THE VIRTUES OF SHAME:

ARISTOTLE ON THE POSITIVE ROLE OF SHAME IN MORAL DEVELOPMENT

by

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The Virtues of Shame: Aristotle on the Positive Role of Shame in Moral Development

Aristotle famously claims that we become virtuous by performing virtuous actions. He also recognizes the potential puzzle this claim gives rise to: How can we perform virtuous actions unless we are already virtuous? After all, virtuous actions require virtuous motives – they are performed “for the sake of the noble” – and virtuous motives characteristically belong to virtuous people. Many modern commentators presume that Aristotle’s solution rests upon characterizing the actions of learners as actions that are the right things to do in the circumstances but are not done with virtuous motivation. But this leaves Aristotle with the problem of bridging what I call “the moral upbringing gap” – i.e. the gap between the motivationally-neutral actions of learners and the dispositions to act reliably from a virtuous motive that such actions are supposed to produce. This gap emerges because, as I explain in Chapter One, the weaker the link between the way in which the actions of learners are performed and the way in which virtuous actions are done by virtuous agents, the more difficult it will be to understand how the repeated performance of the learners’ actions produce genuinely virtuous dispositions.

In Chapters Two and Three, I seek to shed light on what is required to bridge the moral upbringing gap by examining the relationship between several kinds of apparently virtuous actions and the corresponding virtuous dispositions. By examining what is lacking
in each case of pseudo-courage discussed in NE 3.8, I construct an account of what Aristotle thinks the actions of learners must be like if these actions are to lead to genuine courage. I conclude that such actions must be performed from a virtuous motive, whose presence however neither requires nor guarantees that the agent is already virtuous. Shame is thus revealed as crucial to solving our initial puzzle about moral development.

In Chapter Four I offer a criticism of the most frequently adopted explanation of the role of shame in moral upbringing, the pleasure-based approach, which understands shame in terms of enjoyment of the noble and makes pleasure the guiding mechanism for virtue acquisition: Virtuous actions become desirable for the learners because the learners come to take pleasure in such actions. Against this view, I argue that Aristotle regards taking pleasure in virtuous actions as a consequence, and not the source, of love for noble actions.

The crucial role played by shame is further defended in Chapter Five, where I argue that Aristotle sees shame not as mere fear of external disapproval (as in the traditional view), nor as mere tendency to find pleasure in the noble (as in modern pleasure-based interpretations), but as genuine love of noble things and hatred of shameful ones. Understood this way, shame provides learners with the sort of motivation that allows them to perform genuinely virtuous actions before they have acquired practical wisdom and the stable dispositions characteristic of virtuous agents. Shame thus bridges the “moral upbringing gap” by providing the kind of motivation that, when entrenched by understanding, constitutes moral virtue.
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INTRODUCTION

1. The Crucial Role of Shame in Aristotelian Moral Development

The central topic of the present dissertation is the role of shame in Aristotle’s account of moral development in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.\(^1\) In his discussion of moral development, Aristotle clearly establishes a connection between the practices of the not-yet-virtuous learners and those practices grounded in virtuous dispositions of character. However, he does not spell out the details of the process of moral development and leaves for the reader the task of determining the nature of the actions that learners perform during the course of their habituation in virtue — i.e. the nature of the practices that lead learners to become virtuous agents. The main aim of this thesis is to show that (and how) shame plays a crucial role in this process as the moral emotion that provides continuity between the actions of the learners of virtue and the corresponding dispositions that those actions eventually yield.

By offering a new interpretation of the nature of shame as a proto-virtuous emotion that orients learners towards the noble and thus makes them prone to perform virtuous actions in the right spirit, I show that shame is a key factor in moral upbringing. My view is that shame, understood not as mere fear of external disapproval, nor as mere tendency to find pleasure in the noble, but as an emotion responsive to praise and blame and consequently to considerations about the nobility and shamefulness of one’s own actions and one’s character, provides learners with the beginnings of motivation-towards-the-noble

\(^1\) Although Aristotle talks about moral development in other works, most notably in *Eudemian Ethics (EE)* and in *Politics*, I focus here on the discussion from *Nicomachean Ethics*, since the issue is already sufficiently complex. I do however make occasional use of passages from other works in cases where they might prove helpful to illuminate the arguments and claims that we find in the *NE*, but I am careful not to rest the strength of my arguments upon what Aristotle says in other places.

For insightful considerations about differences between the *EE* and the *NE* in relation to the problem of the gap in moral upbringing that is at the center of our discussion, see London (2001: 579-582). London argues that the differences in the treatment of the puzzle in each of these treatises suffices to support the claim that the *EE* should be considered an earlier work, since the *NE’s* discussion of the puzzle clarifies and responds to problems to which the *EE* offers no solution.
and engagement in practical thinking. For this reason, those who obey their sense of shame are able to perform virtuous actions in a way that strengthens and refines their orientation towards the noble and is therefore conducive to virtue.

2. Antecedents

Since the early 1980’s there have been numerous attempts to explain Aristotle’s account of moral upbringing and to determine the steps that, according to Aristotle, lead towards the acquisition of virtue.\(^2\) Thanks to Myles Burnyeat’s (1980) seminal paper, much attention has been given to Aristotle’s claim from \textit{NE} 2.1 that \textit{practice} and not \textit{teaching} generates character virtue, and to details about the relations between the cognitive and emotional factors that intervene in moral upbringing in Aristotle’s account.\(^3\)

Burnyeat famously underlines that the most peculiar feature of the Aristotelian account of ethical upbringing is precisely that Aristotle, unlike Socrates, allows non-rational factors to occupy a preferential place in moral development. This overturning of the Socratic intellectualistic model means, Burnyeat argues, that Aristotle exemplarily achieves a “grasp of the truth that morality comes in a sequence of stages with both cognitive and emotional dimensions” (70-71). In Burnyeat’s reading, Aristotle’s learners of virtue find themselves in an \textit{intermediate stage} in which both rational and non-rational factors play an important role.

An important element in Burnyeat’s approach to Aristotle’s views on moral development is the basic rule that there must be an intimate dependence between Aristotle’s understanding of the process of acquisition of virtue and his conception of virtue — or as Nancy Sherman (1989) later puts it, that “if full virtue is to meet certain conditions, then this

\(^2\) See e.g. Burnyeat (1980); Sorabji (1980); Hursthouse (1988); Sherman (1989: ch.5) and (1996); Broadie (1991: 72-109); Kranz (1998); McDowell (1996a); Vasiliou (1996) and (2007); Curzer (2002); Kristjansson (2006).

\(^3\) McDowell’s ‘Virtue and Reason’ (1979) and ‘The Role of \textit{Eudaimonia} in Aristotle’s Ethics’ (1980) are also central pieces for this shift in the approach to Aristotle’s views on moral development.
must be reflected in the educational process”.

This *continuity principle*, expressed by Aristotle in *NE* 2.3, 1105a5-16 as “the actions from which [virtue] arose are those in which [virtue] actualizes itself” [ἐξ ὧν ἐγένετο, περὶ τὰ ῥᾳ καὶ ἐνεργεῖ], is also the guiding thought of the line of argument that I elaborate in the present work.

One of the fortunate consequences of Burnyeat’s (1980) intervention, supported by the works of Sorabji (1980) and Sherman (1989), has been the total abandonment of the old “*mechanical theory*” of habituation in which learning-by-doing is understood as the mechanical repetition of similar actions. Contemporary interpretations take into account the fact that those practices which lead towards the acquisition of virtue are not mere drills but engage the learners at a cognitive level. A second auspicious consequence of Burnyeat’s intervention in the debate has been a focus on the intentional character of emotions, and on the fact that for Aristotle emotions involve cognition and are at least partly constituted by beliefs. These two changes indicate a higher awareness of the intimate relations between the emotional and the cognitive in the process of moral development.

However, although the emotional dimension of moral development has been acknowledged as relevant, it has nevertheless received fairly scant attention. On most

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4 Sherman (1989: 159); see also Burnyeat (1980: 69).

5 Early defenders of this mechanical theory are Grant (1885); Stewart (1892); Joachim (1951); also Engberg-Pedersen (1983). See Sherman (1989: Chapter 5, §1, 157-159), quoted in note 20 below, for a direct criticism of the view that habituation is a mechanical process. Other direct criticisms of the mechanical view can be found in Hardie (1968: 104); Sorabji (1980: 206); Cooper (1986: 8); Hursthouse (1988: 210-211); Broadie (1991: 109); and Vasiliou (1996: 779-780, and 2007: 42).


7 See, e.g. Sherman’s (1989) comments on what she calls Aristotle’s “intentional theory of emotion”:

Within Aristotle’s analysis, however, beliefs, perceptions, and *phantasias* or imaginings are not merely causes of emotion, but partial constituents. The definition of anger illustrates this. ‘Anger is a desire [ορεξία] accompanied by pain towards the revenge of what one regards as a slight [πρόωνοιν ολιγορια] towards oneself or one’s friends that is unwarranted’ (R. 1378a30-2). Here it is clear that while emotions are expressed as feelings involving pleasure or pain, these feelings are not identifiable independent of their relation to specific evaluations or beliefs constitutive of the emotion. (169-170).
occasions, when the issue does arise it is either raised by those commentators who defend
the view that the process of habituation is some sort of “taming of the emotions”; or it
comes up in discussions in which emotions are indirectly mentioned in relation to the role of
pleasure and pain in moral development. Sherman (1989) is a remarkable attempt to take
seriously the role of emotions in moral development; however, since the main goal of her
project is to argue for a conception of habituation as “reflective and critical” (160), her focus
is on “how we refine the discriminatory capacities included in the emotions” (ibid.).

My present aim is to turn our attention to a different aspect of the emotional
dimension of moral development by offering an account of the role of shame as the emotion
that provides the minimal starting points that make moral progress possible. I will argue that
the sense of shame enables learners to care about the noble and the base as the characteristic
objects of praise and blame. The responsiveness of the sense of shame to praise and blame
makes obedience to shame in learners an ideal mediator in the process of initiation to the
sphere of the practical, where nobility and shamefulness are central.

