagoras' view that I offer is that Zeus provided *dikē* (the rational capacity to see what is good for the whole and establish laws on that basis) and *aidōs* (the aspect of spirit that cares about what those above them have to say and acts accordingly through respect and fear) for the purpose of promoting a stable society. Further, I argued that both of these qualities can give us the art of war, which allows for inter-city order, while *dikē* and *aidōs*, in the individual, allows for intra-city (and

inter-personal) order. Spirited motivations thus serve as an important foundation for civic peace and virtue.

This foundation translated easily to the *Republic*, where we saw courage, the main spirited virtue, as a natural prerequisite for guardianship and also for dialectical success. I argued that the many tests a guardian is put through test courage in particular, with exception of the final test, which tests one's reason *and* one's spirited temperament, that is whether it has been trained to flexibly adjust to reason's considerations or whether it is too rigid or too easily molded. If either is the case, the individual fails at preserving their beliefs through difficult bouts of dialectic and loses their candidacy for guardianship. Through this discussion, we also saw the complexity of the interweaving of what spirit and reason bring to a virtuous action, where I showed the dependency is not just one way, but reason also depends on spirit. The ideal guardians thus have the right combination of spirited traits and rational development.

This project, I think, has opened up broader avenues for thinking about Platonic moral psychology in terms of the relationships among different motivations for action. Many questions too that are an extension of this project remain unanswered, such as whether other dialogues with an *elenchus* fit this model of dependency, or how appetitive motivations fit into this picture, or whether there are genuine cases of virtuous action that involve no spirited motivation. Whether Plato's views may have changed dialogue to dialogue and how exactly his views may have evolved has also not been explored here. But I think it has proven fruitful to look at what later dialogues say and seek parallels in earlier dialogues. It has also been very illuminating for how we can think of one class of motivations, and I am sure such a method, as employed here, may provide interesting results for those who are curious about other aspects of Plato's philosophy, or are looking to draw out a more developmentalist account of his views.

## Bibliography

- Adam, J., & Rees, D. (1963). *The Republic of Plato*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. (1984). (H. Rackham, trans. & J. Bywater ed.). Oxford, Clarendon Press.  
1894. (Original work written ca. 340 BCE)
- Bobonich, C. (2008). *Plato's utopia recast: His later ethics and politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Brennan, T. (2014). The nature of the spirited part of the soul and its object. In R. Barney, T. Brennan, & C. Brittain (Eds.), *Plato and the divided self* (102–127). Cambridge University Press.
- Brickhouse, T. C., & Smith, N. D. (2010). *Socratic moral psychology*. Cambridge University Press.  
— (2015). Socrates on the Emotions. *Plato Journal*, 15, 9–28.
- Burkert, W. (2012). *Greek religion: Archaic and classical*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Burnyeat, M. (2005). The Impiety of Socrates. In R. Kamtekar (Ed.), *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito* (150–162). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Cairns, D. L. (1993). *Aidōs: The psychology and ethics of honour and shame in ancient Greek literature*. Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press.
- Cartledge, P. (2009). *Ancient Greek political thought in practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Destrée, P. (2019) Plato on pleasures from comedy: *Philebus* 47d–50e in Dimas, P., Jones, R. E., & G. R. Lear, (Eds.). *Plato's Philebus: A philosophical discussion* (First edition). Oxford University Press, 163-183.
- Devereux, D. (1995). Socrates' Kantian conception of virtue. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 33(3), 381–408.
- Greene, J. D. et al. (2009). Pushing moral buttons: The interaction between personal force and intention in moral judgment. *Cognition*, [s. l.], v. 111, n. 3, 364–371.
- Havelock, E. A. (1978). *The Greek concept of justice: From its shadow in Homer to its substance in Plato*. Harvard University Press.

- Hesiod. *Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle, Homeric*. Trans. E. White. (1914). H G. Loeb Classical Library  
Volume 57. London: William Heinemann. (Original work published ca. 750-650 BCE)
- Kamtekar, R. (2017). *Plato's moral psychology: Intellectualism, the divided soul, and the desire for good*  
(First edition). Oxford University Press.
- Kraut, R. (1984). *Socrates and the state*. Princeton University Press.
- Meyer, S. S. (2012). Pleasure, pain, and "anticipation" in *Laws I* in Patterson et al., (eds.) *Presocratics and Plato*, pp. 311-28.  
— (2017). *Plato: Laws 1 and 2*. Oxford.
- Nightingale, A. (1999). Plato's law code in context: Rule by written law in Athens and Magnesia. *The Classical Quarterly*, 49(1), 100–122.
- Penner, T. 1992. What Laches and Nicias miss – and whether Socrates thinks courage is merely a part of virtue. *Ancient Philosophy*, 12: 1–27.
- Plato. (1997). (Cooper, J. M., & Hutchinson, D. S., ed.). *Plato complete works*. Hackett Publishing Company Inc.
- Plato. *Crito*. (1997). (G.M.A. Grube, trans.). *Plato complete works*. Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 7-48. (Original work published ca. 385-378 BCE)
- Plato. *Laches*. (1997). (R.K. Sprague, trans.). *Plato complete works*. Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 664-686. (Original work published ca. 385-378 BCE)
- Plato. *Lysis*. (1997). (S. Lombardo, trans.). *Plato complete works*. Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 687-707. (Original work published ca. 385-378 BCE)
- Plato. *Laws*. (T. Griffith, trans. & M. Schofield, ed.). (2016). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published ca. 385-378 BCE)
- Plato. *Phaedrus*. (1997). (A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff, trans. & J.M. Cooper, ed.). *Plato Complete Works*. Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 506-556. (Original work published ca. 385-378 BCE)

- Plato. *Platonis Opera*. (1903). (J. Burnet, ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Plato. *Protagoras*. (1997). (S. Lombardo and K. Bell, trans.). *Plato Complete Works*. Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 746-790. (Original work published ca. 385-378 BCE)
- Plato. *Republic*. (1992). (G.M.A. Grube, trans.). Hackett Publishing Company Inc.
- Plato. *Sophist*. (1997). (N. P. White, trans.). *Plato Complete Works*. Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 235-293. (Original work published ca. 385-378 BCE)
- Plato. *Symposium*. (2008). (R. Waterfield, trans.). Oxford University Press. (Original work published ca. 385-378 BCE)
- Plato. *Timaeus*. (2016). (P. Kalkavage, trans.). 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Hackett Publishing Company Inc. (Original work published ca. 385-378 BCE)
- Plutarch. (1914). *Plutarch lives, Theseus and Romulus. Lycurgus and Numa. Solon and Publicola*. (B. Perrin, trans.). Harvard University Press. (Original work published ca. 200 AD)
- Reshotko, N. (2006). *Socratic virtue: Making the best of the neither-good-nor-bad*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rudebusch, G. (2017). The unity of virtue, ambiguity, and Socrates' higher purpose. *Ancient Philosophy*, 37(2), 333–346.
- Saunders, T. J. (1962). The structure of the soul and the state in Plato's *Laws*. *Eranos* 60, 37–55.
- Singpurwalla, R. (2013). Why spirit is the natural ally of reason: Spirit, reason, and the fine in Plato's *Republic*. *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 44, 41-66.
- (2006). Reasoning with the Irrational: Moral Psychology in the *Protagoras*. *Ancient Philosophy* 26(2): 243–58.
- Smith, N. D. (2020). Socrates's agonistic use of shame. In *Athletics, Gymnastics, and Agon in Plato*, 157–171.
- Towle, J. A. (1889). *Commentary on Plato: Protagoras*. Ginn & Company. Boston and London.

Vlastos, G. (1993). The Socratic elenchus: Method is all. *Socratic Studies*, 1–38.

Wilburn, J. (2021). *The political soul Plato on thumos, spirited motivation, and the city*. Oxford University Press.

— (2012). Akrasia and self-rule in Plato's *Laws*. In B. Inwood (Ed.), *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, Volume 43*: 24–53.

Woodruff, P. B. (2000). Socrates and the irrational. In N. D. Smith and P. B. Woodruff (Eds). *Reason and Religion in Socratic Philosophy*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 130–50.