In my opinion, shame, which was considered to be a fundamental civic virtue in the
tradition from Homer to Plato,\textsuperscript{8} does not lose its force and relevance in the works of
Aristotle. Although Aristotle, as Plato also did, partly breaks with the tradition that precedes
him by giving shame a less important role in the life of the virtuous person, his strategy is —
I think — to transfer the central role of shame from the virtuous life to earlier stages in
moral development, as a requirement for the acquisition of mature virtue.\textsuperscript{9} In this way,

\textsuperscript{8} For a detailed and insightful study of the role of \textit{aidos} in Greek morality from Homer to Plato and Aristotle
see Cairns (1993).

\textsuperscript{9} Thus, views like that of Irwin (1999), who sees in the fact that Aristotle denies to shame the condition of
being a virtue a sign that he “rejects a long Greek tradition” (347) are, in my opinion, exaggerated. In my view,
on the contrary, Aristotle does not reject the long tradition that considers shame a central element in the
regulation of moral conduct, but he merely refines this view by limiting the positive role of shame to the sphere
of moral development.
shame does not become less important in Aristotle’s work than it was in the work of his predecessors; on the contrary, in Aristotle shame becomes an indispensable notion in the explanation of how the acquisition of full virtue is possible.

Some contemporary commentators overlook the positive role of shame in moral development because they focus on a notion of shame as a mere desire for recognition and fear of disgrace; a desire in no way related to the sort of orientation towards the noble that Aristotle takes to be characteristic of a virtuous agent. These commentators tend to see shame’s dependence on the opinion of others as a reason to reject its role in the development of an autonomous moral agent. ¹⁰

There are, however, commentators who acknowledge the positive role of shame in moral development. ¹¹ The present study is greatly indebted to their views, although there are substantial points of disagreement that will be revealed in the course of our discussion.

A notable approach to the role of shame in Aristotle’s view is that taken by Burnyeat (1980), who holds that Aristotle sees shame as “the semi-virtue of the learner” (78) and argues that shame is the hinge upon which the process of moral upbringing pivots (78-79). Burnyeat understands shame as an emotion that allows learners to detect and enjoy a new kind of pleasure related to the noble, and thus helps learners to shift their attention from appetitive pleasures to the pleasures of noble activities. Although this interpretation points in the right direction by presenting shame as an intermediate condition that provides learners with a new access to moral value, I will argue (in Chapter 4, Section 3) that it fails to capture

¹⁰ Some representative examples of this approach are Irwin (1999), Broadie (1993), Taylor (2006). Two excellent discussions of this modern prejudice about shame as an obstacle to autonomy are Williams (1993: esp. ch. 4) and Calhoun (2002). See Chapter 3, Section 2 for a detailed discussion of this issue.

¹¹ This is particularly the case since Burnyeat (1980). Other authors who concede an important place to shame in their account of Aristotle’s theory of moral development are: Cairns (1993), Curzer (2002: esp. 425), and Grönroos (2007: 265-6).
the nature of shame as Aristotle presents it by giving an excessive weight to its relation to pleasure.

A second direct defense of the relevance of shame in moral development is found in Cairns (1993). Cairns holds, correctly I think, that shame plays a positive role in moral development because it can “give one a genuine desire to do what is kalon and avoid what is aischron” and “enable one to act, in some sense, ‘for the sake of the noble’” (425). I greatly sympathize with his characterization of shame as responsive to the noble and the shameful as such, and with his claim that this responsiveness turns shame into “an indispensable ally in the process of moral development” (425-428). However, I think that Cairns fails to fully grasp the extent to which Aristotle’s project depends on the fact that shame is a praiseworthy emotion and not a virtue. Thus, while Cairns sees as a failure Aristotle’s reluctance to concede to shame the status of disposition (hexis), I think that shame can perform a central role in moral development mainly because it is an emotion only appropriate in young people and not a disposition. (See esp. Chapter 5, Section 3.)

Finally, some authors like Grönroos (2007), following Cooper’s (1996) views on thumos, conceive shame as an emotion inseparably linked to thumos and associated with the thumoeidetic desires, and they propose that thumos is the emotion that provides the motivational starting point for moral progress. As we will see (in Section 4 of Chapter 2), although Cooper’s project is not unattractive in so far as it provides a coherent account of moral development without gaps, and it reinforces the idea of a strong continuity between Aristotle and Plato, the textual evidence does not allow us to attribute such a view to Aristotle.

In summary, I propose in this dissertation the view that shame plays a central role in the process of moral development. This stance finds itself in harmony with the general view
held by those authors who contend that obedience to one’s sense of shame allows learners to make progress towards virtue. Where my analysis differs, however, is in regard to details concerning the relationship of shame with pleasure and pain, the nature of shame as a peculiar emotion, and the relationship of shame with virtue and the noble.

3. The Chapters

In order to provide the reader with a more structured view of the dissertation, I present here a summary of each chapter.

Chapter 1

This chapter examines Aristotle’s account of moral development as learning-by-doing in NE 2.1-4, and raises some questions concerning the requirements that the practices of the learners of virtue should fulfill if they are to be conducive to the formation of virtuous dispositions.

According to the account of habituation in NE 2.1, learners become virtuous by performing virtuous actions — what I shall call “the learning-by-doing thesis”. Some opponents find this view puzzling because it assumes that not-yet-virtuous learners can perform virtuous actions before they are virtuous; however, Aristotle argues in NE 2.4 that there is nothing implausible about the idea that learners are able to perform virtuous actions. Chapters NE 2.1-4, unfortunately, do not give an obvious explanation of how Aristotle thinks that this is possible, and thus we are left with the task of interpreting Aristotle’s solution to the puzzle.

Insofar as learners do not act from virtue, they can only perform virtuous actions in a way that is different from the way in which virtuous agents act, which Aristotle calls virtuously-performed virtuous actions, while at the same time there should be continuity
between the way in which learners perform their actions and the way in which virtuous agents act.

In the most common modern interpretations, Aristotle’s solution to the puzzle is that learners perform actions that resemble those of virtuous people in that they are the right things to do in the circumstances, although they are not done for virtuous motives, i.e. learners do not need to do the relevant actions on account of their nobility. I show that this ‘motivationally-neutral view’ leaves open ‘the problem of the gap in moral upbringing’, i.e. the problem of providing a sufficient link between the actions of the learners and the dispositions that those actions are expected to produce.

As an alternative, I propose a view inspired by Aristotle’s parallel discussion of the learning-by-doing thesis in *Metaphysics* 9.8. Here I argue that, if the actions of the learners are to be conducive to virtue, they should partly fulfill the requirements for virtuously-performed virtuous actions concerning knowledge, motivation and stability.

*Chapter 2*

In this chapter I offer a brief analysis of the possible alternative solutions to bridge the moral upbringing gap suggested by Aristotle’s discussion of the different kinds of pseudo-courage in *NE* 3.8. Aristotle presents there several different ways in which someone can perform courageous actions (or actions that resemble courageous actions) without being courageous, and he discusses these cases as different kinds of “pseudo-courage”: shame-courage, fear-of-punishment courage, experience-courage, *thumos*-courage, hope-courage, and ignorance-courage. I examine each of these cases with the aim of finding out whether any of the sorts of actions performed by the different pseudo-courageous types is a good model for the actions that the learners of virtue should perform in order to become virtuous. At the same
time, by seeing what goes wrong in each of the different cases of pseudo-courage, we will gain a clearer idea of the conditions that the learners must fulfill for their actions to qualify as conducive to the acquisition of virtuous dispositions.

This analysis of NE 3.8 will reveal that the reason why most of the cases of pseudo-courage do not offer reliable models for moral upbringing is that the agents fail to fulfill minimal conditions regarding knowledge or motivation. This result offers further evidence in support of my reservations against the motivationally-neutral view. The examples presented by Aristotle confirm that actions that are externally similar to virtuous actions but are performed in order to avoid pain, or for the sake of rewards, or with no particular goal, are unable to produce the corresponding virtuous dispositions.

In contrast, as I argue in the next chapter, the variety of pseudo-courage based on shame emerges as the most promising of all possible candidates to bridge the moral upbringing gap.

Chapter 3

This chapter is devoted to a detailed discussion of shame-courage in NE 3.8. In a very common interpretation of this passage, commentators fall prey to a modern prejudice against shame and tend to see shame-courage as a heteronomous source of motivation (i.e. a mere concern with how others perceive us), which is therefore unable to provide a good basis for virtuous action performed for the sake of the noble. However, as I argue, this interpretation of shame as a mere concern with external recognition comes as a result of overlooking the connections made by Aristotle between shame and virtue and the noble. Once these connections are restored and shame is understood as involving a genuine concern with one’s own virtue and the nobility of one’s actions, we will be able to establish
that learners who obey their sense of shame are ultimately acting for the sake of the noble in their actions.

I show that commentators tend to neglect the positive role of shame in moral progress due to a failure to make (and use) the distinction, present in Aristotle, between two kinds of shame: (a) shame as mere love of honor and mere fear of disapproval, and (b) shame as love of the praiseworthy and hatred of the shameful. My analysis of the notion of honor and its relation to the social practices of praise and blame will reveal that love of honor is intimately bound up with the love of the noble, and that honor-lovers aim ultimately at virtue.

Thus, I show that, understood in this light, shame can play a relevant role in moral development. Learners with shame can perform actions that are not only externally indistinguishable from those performed by virtuous people, but that are also ultimately oriented towards the same noble goals. They therefore fulfill at least partially the second requirement for virtuously performed virtuous action, and for this reason their actions constitute the right kind of practice towards the acquisition of virtue.

Chapter 4

In this chapter I offer a criticism of the most frequently adopted explanation of the role of shame in moral upbringing, namely the pleasure-based approach, which makes pleasure the guiding mechanism for virtue acquisition. I present two models of a pleasure-based interpretation of Aristotle’s account of moral upbringing, and I offer reasons to avoid reading Aristotle’s view under those terms.

The whole chapter can be seen as an attempt to interpret in non-hedonistic terms what Aristotle means when he claims that “the good upbringing” [ hann ὁρθὴ παιδεία], as Plato says, teaches us to “delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought” (NE 2.3).
First, I discuss what I call “the brute conditioning view”, according to which Aristotle conceives the good upbringing as a conditioning process in which pleasure and distress become attached to the right kinds of objects — namely to noble objects and activities — in a behavioristic manner. Second, I discuss what I call “the refined pleasure-based view” which holds that for Aristotle the good upbringing consists mainly and primarily in learning to enjoy properly a new sort of pleasure that arises from noble objects and actions.

Although it is true that Aristotle says that the good upbringing consists in learning to enjoy properly noble objects and actions, I argue that we should not take the hedonic factor of upbringing as the primary one. My position is greatly influenced by Sarah Broadie’s (1991) criticism of Burnyeat (1980) on this point. In this chapter I offer a modified version of Broadie’s objection and reveal the incompatibility of Burnyeat’s view with Aristotle’s general conception of the relationship between pleasures and virtuous activities.

In concluding this chapter I suggest an alternative to Burnyeat’s proposal. In my view the pleasures that learners take in virtuous activities are considered to be signs that confirm that learners are on the right track, but they are not the goal that learners pursue when they engage in such activities.

Chapter 5

In the final chapter I present an alternative interpretation of the sense of shame in Aristotle as a genuine love of noble things and hatred of shameful ones that includes both a grasp of the noble and a certain tendency (not yet a stable disposition) to act for the sake of noble objects. This grasp of and orientation towards the noble is precisely what allows those with a sense of shame to be able to perform genuinely virtuous actions.

I offer first a general study of the notion of shame in NE 4.9 and 10.9. The main goal of this analysis is to support the view that shame is the best possible candidate to solve
the moral upbringing gap. Particularly relevant to this aim is the discussion of Aristotle’s claim in NE 10.9 that shame is the characteristic emotion of those who have started making some progress towards the possession of virtue. I show here why Aristotle holds that shame provides the learners of virtue with both the relevant cognitive capacity and the required motivation to perform the kinds of actions that are productive of virtue.

An analysis of the meaning and the implications of this claim will reveal that agents with a sense of shame have already a grasp of the noble that allows them to produce value judgments, while they also have an attachment to the noble and repulsion for the shameful that provides the right kind of motivation that allows learners to engage in virtuous activity in a way that is conducive to virtue.

Thus, my interpretation avoids the problems which the currently dominant interpretation of Aristotle’s account of moral development incurs, by providing a genuinely intermediate place for the learners of virtue with respect to both the cognitive and emotional dimensions of moral development.
CH. 1. ARISTOTELE ON LEARNING-BY-DOING IN MORAL UPBRINGING

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter I present a preliminary discussion of the meaning of Aristotle’s thesis in NE 2.1 that learners acquire virtue by performing virtuous actions and I offer a first approach to the question about the requirements that learners have to fulfill if their practices are to be conducive to virtue. The focus of the discussion is Aristotle’s solution in NE 2.4 to a potential puzzle the “learning-by-doing thesis” gives rise to: How can learners perform virtuous actions unless they are already virtuous? The discussion of Aristotle’s solution to this “priority puzzle” will provide us with a solid framework to tackle the broader question about the conditions of a good upbringing.

I start by presenting in Section 1 the learning-by-doing thesis and the main lines of the puzzle concerning the priority of virtuous actions over virtuous dispositions that it generates. In Section 2, I present evidence that Aristotle establishes the need for *continuity* between the actions of the learners and the dispositions that those actions are expected to produce. Then, I tackle in Section 3 the relevant details of Aristotle’s solution through a preliminary analysis of the pertinent passages of NE 2.4. This analysis will reveal an ambiguity in the way in which Aristotle characterizes the actions of the learners of virtue, leading us into a discussion of possible interpretations.

In Sections 4 and 5 I offer an account and criticism of the most common approach to these passages, “the *motivationally-neutral account*”. Commentators presume that Aristotle’s solution to the priority puzzle rests upon accepting that although the actions of the learners are virtuous insofar as they are the right things to do in the circumstances, the learners’ actions are not performed from virtuous motives — or in Aristotelian terms, they are not
performed “for the sake of the noble”. My central objection to this view is that it generates a gap between the actions of the learners of virtue and the virtuous dispositions that these actions are expected to produce, and consequently it is unable to provide a satisfactory explanation of the learner’s transformation into a virtuous person.

As a corrective to this line of interpretation, in Section 6 I lay out an alternative proposal that I believe solves the problem of the gap by fleshing out Aristotle’s understanding of moral development as a continuous process. By appealing to a parallel text from Metaphysics 9.8, I show that it is possible to provide an alternative interpretation of Aristotle’s account of moral development that instead of generating a gap between the actions of the learners and the dispositions that they produce, strengthens the idea that there is a continuity between them.

To conclude, Section 7 suggests that any attempt to respond to the priority puzzle without generating the problem of the gap should offer an account of the general requirements that the actions of the learners must fulfill in order to produce the corresponding virtues. From this discussion, I draw some guidelines about how we should proceed into upcoming chapters as we begin to answer to our guiding question about the conditions and aims of the good upbringing.
1. The Learning-By-Doing Thesis and the Priority Puzzle

In *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1, Aristotle presents and defends “the learning-by-doing thesis”, according to which learners of virtue become just, temperate, and otherwise virtuous by performing the kinds of actions that are characteristic of virtuous people, in the same way that learners of a craft become experts by performing the kinds of actions that are characteristic of the experts in that craft:

**[T1a]** *NE* 2.1, 1103a32-b2:

> For the things we have to learn before we can do, we learn by doing, e.g. people become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we come to be just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, courageous by doing courageous actions.\(^{12}\)

> α γὰρ δεῖ μαθόντας ποιεῖν, ταῦτα ποιοῦντες μανθάνομεν, οἶον οἰκοδομοῦντες οἰκοδομοῦνται καὶ κιθαρίζοντες κιθαρίζονται· οὔτω δὲ καὶ τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντες δίκαιοι γίνομεθα, τὰ δέ σωφρονὰ σώφρονες, τὰ δ' ἀνδρεία ἀνδρεῖοι.

By suggesting that the learners perform virtuous actions *before* they have the corresponding virtues, this thesis gives rise to a familiar objection concerning the priority between virtuous actions and virtuous dispositions:

**[T1b]** *NE* 2.4, 1105a17-21:

> The question might be asked, [1] what we mean by saying that we must become just by doing just actions, and temperate by doing temperate actions; for [2] if people do what is just and what is temperate, they are already just and temperate, exactly as, if they do what is grammatical or musical, they are grammarians and musicians.

> Ἀπορήσειε δὲ ἃν τίς πῶς λέγομεν ὅτι δὲ τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντας δικαίους γίνεσθαι, τὰ δὲ σωφρόνα σωφρόνες· εἰ γὰρ πράττουσι τὰ δίκαια καὶ σωφρόνα, ἂν εἰσὶ δίκαιοι καὶ σωφρόνες, ὃσπερ εἰ τὰ γραμματικά καὶ τὰ μουσικά, γραμματικοὶ καὶ μουσικοὶ.

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\(^{12}\) Translations of the text of *NE* are from Ross (1984), with some revisions.
The objection, which I shall call here “the priority puzzle”, is that the learning-by-doing thesis clashes with the common assumption that if someone performs a virtuous action, then that person must already be virtuous: How can learners perform virtuous actions unless they “are already” [ἡδὴ εἰσί] virtuous? In other words, how is learning-by-doing possible if being virtuous, i.e. having virtuous dispositions, must be prior to doing virtuous actions?

Although this is one of the well-known sophistical quibbles about learning, Aristotle takes it seriously here. And, indeed, the objection does not sound at all unreasonable if we see it in the light of Aristotle’s own claims (1) that virtuous actions are performed “for the sake of the noble” [τοῦ καλοῦ ἔνεκα]14, and (2) that acting for the sake of the noble characteristically belongs to virtuous people.15

In his response in NE 2.4, Aristotle suggests that the puzzle is solved when we understand correctly the conditions for “doing virtuous actions” [τὰ δίκαια/σωφρονα/etc. πράττοντας]. Aristotle’s solution is to distinguish between (a)
performing virtuous actions and (b) performing virtuous actions \textit{virtuously}, which requires the agent to fulfill three further conditions concerning knowledge, motivation and stability.\footnote{This distinction is expressed by Aristotle by (a) using the preposition \textit{kata} to describe the first sort of virtuous actions as actions “\textit{in accordance with the virtues}” [\textit{kata} \textit{ta} \textit{s} \textit{Arete}a] and (b) using an adverbial form for what I call here actions performed “\textit{virtuously}”: \textit{dikaios}, \textit{sofros}, etc. (See \textit{NE} 1105a26-b4, cited in \textit{T1f} below.) The way of performing virtuous actions that Aristotle labels with the adverbial expression “\textit{virtuously}” is sometimes in the literature referred to as performing actions “\textit{from virtue}” (as opposed to performing actions “merely in accordance with virtue”). See for example Sherman (1988: 98); Broadie (1991: 83; Audi (1995: esp. 449-450). I try to avoid using these terms in this initial characterization because they bring some Kantian connotations that might obscure the discussion. For a clear illustration of this point see Audi (1995): “Aristotle distinguishes between acting from virtue and acting merely in accordance with it. This wording, though true to Aristotle, recalls Kant’s distinction between acting from duty and merely acting in conformity with it”. (449-450) Audi adds in note 1 (449): “This is not exactly his wording, but the distinction seems clearly implied in his contrast between merely doing just and temperate deeds and doing them in the “way in which just and temperate people do them”. See \textit{NE} 1105a25-1105b15.”}

The main point of Aristotle’s response is, then, that the triple requirement of knowledge, motivation and stability is not a necessary condition for actions to be virtuous, but for actions to be performed virtuously. Learners, therefore, can perform virtuous actions even if they do not fulfill the triple requirement.

However, although it is clear that these are the main lines of Aristotle’s response, the precise details of this solution are far from obvious. Concretely, although it is clear that Aristotle conceives the virtuous actions performed \textit{in accordance with virtue but not virtuously} as requiring \textit{the agent} to fulfill fewer (or weaker) conditions than they are required to fulfill if they are to perform virtuous actions \textit{virtuously}, it is not clear which of the conditions should be weakened or to what degree if the actions are to be conducive to the acquisition of virtue. The aim of the present chapter is to shed some light on this issue.

Many modern commentators take Aristotle to solve the priority puzzle by accepting that while virtuous people perform virtuous actions from virtuous motives, learners perform temperate actions, just actions, etc. without acting from virtuous motives.\footnote{The characterization of the actions of the learners as lacking virtuous motivation is exemplified by Ross’ (1959) interpretation of the distinction in \textit{NE} 2.4 as a distinction between (a) doing “the right thing” in the circumstances, and (b) doing it “from a good motive” (194); in the same vein, Broadie’s (1991) explanation of...} In other words,
according to this “motivationally-neutral conception of the learners’ actions”, learners of virtue perform actions that are the right responses under the circumstances, i.e. actions that are externally indistinguishable from those that a virtuous agent would perform in the same situation, but since learners are not yet virtuous agents, their actions necessarily lack virtuous motivation. What is supposed to distinguish the virtuous actions of the learners from those of virtuous agents in this interpretation is not only the fact that learners do not have a stable virtuous disposition of character, but also the fact that their actions are not performed “for the sake of the noble”.

My aim here is to challenge the foregoing solution to the priority puzzle by arguing that this motivationally-neutral conception of the learners’ actions is vulnerable to an objection similar to a now widely-accepted objection to the old “mechanical theory” of...

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NE 2.4 pivots upon the distinction between “doing what in fact is right” and “doing it in the right spirit” (88). A recent defense of this interpretation can be found in Vasiliou (2007):

> What Aristotle needs, however, to solve the puzzle of II.4 is not only a separation between virtuous action and motive but also the ability to describe the virtuous action, the action to be done, without using ethical terms. This is what makes it possible for the virtuous and non-virtuous agent to, in one ordinary sense of the expression, do the same action – for example, to share half their sandwich, even though it will only be a truly virtuous action if the agent is motivated in the appropriate way. (53, note 22; my emphasis)

This motivationally-neutral conception of the learners’ actions is also held, among others, by Hardie (1968); Williams (1995); Irwin (1999); Taylor (2006). The details of this view and the relevant references are presented in Section 4 of this Chapter.

Sherman (1989) expresses her view initially in a way that does not force us to take the actions of the learners as motivationally-neutral:

> His solution in Book II is precisely to differentiate habituating actions from actualizations. Both actions will concern the same sorts of circumstances and external requirements (1104a28-b5), but the actions of the novice will lack the full structure of motives and reasons characteristic of the person who already has a stable character (1105a29-35). (187)

However, the fact that Sherman acknowledges that there is not full continuity between the motives of learners and those of virtuous people is an indication that she adopts the motivationally-neutral view (see 1989: 189, quoted in note 34 below).

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18 The meaning of Aristotle’s claim that virtuous actions are done “for the sake of the noble” is controversial. Here I take it that when commentators claim that the motivation of learners and virtuous agents differ, they mean that the ultimate goal of learners is not the noble action insofar as it is noble, but rather insofar as it is pleasant or useful. In this view, learners, as opposed to virtuous agents, do not aim at virtuous actions for their own sake, but because those actions bring them some pleasure or some utility that is different from their nobility.
habituation — in which learning-by-doing is understood as mechanical repetition of similar actions. Modern commentators tend to reject this view on the grounds that it does not provide sufficient continuity between the mechanical behavior of the learners and the dispositions that are expected to result from the repetition of such behavior, and so leaves unexplained the learners’ transition to virtue. My objection to the motivationally-neutral conception of the learners’ actions is similar: this conception does not provide sufficient continuity between the motivationally-neutral actions of the learners and the dispositions to act reliably for the sake of the noble that learners are supposed to acquire through performing such actions. In other words, this line of interpretation leaves Aristotle with the new difficulty of bridging what I call “the moral upbringing gap” between the practices of the learners and the virtuous dispositions that such actions are supposed to produce. For this reason, I believe that the motivationally-neutral conception of the learners’ actions does not afford an adequate solution to the problem raised by the priority puzzle.

The main aim of this chapter is to establish that, whatever strategy Aristotle chooses to explain how someone without virtue can perform virtuous actions, the characterization of the learners’ actions should enable us to see how those actions eventually result in the production of virtue. On the alternative view proposed here, Aristotle’s solution to the priority puzzle requires continuity between the motivation of learners and the motivation of virtuous agents. Learners can become genuinely virtuous only if they act (at least occasionally)

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19 Early defenders of this mechanical theory are Grant (1885); Stewart (1892); Joachim (1951).

20 In Sherman’s (1989) words, the mechanical theory “ultimately makes mysterious the transition between childhood and moral maturity” because it “leaves unexplained how the child with merely ‘habituated’ virtue can ever develop the capacities requisite for practical reason and inseparable from full virtue” (158). Other explicit rejections of the mechanical theory are mentioned in note 5 above.

21 I have adopted from Burnyeat (1980) and Sherman (1989) this general principle that there must be an intimate dependence between Aristotle’s view of the process of moral development and his conception of virtue —or as Sherman puts it, that “if full virtue is to meet certain conditions, then this must be reflected in the educational process” (Sherman, 1989: 159; see also Burnyeat, 1980: 69). This continuity principle is the main background thought of the line of argument that I elaborate here.
from virtuous motives, because the practice of acting from virtuous motives is precisely what yields the dispositions to act reliably from such motives. This implies that the actions of learners can and indeed must be done for the sake of the noble, even if learners do not yet have stable virtuous dispositions of character. To make this move plausible, I question the way claim (2) is usually read – namely, as assuming that *only* virtuous agents can act from virtuous motives. For although it is true that virtuous motives belong characteristically to virtuous people, this does not preclude the possibility that non-virtuous agents occasionally act from virtuous motives. In conclusion, then, by allowing the virtuous actions of learners to be performed from virtuous motives, my view provides the kind of continuity required if the actions of the learners are eventually to yield genuinely virtuous dispositions.

2. Question about the “How” and the Continuity Principle

Let me offer first some evidence in support of the claim that Aristotle’s learning-by-doing account requires continuity between the learners’ actions and the dispositions that those actions are expected to yield. Aristotle expresses this point when he discusses in *NE* 2.1 the way in which the actions of learners must be if they are to produce the right dispositions:

[T1c]  *NE* 2.1, 1103b6-13:

Again, it is from the same causes and on account of the same things that every virtue is both produced and destroyed, and similarly every art; for it is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre-players are produced. And

22 See also *NE* 3.5, 1114b26-30:

With regard to the virtues in general we have stated their genus in outline, viz. that they are means and that they are states of character, and that they tend, and by their own nature, to the doing of the actions by which they are produced, and that these are in our power and voluntary, and as the right rule prescribes.

Κοινή μὲν οὖν περὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν ἐρημήσατι ἡμῖν τὸ τε γένος τύπω, ὡστε μεσότητες εἰσιν καὶ ὁτι ἔχεις, ὡστε τί θέλεις, ὡστε τούτων πρακτικῶν <καὶ> καθ' αὐτᾶς, καὶ ὡστε ἡμῖν καὶ ἑκούσιοι, καὶ αὐτῶς ὡς ἀν ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος προσταξῇ.
the corresponding statement is true of builders and of all the rest; people will be good or bad builders as a result of building well or badly. For if this were not so, there would have been no need of a teacher, but everyone would have been born good or bad <at their craft>.

In this passage, Aristotle expresses very clearly his belief that it makes a great difference how the actions during the learning process are performed: to become a good builder, the learner needs to practice building “well” [\textit{eu}]; to become a good lyre player, the learner needs to practice playing the lyre well; and, in general, to become a good expert in a craft, one needs to perform the corresponding activities well. Thus, an adequate explanation of what the learning-by-doing thesis amounts to in the case of the crafts must say something about how the doings are performed. For example, if someone simply makes sounds with the lyre unaware that she is doing so, or if she repeatedly plays with the wrong rhythm, in the wrong tone, with the wrong instrument, etc., it is clear that her “practice” is not going to contribute to her becoming a good lyre-player. So too in the case of virtue it seems reasonable to expect considerations about how the learners’ actions are performed to enter any adequate account of the learning-by-doing thesis.

Aristotle is explicit about the existence of a parallelism between crafts and virtues in this respect: “This, then, is the case with the virtues also” [\textit{ou} \textit{to\i} \textit{de} kai \textit{e\pi} \textit{tou} \textit{a\re\ta\vw} \textit{exei}] (2.1, 1103b13-14). As he continues to say: some people become just, courageous, temperate and well-tempered, while others become unjust, cowardly, intemperate and irascible “by behaving \textit{one way or another in the same circumstances}” [\textit{o\i} \textit{me\nu} \textit{ek} \textit{tou} \textit{ou\t\wa\i} \textit{en ou\t\io\i} \textit{anast\re\fas\i}, \textit{o\i} \textit{de} \textit{ek} \textit{tou} \textit{ou\t\wa\i}] (1103b13-22), i.e. by acting \textit{well or badly}.
For instance, if someone stands in the middle of the battlefield unaware that she is doing so, or if she stands in her post at the wrong moment, with the wrong weapons, against the wrong enemy, with the wrong goal, etc., her action will not contribute to her becoming courageous. In other words, simple practice by itself does not lead to the acquisition of the right dispositions, but it has to be the right kind of practice:

\[ T1d \quad NE 2.1, 1103b21-25: \]

Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities. This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind; it is because the states of character correspond to the differences between these. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits in one way or another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference.

Consequently, when Aristotle says that we acquire virtues of character by performing virtuous actions, we should mentally include the clarification: by performing virtuous actions well.\(^{23}\) Any satisfactory solution to the priority puzzle proposed in \( NE 2.4 \) should attend to the way in which the actions of learners are performed. For as the final passages of \( NE 2.1 \) show, the question relevant to the acquisition of the virtues (as of crafts) is the question of how the learners’ actions are performed: the learners will acquire virtuous dispositions (or expert knowledge) only if they perform the relevant actions in the right way.

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\(^{23}\) In his response to the puzzle in \( NE 2.4 \) Aristotle again makes reference to the notion of the \( \text{εὖ} \) —and the problem of the “how” — in support of the disanalogy between crafts and virtues, and he indicates that the \( \text{εὖ} \) concerning the performance of virtuous actions is more complex than in the case of the crafts because “the products of the crafts have their \( \text{εὖ} \) in themselves, so that it is enough that they should have a certain character”, while in the case of the virtues there are some conditions concerning the agent. (See discussion in Section 3.b in this Chapter, below.)
3. Aristotle’s Solution to the Priority Puzzle: General Lines

Let us look now in more detail at the text where Aristotle offers his solution to the priority puzzle. His response in *NE* 2.4 proceeds in several steps. First, he shows that the puzzle is easily avoided in the case of the crafts. He offers an example to show how someone who does not yet possess a craft can nevertheless perform an action stereotypical of the craft — i.e. the sort of action an expert of that craft would typically perform in the relevant circumstances. He then argues that also in the case of the virtues, it is possible for someone who is not yet virtuous to perform an action stereotypical of a virtue — i.e. the action that a virtuous agent would typically perform in the circumstances. He adds, however, that for the actions to be performed *well* in this second case some extra factors are needed.

3.a. Grammar Example: *In Accordance With Grammar vs. Grammatically*

The first step in Aristotle’s argument against the priority of disposition over action is a simple counterexample:

[T1e]  *NE* 2.4, 1105a21-26:

Or is this not true even of the arts? It is possible to do *something grammatical* either by luck or because someone else prompts you. Someone will be an expert grammarian, then, only when he has both done something *grammatical* and done it *grammatically*; and this means doing it in accordance with the grammatical knowledge in himself.

Aristotle here provides evidence that it is possible for someone without grammar expertise to produce something grammatical, and thus he shows that, contrary to the common assumption made by those who present the priority puzzle as a challenge, it is not true that
“if someone does something grammatical or musical, they are grammarians or musicians” (1105a20-21).

The grammar example introduces a crucial distinction between (a) productions that are grammatical but not grammatically done, in the sense that the products are “something grammatical” [γραμματικόν τι], even though they do not come about from the producers’ knowledge of grammar; and (b) productions that are grammatical and “grammatically done” [γραμματικῶς] where the products are not only of a certain type but come about through the agents’ exercise of their own grammatical expertise (that is, the productions have to be done in accordance with the knowledge or craft “in the agent” [ἐν οὐτῷ]). As a refutation of the common assumption that actions or productions are always expressions of the corresponding dispositions in the agents, then, the example is clear and adequate: it is easy to accept that someone who has no idea of Spanish can write a correct Spanish sentence by choosing random words from a list, by copying a sentence from the grammar book, by repeating what someone who speaks correct Spanish says, etc. In all these cases, the agent produces correct Spanish sentences (i.e. she performs actions stereotypical of a proficient Spanish speaker) without possessing any knowledge of Spanish in herself. This shows that, at least in some cases, someone might perform an action stereotypical of a craft without possessing the corresponding expertise. It follows, then, that in the case of the crafts the thesis about the necessary priority of dispositions over actions is not accurate.

However, Aristotle cannot intend the distinction established by the grammar example as a full reply to the priority puzzle. Indeed, by showing that learners can do something grammatical or musical without being grammarians or musicians, he does not yet show that (or how) it is possible for learners to perform the kinds of actions that will eventually lead to the acquisition of the relevant dispositions — in other words, this
response does not say anything about whether (or how) learners can perform the relevant actions well.

Moreover, this response is particularly unsatisfactory if we read the passage as presenting a strict dichotomy between (a) actions *merely* in accordance with grammar and (b) actions *from grammar*, where all actions done in accordance with grammar but not from grammar are to be taken as grammatical only coincidentally. In such a reading the only option left open for the learners, who do not yet possess the expertise, is to perform the actions coincidentally, and consequently, it is impossible for learners to perform the relevant kind of actions well.

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24 This strict-dichotomy reading is not uncommon. Some examples of this approach are Irwin (1999); and Vasiliou (2007). Irwin (1999), who takes the grammar example to be a self-standing response to the puzzle in *NE* 2.4, understands the distinction in this way: “… the point he has made in the first reply [namely 2.4.1105a21-26], [is] that someone might produce a good product accidentally” (195, my italics). Vasiliou (2007) also sides with this line of reading:

> While it is sufficient for a skill to be executed excellently if its product is excellent, it is not sufficient for an action to have been done virtuously for a person simply to have done what the virtuous person would do. *A shoe might, by accident, be an excellent shoe* (we can determine this by examining the shoe); but a virtuous action cannot be virtuous by accident. (52, my italics)

25 Also Taylor (2006) points out, correctly in my opinion, that although the grammar example can be read in this way, this interpretation makes it difficult to see how the example helps to support the original learning-by-doing thesis as expressed in *NE* 2.1:

> But now Aristotle seems to have slipped away from addressing the crucial problem, at least as it arises from the formulation in chapter 1. There he explicitly asserts (1103a31-32) that we acquire the virtues and other skills by having previously exercised them, and treats examples such as “we become builders by building” (a33-34) as satisfying that general description. If that is still his problem in this chapter, he does not solve it by distinguishing between exercising a skill and doing the things prescribed by a skill without possessing it. For the latter is not exercising the skill and thus the distinction contributes nothing to answering the question “How is it possible to acquire a skill by exercising it?” (82, my italics)

Taylor’s view is that Aristotle’s conception of learning requires learners to be in an intermediate stage in which they are already somehow able to exercise the skills that they do not yet possess fully:

> […] the later conception loses sight of Aristotle’s central insight that the acquisition of skills is cumulative, so that we acquire fully mature skills via a process of development in which the exercise of those very skills at a more primitive level is progressively refined and elaborated (see above). Even the apprentice builder builds ‘in accordance with the building skill which is in him’. The crucial point is that building skill is in the apprentice in a less developed form than that in which it is in the master, just as the nature of an animal species is in an immature member of the species in a less developed form than that in which it is in an adult. (82-83, my italics)
Although this strict-dichotomy reading is, I think, inaccurate, it is encouraged by Aristotle’s choice of examples. In particular, the use of the example of someone who does the right (grammatical) action merely “by luck” [ἀπὸ τύχης] suggests that Aristotle has in mind here a coincidental production—since the activity of someone who produces something grammatical by luck is the clearest case of doing something grammatical only coincidentally.26

The problem with reading the distinction presented in the grammar example as a strict dichotomy between coincidental productions and expert productions is that, understood this way, the distinction does not satisfy the requirements for an adequate solution to the priority puzzle. For it is clear that, even in the case of the crafts, the practice of merely coincidental productions will not lead to the acquisition of the corresponding expertise. For example, if our Spanish learner keeps copying random words from a list and putting them together in sentences, even if she were so lucky that she hit upon correct sentences on every occasion, we would not say that she is really learning anything in that process. To put it in the terms of our discussion of the question about the ‘how’ (Section 2 of this chapter, above), Aristotle is aware that to become an expert in a craft, the learner, who does not possess the craft yet and consequently cannot be acting from the craft in himself, has nonetheless to practice the corresponding productive actions well and not in any old way.

For Aristotle, then, the case of doing something grammatical by luck cannot be the model for how learning-by-doing occurs. We should pay attention instead to the second case that he mentions in the example, namely that of the learner who does the right (grammatical) thing because she is prompted by someone else (presumably the teacher). Although this kind of production could also be coincidental in cases where the agent blindly follows instructions

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26 For “luck” [τύχη] as “one of the coincidental causes” [τῶν κατὰ συμβεβηκός αἰτίων] see e.g. Physics 197a32-33; 199b23.
and does not pay attention to what she is doing, those are not the relevant cases when we are talking about learning: learners must follow the teacher’s instructions paying attention to what they are doing so that they become more able to reproduce the activities in the future. Only if they pay attention to the relevant features will they acquire the memories and experience that eventually turn into expert knowledge.

Unfortunately, Aristotle does not spell out in our text how we should understand the two cases mentioned in his example, and he simply contrasts “acting by luck or because someone else prompts one” with acting from the knowledge or skill “in oneself”. What he offers us with this distinction is simply a first step towards his solution to the puzzle by opening the possibility that grammatical productions can be done by non-experts. We need to find out still the ways of doing grammatical productions well that are available to the learners so that we can determine what kinds of practices will lead properly to the acquisition of grammatical knowledge.

We should thus look at the grammar example not as an independent answer to the priority puzzle, but rather as a first step in Aristotle’s argument. Aristotle appeals in the next lines to a difference between crafts and virtues not with the aim of building a new response to the priority problem, but rather to add some indications about the character of the actions that learners should perform if their practices are to yield the relevant dispositions.

Some commentators think that the grammar example is a sufficient response to the puzzle as it is presented in NE 2.4. For example, Broadie (1993) claims that this counterexample concerning the crafts is all that Aristotle needs for responding to the objection in NE 2.4: “Aristotle responds by denying (2) [i.e. that doing what is grammatical is a sufficient condition for being proficient in grammar], which is all that he needs for his main point, but then as if to be on the safe side he takes this opportunity to argue against (1) [that virtues are analogous to skills]” (119, note 17). Irwin (1999) thinks that Aristotle gives in NE 2.4 two consecutive independent answers: “The second reply is independent of the first [i.e. the reply where he argues that the crafts do not support the objection], and challenges (2) [i.e. “that virtues are analogous to crafts in the relevant ways”], insisting on an important difference between virtues and crafts.” (195) In my reading, however, the grammar example offers only a formal solution, and we get a satisfactory response only with the further explanations in NE 2.4, 1105a26-b4 [T1f].
3.b. Disanalogy Between Crafts and Virtues and the Question about the ‘How’

Aristotle’s next step is to tackle the question of the ‘how’ by appealing to a disanalogy between the crafts and the virtues:

[T1f] NE 2.4, 1105a26-b4:

Again, the case of the arts and that of the virtues are not similar; for the things that come to be by the arts have their goodness in themselves, so that it is enough that they should have a certain character, but if the things that are in accordance with the virtues have themselves a certain character it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately. The agent must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. These are not reckoned in as conditions of the possession of the arts, except the bare knowledge; but as a condition of the possession of the virtues knowledge has little or no strength, while the other conditions count not for a little but for everything, i.e. the very conditions which result from often doing just and temperate acts.

Here, Aristotle explains first what is necessary for a stereotypical productive action to be performed well, and then contrasts this with the requirements for stereotypical virtuous actions to be performed well or “virtuously”. The main difference is that in the case of the crafts “the quality of being done well” or “the goodness” [τὸ ἦ] is relative to the character of the resultant products, i.e. the goodness of the production depends on whether the product is musical or grammatical, and in general right, while in the case of the virtues, e.g. justice or
temperance, the goodness of the action cannot be judged by attending to a separate product, but it depends also on whether the agent fulfills the following requirements:

1. **Knowledge requirement:** the agent must know what he is doing;
2. **Motivation requirement:** the agent must choose the actions, and choose them for their own sake; and
3. **Stability requirement:** the agent must act from a firm and unchangeable character.

This means that for a virtuous action to be done well, the agent not only must pay attention to the external result of her behavior and be aware of its appropriateness to the given situation, but she also must fulfill certain requirements while acting. Indeed, Aristotle says in [T1f] that in the case of virtuous activity, when something comes to be “according to the virtues” \( \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha \ \tau\alpha\sigma\ \acute{\alpha}\rho\varepsilon\tau\alpha\sigma\) it does not suffice for it to be done virtuously that the thing done “has a certain character” \( \pi\omega\sigma\ \acute{\varepsilon}\chi\eta\) — presumably that it is the right thing to do in the circumstances; on the contrary, for an action to be performed virtuously, the agent has to fulfill the mentioned requirements concerning knowledge, motivation and stability.

How should this point affect our understanding of the processes of learning? What are the differences between the requirements for the right practice to become a good lyre player and the requirements for the right practice to become a just person? Aristotle’s account of the disanalogy gives us some hints about this issue. On the one hand, when learning a craft, agents should pay attention in their practices to features or conditions of the product. Thus learners do the things that are characteristic of an expert in a craft by making the product conform to the standards of the craft. For example, the person learning to make shoes should do the things that expert shoemakers characteristically do: she should choose the right material, sew the pieces together in the right way, design the shoes with the right shape, use the right instruments, etc. In sum, she should attend to the effects of her actions,
choice of materials etc. on the product and she does not need to fulfill any further requirements.

We should not take the present contrast between the sphere of the crafts, where the main focus is on the product, and the sphere of the virtues, where the main focus is on the agent, as indication that Aristotle wants to deny that the learner of crafts needs to have at least some relevant knowledge if she is going to be able to perform well any of the actions or productions that are characteristic of the craft. For in Aristotle concludes by saying that while the relevant factors “towards the possession of the virtues” \[\text{προσ \ δὲ \ τὸ \ τάς \ ἀρετὰς \ ἔχειν}\] are knowledge, motivation and stability, the only relevant factor “towards the possession of the crafts” \[\text{πρὸς \ μὲν \ τὸ \ τάς \ ἄλλας \ τέχνας \ ἔχειν}\] is knowledge. This clearly indicates that also in the practice of the crafts the knowledge requirement is important. I take the knowledge that is relevant in the acquisition of a craft to be the kind of knowledge that renders the production of a certain result intentional and not accidental. In other words, the learners of a craft will have to be aware of the relevant details of their practices and pay attention to the relevant factors that make their productions right in the given circumstances.

Aristotle’s point is that if the learners of a craft pay attention in their practices to the details concerning the product and the appropriate means to bring it about, they can be said to be acquiring all they need in order to have the skill. But things are difference in the sphere of the virtues.

The role of the disanalogy passage is mainly, then, to establish that while the learners of crafts need to acquire only (or mainly) knowledge, in the case of the virtues, in contrast, learners need to acquire not only knowledge but also the right choice (probairesis) and an unchangeable disposition. So while the kind of activities involved in the acquisition of a craft
require the learner to be aware of the relevant features of the particular circumstances of the production, the kind of activities involved in the acquisition of virtue require not only that the learner be aware of these features, but also that she possess the right kind of motivation and some ground for reliability.

3.c. Virtuous Actions vs. Virtuously Performed Virtuous Actions

Aristotle’s final step is to confirm that the distinction between (a) performing actions that are in accordance with virtue and (b) performing such actions virtuously provides a satisfactory solution to the puzzle:

[T1g] NE 2.4, 1105b5-12:

Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate person would do, but it is not the person who does these that is just and temperate, but the one who does them as just and temperate people do them. It is well said, then, that it is by doing just actions that the just person is produced, and by doing temperate actions the temperate person; without doing these no one would have even the prospect of becoming good.

The main claim is that there are actions that are “such as” [τοιαύτα οία] the virtuous person would do [1105b5-7], i.e. stereotypically virtuous actions, which can be performed by agents who lack virtuous dispositions. These are the actions in accordance with virtue that learners can perform. There is in addition a special way of performing virtuous actions “as just and temperate agents do” [οὕτω πράττων ὡς οἱ δίκαιοι καὶ σωφρονες πράττουσιν], namely justly and temperately, and in general virtuously, which involves the
fulfillment of the above-mentioned requirements concerning knowledge, choice and stability. Aristotle’s point is that learners do not have to completely fulfill these requirements in their actions for them to be relevant to the acquisition of virtue—otherwise learning-by-doing would be impossible. Although virtuous agents perform virtuous actions virtuously, there is another way of performing virtuous actions that is available to those who do not yet possess virtue, and thus enables them to acquire virtue.

The solution, then, can be expressed as Taylor (2006) does in his commentary on 1105a28ff.:

This distinction [sc. between actions that are in accordance with the virtues and actions that are in addition performed virtuously] enables Aristotle to offer in the case of virtue a solution of his problem; an essential part of the process of learning to act while satisfying those further conditions consists in acting without satisfying them. (83, my emphasis)

Taylor holds that the disposition to act fulfilling the conditions of knowledge, motivation and stability is acquired by acting without fulfilling those conditions. The question that interests me here is whether “acting without satisfying [the mentioned conditions]” should be understood as acting without satisfying those conditions at all, or acting without satisfying them fully. Taylor’s way of expressing Aristotle’s point threatens to mislead us if it leads us to overlook the fact that the actions of the learners must fulfill the general requirement that they be done in some sense “well” and cannot be performed in any old way. In other words, even if the virtuous actions of the learners cannot be performed virtuously, this may be only because learners do not fully fulfill all the requirements for performing such actions virtuously and not because they do not fulfill any of these requirements.

Thus, the distinction between performing actions that are in accordance with virtue and performing those actions virtuously provides little more than a merely formal solution. To see how the solution actually operates, i.e., how this distinction allows that we acquire
virtue by doing virtuous actions, we will need to fill in a few details regarding the actions performed by the learners. Concretely, we need to ask whether the learners’ actions, which are “such as” \( \text{τοιαύτα ὁίᾳ} \) “the just or the temperate person would do”, are simply the right things to do in the circumstances, or whether learners instead fulfill in their actions at least partially some of the further requirements concerning knowledge, motivation and stability.

4. The Motivationally-Neutral Account of Learner’s Actions

Modern commentators tend to agree, and correctly I think, that the actions of the learners cannot be mere mechanical reproductions of the virtuous agents’ external behavior. The learners must instead be aware of the actions that they perform and must exercise from the beginning their critical and perceptual capacities. To put it briefly, although learners of virtue do not have practical wisdom and consequently do not possess the kind of knowledge about virtue and the noble that virtuous agents have, habituation is not a “mindless process” but it requires the fulfillment of certain requirements concerning the learners’ knowledge. 28

However, commentators do not tend to make the same move in relation to the learners’ motivation. One very common interpretation of NE 2.4, the view I call the motivationally-neutral view, is that Aristotle solves the priority puzzle by establishing that the actions performed by the learners are virtuous in that they are the right actions in the circumstances, i.e. the kinds of actions characteristically performed by virtuous people, but

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28 See e.g. Sorabji (1980: 216): “[H]abituation involves assessing the situation and seeing what is called for. So habituation is intimately linked with the kind of intuitive perception (\( \text{νοῦς} \)) that we have been discussing”; Cooper (1986: 8): “[H]abituation must involve also (although Aristotle does not explain how it does so) the training of the mind”; Sherman (1989: 7): “Contrary to the popular interpretation according to which ethical habituation is nonrational, I argue that it includes early on the engagement of cognitive capacities”; Broadie (1991: 103): “[H]abituation cannot be a mindless process, and the habit (once formed) of acting justly cannot be blind in its operations, since one needs intelligence to see why different things are just under different circumstances”; McDowell (1996: 28): “The relevant habituation includes the imparting of conceptual apparatus, centrally the concept of the noble”.

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they differ from the activities of virtuous people not only in that they are not performed from a stable disposition of character, but also in that they lack virtuous motivation.\textsuperscript{29}

One clear example of this interpretation can be found in the following passage from Sir David Ross’ (1959) reading of NE 2.4:

A paradox is involved in Aristotle’s assertion that we become good by doing good acts; how can we do good acts if we are not ourselves good? He proceeds to explain that there is a difference between the acts that create and those that flow from the good disposition. ... Thus the paradox disappears: \textit{the actions that produce virtue are not in their inner nature but only in their external aspect like those that virtue produces}. Aristotle here (1105a17-b18) lays his finger with precision on the distinction between the two elements involved in a completely good action—(a) that the thing done should be the right thing to do in the circumstances, and (b) that it should be done from a good motive. (194, my emphasis)

The main assumption behind the motivationally-neutral conception of the learners’ actions is, I think, that Aristotle tries to solve the priority puzzle while maintaining a strong version of claim (2) above – i.e., the version according to which only virtuous agents are moved by virtuous motives or, in other words, only virtuous agents act for the sake of the noble. This assumption is manifest in Terence Irwin’s (1999) commentary on NE 2.4:

The puzzle arises because Aristotle has emphasized the similarity between the actions that we learn to do in habituation and the actions that we do when we are virtuous. We may suppose that if the actions are the same, their motive must be the same too, so that \textit{we can learn to be virtuous only if we already have the motive of the virtuous person}. (195, my emphasis.)

\textsuperscript{29} Some examples are Broadie (1991); Irwin (1999); Vasiliou (2007). Broadie’s (1991) explanation of NE 2.4 pivots upon the distinction between “doing what in fact is right” and “doing it in the right spirit” (88). Irwin (1999) talks about actions that are “not done for the virtuous person’s reasons”, by which he means actions that are not done for their own sake, since he contrasts them with how virtuous agents “do the virtuous action because they have decided to do it for its own sake” (xviii). A more recent defense of this line of interpretation can be found in Vasiliou (2007):

What Aristotle needs, however, to solve the puzzle of II.4 is not only \textit{a separation between virtuous action and motive} but also the ability to describe the virtuous action, the action to be done, without using ethical terms. This is what makes it possible for the virtuous and non-virtuous agent to, in one ordinary sense of the expression, do the same action – for example, to share half their sandwich, even though it will only be a truly virtuous action if the agent is motivated in the appropriate way. (52, note 22; my emphasis)
Here Irwin assumes that the gist of the objection about priority that Aristotle is trying to solve is that it is impossible for a non-virtuous agent to perform virtuous actions because non-virtuous agents cannot have virtuous motives. Once the equivalence between virtuous motive and “the motive of the virtuous person” is assumed, it follows that any successful solution to the priority puzzle must hinge upon dissociating virtuous actions from virtuous motivation and showing that the actions of the learners can be virtuous even if they are not performed from a virtuous motive.

The reasoning leading to the motivationally-neutral view is, then, as follows: since only virtuous agents are moved by virtuous motives, the actions of the learners must necessarily lack virtuous motivation. If, per impossibile, the actions of the learners were performed from virtuous motives, then the learners would already possess virtue. Consequently, since learners cannot have virtuous motivation, Aristotle must allow for a way of describing the virtuous actions of the learners that is not only independent of the agents’ possession of virtuous dispositions, but also independent of the agent’s motivation.

My approach, in contrast, is to embrace Irwin’s conclusion and take it not as the problem but as the solution: learners become virtuous by acting from virtuous motives, or as Irwin puts it, by acting with “the motive of the virtuous person”. My claim is that Aristotle does not accept that being a fully virtuous agent is a necessary condition for acting from a virtuous motive, and consequently, he can solve the puzzle without renouncing the claim that the virtuous actions of the learners involve virtuous motivation.

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30 The view that virtuous motivation is not necessarily dependent on the possession of stable virtuous dispositions was first suggested to me by Hurka (2006), where he attributes to Aristotle (and criticizes) the assumption that only virtuous agents act with virtuous motives. My claim here is, however, that Aristotle does not hold that only virtuous agents act with virtuous motives, and that this claim is erroneously attributed to him by some commentators.
5. Disadvantages of the Motivationally-Neutral Account of Learner’s Actions

The motivationally-neutral conception of the learners’ actions presents a number of problems that recommend rejecting it, particularly as providing a solution to the priority puzzle. The first problem is that it frequently leads commentators to embrace a deflationary view of the virtuous actions of the learners that does not fit well with the textual evidence. Second, and most importantly, this conception opens a gap between the motivationally-neutral actions of the learners and the noble-oriented virtuous dispositions that those actions are expected to yield. Finally, the motivationally-neutral conception of the learners’ actions is unable to identify the relevant factor responsible for the difference between those cases in which repetition of the right behavior leads to the formation of virtuous dispositions, and those in which the same behavior leads to the formation of non-virtuous tendencies.

5.a. Incorrect Deflationary Conception of the Virtuous Actions of Learners

The belief that Aristotle solves the priority puzzle by establishing that the actions of learners should be describable independently of the motive of the agent moves some commentators to weaken the sense in which the learners’ actions are said to be virtuous.\(^{31}\) These commentators hold that Aristotle’s solution to the priority puzzle is to distinguish between the \textit{fully} virtuous actions of virtuous agents, which necessarily involve a virtuous motive, and the \textit{minimally} virtuous actions of the learners, which lack virtuous motivation. The reason behind this distinction is that they want to maintain the claim that an action is only fully (or

\(^{31}\) This tendency is not uncommon in the literature. Commentators who adopt this line of interpretation refer variously to the learners’ actions as “not strictly virtuous” (Hardie, 1968: 104-5), “outwardly similar actions done from a different ethical condition” (in contrast with “actions done from virtue”) (Broadie, 1991: 87), “minimally virtuous actions” (Williams, 1995: 14), “acts that are less than fully V[irtuous]” (ibid.), “virtuous actions in a minimal sense” (Vasiliou, 2007: 51), and so on.
truly) virtuous action if it is done from a virtuous motive. These commentators thus take the actions of learners to be virtuous insofar as they are “the right thing to do in the circumstances”, but not fully virtuous because they do not stem from virtuous motives.

The first problem with this deflationary account of the learners’ actions is that it does not fit what the text says. In 1105a26-b12 ([Tlf] and [Tlg]), Aristotle refers to the actions of the learners not only as actions done “in accordance with virtue” [κατὰ τὰς ἀρετὰς] but also as “just and temperate actions” [τὰ … πράγματα δίκαια καὶ σωφρονα]. Also in [Tla] and [Tlb] Aristotle talks about performing “just and temperate actions” [τὰ μὲν δίκαια … τὰ δὲ σωφρονα], even though he had the vocabulary to express his thesis differently had he wanted to do so. Since we have no reasons for thinking otherwise, then, we should take what he says at face value: the actions are just and temperate etc., and in general virtuous.

Furthermore, Aristotle distinguishes the learners’ actions from the actions of virtuous agents not by saying that they are less virtuous, but by saying that they are not performed justly or temperately [δικαίως ἢ σωφρόνως]—and, in sum, not virtuously. It seems clear to me, then, that the distinction in NE 2.4 is between two ways of performing fully virtuous actions—i.e., (a) in accordance with virtue but not virtuously and (b) virtuously. Aristotle holds that the conditions of knowledge, choice and stable disposition

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32 A clear example can be found in Vasiliou (2007): “the motivation’s being of the right sort is an essential feature of the action’s belonging to the type ‘virtuous’” (52, note 22); and a few lines below: “it will only be a truly virtuous action if the agent is motivated in the appropriate way.” (ibid., my emphasis; see full passage quoted in note 29 above). The connection between virtuous action and virtuous motivation can also be found in Richardson Lear (2004): “a fully virtuous action is one performed in a virtuous way (1105b5–9). In other words, a fully virtuous action is not just the one that is intermediate; it is one that is chosen and chosen for itself.” (117). See also Gottlieb (2006):

*On Aristotle’s account, having the right motivation is part and parcel of doing the right thing.* “Doing the right thing although I would rather be doing something else” means that one is not doing the right thing tout court, but one is doing something that only looks as if it is the right thing. (229)
are conditions that the agent has to meet if the virtuous action is to be performed virtuously, but not conditions for virtuous action in general, as is often thought.\textsuperscript{33}

Thus, those who on the basis of the assumption that the learners’ actions do not involve virtuous motives conclude that those actions are not fully (or not strictly) virtuous are disregarding the terms of the distinction that Aristotle establishes in this passage.

5.b. The Moral Upbringing Gap

Let me turn now to what I consider to be the central difficulty for the motivationally-neutral view. This is that if the actions of the learners lack virtuous motivation, then it is not clear how learners are supposed to become virtuous by repeatedly doing such actions.

My worry is similar to the one that other authors have expressed against the mechanical theory of habituation. The main problem, as I see it, is that the less continuity between the actions of the learners of virtue and the actions performed by virtuous agents, the more difficult it will be to understand how the repeated performance of the actions of the learner produces virtue. Thus, if the actions of the learners of virtue differ in motive from those of virtuous agents, it is hard to see how repeatedly performing such actions should lead to the acquisition of a state to which proper motivation is crucial. The motivationally-neutral conception thus creates a “moral upbringing gap” similar to the gap seen by commentators in the explanations of moral development given by the mechanistic theory.

The general problem of the gap is formulated clearly by Hardie (1968):

\textsuperscript{33} One example of how commentators insist on calling “virtuous actions” only those in which the agent fulfills the requirements for virtue is the following claim from the commentary of Gauthier & Jolif (1958-59): “\textit{l’action vertueuse ne doit pas découler d’une disposition passagère, mais d’un état habituel de caractère qui rend cette activité comme naturelle}.” (130, my emphasis) Here they are talking about “virtuous action” as if it only referred to the action performed by the virtuous agent. See also Taylor’s (2006) comments to 1105b26-30: “\ldots here [Aristotle’s] claim is that when skill is exercised, its being exercised well is determined purely by the excellence of the product, whereas in the case of the virtues extra conditions concerning the agent must be satisfied for the act to be virtuous.” (83, my emphasis.)
The question then remains how non-virtuous actions, actions done under direction or even under compulsion, produce virtues. To say, as Aristotle does in EN II.1, that, while virtue is not an endowment of nature, we have a natural tendency to acquire virtue is, perhaps, only a way of saying that the thing does happen. “we are adapted by nature to receive them, the virtues, and are made perfect by habit” (1103 a23-6). (105, my emphasis)

Here Hardie has great difficulty finding in Aristotle’s text an explanation of how the actions of the learners, conceived as non-virtuous and performed merely under direction or under compulsion, are able to produce virtuous dispositions. His answer to this question seems to be that Aristotle simply takes this transition as a brute fact about human nature with no need to be explained—he claims that all that Aristotle says about it is that it just “does happen”.

Defenders of the motivationally-neutral view meet a similar problem, and are forced to leave the transition between the motivationally-neutral actions of learners and their acquisition of virtuous dispositions unexplained, or else appeal to a fact of human nature. However, we can provide an explanation for the transition if we allow that learners can have, at least occasionally, virtuous motives. To avoid the gap, then, we need a solution that guarantees continuity in the development of motivational attitudes.

### 5.c. Why Are Right Actions without Virtuous Motive Not Productive of Virtue?

Finally there is a further group of related phenomena that the motivationally-neutral conception cannot explain, namely, the case of those who repeatedly perform the right actions in the circumstances, aware of the relevant details involved, but not from a virtuous

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34 Sherman (1989) acknowledges that with the explanation provided there is not full continuity in the process of learning virtue (as opposed to that of learning crafts) because learners do not perform their actions from a reliable motive or choose them “as a valued way of living”:

The learner’s temperate actions may be directed at health, but the motive will neither be reliable nor the actions themselves chosen as a valued way of living. In a more dramatic way than in the case of the crafts, there may be qualitative differences between what the learner and the expert possesses; the development may be less smooth or continuous. (189, my emphasis)
motive, and fail to acquire virtue as a result. If we assume, as the motivationally-neutral view does, that Aristotle’s claim is that people become virtuous by performing the right actions without the right motive, then Aristotle would be left with these numerous irregular cases in which some agents do not acquire virtue as a result of their activities.

However, Aristotle is familiar with this phenomenon, as we will see in Chapter 2, and he deals with it in his discussion of the different kinds of pseudo-courage in *NE* 3.8, where he offers several paradigmatic cases: on the one hand, he mentions those who do courageous things from fear of punishment—these would not act as they do if there was no threat; secondly, he talks about those who are courageous on account of experience, who have been trained to react to dangerous situations in the right way — these agents turn into cowards whenever the danger appears real or the situation is unfamiliar; finally, he mentions sanguine people, who have been repeatedly successful in dangerous situations in the past and for that reason think of themselves as courageous, but also they turn into cowards whenever they realize that they are not able to deal with present dangers.

Curzer (2002) also refers to this problem:

> Conversely, some people habitually act rightly in situation after situation although their motives are far from pure. They refrain from theft in order to avoid getting caught, stand fast in battle in order to impress their girlfriends, etc. … they lack the desire to perform virtuous acts for their own sake. Some of these people go on to become virtuous, I suppose, but others make no moral progress at all. They habitually act rightly, but for the wrong reasons. They show that habituation alone is insufficient to instill the desire to perform virtuous acts for their own sake. I shall suggest below that habituation instills this desire only when combined with a certain catalyst. (148, my emphasis)

Curzer’s view is that pain and fear of punishment are the catalysts that need to be combined with habituation in order to produce the virtues. What is relevant from this text is that Curzer takes these examples of people who fail to become virtuous by repeatedly performing right actions for the wrong reasons as a challenge to Aristotle’s conception of habituation as learning-by-doing. In other words, Curzer rejects — in frontal clash with Aristotle’s own claims in *NE* 2.1 — that habituation is the right method to produce virtuous dispositions (“habituation alone is insufficient to instill the desire to perform virtuous acts for their own sake”), and he claims that habituation needs to be complemented with punishment. However, Curzer’s objection to the self-sufficiency of habituation is based on the assumption that Aristotle’s conception of habituation allows that the “right actions” performed by learners can be done “for the wrong reasons” or from motives that are “far from pure”. He does not consider that the notion of habituation that Aristotle is using might already include other requirements for the actions of the learners that make them productive of virtuous dispositions.
Why do these agents not acquire a courageous disposition even though they repeatedly perform actions that resemble those of courageous people? We will work towards a more detailed answer in the next chapter, but let me advance here that the main clue provided in *NE* 3.8 for why these agents fail to acquire courage is that they do not act for the sake of the noble; instead, they act respectively with the goals of avoiding punishment or receiving some advantage (money or victory). The actions of these agents, then, fail to produce virtuous dispositions because they lack virtuous motivation. These agents can at best acquire knowledge about what the courageous things to do are, and become more able to identify them, or even more able to bring them to practice; however, their actions do not contribute to build a stable disposition to do courageous things for their own sake or for the sake of their nobility.

6. The Alternative View

My goal here is to give an account of Aristotle’s response to the priority puzzle that does not require us to renounce the claim that the actions of the learners are done for the sake of the noble. My view is that Aristotle’s general conception of how actions produce dispositions requires the learners’ actions to have virtuous motives if they are to yield virtuous dispositions. My interpretation demands, therefore, that we conceive the relation between virtuous dispositions and virtuous motives differently than the defenders of the motivationally-neutral view do: although acting for the sake of the noble belongs characteristically to virtuous agents, not only virtuous agents can perform actions for the sake of the noble. Once we see that Aristotle accepts this claim, we can see that his solution to the puzzle does not need to violate the principle of continuity in relation to motivation: learners become virtuous, i.e. acquire dispositions to choose actions for their own sake, by performing virtuous actions with the right kind of motivation.
6.a. Virtuous Dispositions and Virtuous Motives

Let me clarify first my point about the relationship between virtuous dispositions and virtuous motives. Aristotle undoubtedly associates the possession of virtuous dispositions with acting from virtuous motives, and he even indicates that virtuous dispositions and virtuous motives are necessarily connected in that virtuous agents always necessarily act from virtuous motives and cannot act from non-virtuous ones. Indeed, in his discussion of the particular virtues of character in NE 3-4, Aristotle repeatedly describes virtuous agents as acting “for the sake of the noble” \([\text{tou} \, \text{kalo} \, \text{e} \text{ve} \text{ka}]\), and he even says that the noble is the “goal of virtue” \([\text{telos} \, \text{thi} \, \text{areti} \text{si}]\) (3.7, 1115b13).\(^{36}\)

However, the fact that acting from virtuous motives is characteristic of virtuous people does not rule out the possibility that at least some non-virtuous agents at least sometimes act from virtuous motives: the learners, as they progress towards virtue, presumably act increasingly from virtuous motives until they have a settled disposition to act from such motives. That is, learners can aim at noble goals for their own sake, even if this aiming might be occasional and lack the reliability that the possession of virtue confers.

6.b. Virtuous Motives in Non-Virtuous Agents

Indeed, there is evidence that Aristotle’s view on this issue is that virtuous motivation (i.e., wanting to do actions for the sake of the noble) is available also for non-virtuous agents. One of the crucial passages\(^{37}\) that provide this evidence is the discussion of civic courage in NE 3.8, which shows that virtuous motivation is also available for people who do not possess the virtue of courage:

\(^{36}\) See note 15 above for a list of references.

\(^{37}\) The other relevant passage is NE 10.9, 1179b4-16, where Aristotle characterizes the learners of virtue who have a sense of shame as true lovers of the noble, and he compares them with those who act from fear of punishment. A discussion of this second passage can be found in Chapter 5, Section 4 below.
This kind of courage is most like that which we described earlier, because it is due to virtue; for it is due to shame and to desire of a noble object (i.e. honour) and avoidance of disgrace, which is ignoble.

This passage shows that Aristotle thinks that those who have civic courage, which is an imperfect form of courage, perform actions on account of their “desire for something noble” \( \text{διὰ καλοῦ ὑρεξὶν} \). Desire for the noble is the characteristically virtuous motive, and although there might be differences between desire for the noble \textit{simpliciter}, in the way that the fully virtuous person has it, and the qualified desire for the noble of the person with shame, this passage indicates that the person with a sense of shame is oriented towards a noble object (honor) and able to attend to considerations different from the mere pursuit of pleasure or gain.\(^{38}\)

This point is confirmed by Aristotle’s comparison between professional soldiers and citizen soldiers in a passage some lines below:

Professional soldiers turn cowards, however, when the danger puts too great a strain on them and they are inferior in numbers and equipment; for they are the first to fly, while citizen-forces die at their posts, as in fact happened at the temple of Hermes. For to the latter flight is disgraceful and death is preferable to safety on those terms; while the former from the very beginning faced the danger on the assumption that they were stronger, and when they know the facts they fly, fearing death more than disgrace; but the brave man is not that sort of person.

\(^{38}\) I do not mean here that the motive of the person who acts from shame is \textit{strictly the same in all possible senses} as the motive of the virtuous person. I am aware of the fact that because the virtuous person has \textit{phronēsis}, her motives will have a complexity that cannot be present in the case of non-virtuous agents. The claim I am making here is a weaker one, namely that the motive of the person who acts from shame is virtuous in the relevant sense that the \textit{central concern} of the agent is the nobility of the action and not the consequential pleasure or the gain that she will derive from the action. I present further arguments in favor of this claim in the analysis of Aristotle’s account of shame-courage in \textit{NE} 3.8 in Chapter 3 below, and a further discussion of the motive of the person with shame in Section 4 of Chapter 5.
The relevance of passages [T1h] and [T1i] lies in the fact that they depict citizen soldiers as agents who do not act merely from fear of punishment or merely in search of rewards, but from a motive that is in some way virtuous, even though it does not arise from a stable disposition of character and it has to be reinforced by law. Those citizen soldiers who act from shame act from a desire of honor as sign of nobility and praiseworthiness, and not as something that brings pleasure or gain, and they avoid disgrace in action not because of the potential punishments, but because they hate the shameful even more than they fear death.

6.c. Aristotle’s Solution to the Priority Puzzle

We are ready now to see that Aristotle’s solution to the priority puzzle does not need to violate the principle of continuity in relation to the development of the motivational attitudes of the learners. Just as the critical and perceptive powers of learners are involved from the beginning in the process of moral development, so too are their motivational attitudes.

In the view that I propose, then, the learners of virtue are not blank slates, and they are also not exclusively motivated by pleasure and gain. On the contrary, they do have some desires and emotions oriented towards the noble that allow them to have occurrent virtuous motives, even if they do not yet have stable dispositions of character.
My proposal follows the model offered by Aristotle in his solution to the priority puzzle in *Metaphysics* 9.8.\(^{39}\)

[**Tij**] *Metaph 9.8, 1049b29-1050a2:*

This is why it is thought impossible to be a builder if one has built nothing or a lyre player if one has never played the lyre; for he who learns to play the lyre learns to play it by playing it, and all other learners do similarly. And thence arose the sophistical quibble, that one who does not possess a science will be doing that which is the object of the science; for he who is learning it does not possess it.

But since, of that which is coming to be, some part must have come to be, and, of that which, in general, is changing, some part must have changed (this is shown in the treatise on movement), the learner must, it would seem, possess something of the science. But here too, then, it is clear that actuality is in this sense also, viz. in order of generation and of time, prior to potency.

Aristotle is dealing in this passage with a puzzle about priority similar to the one that we find in *NE* 2.4, although here it is applied to theoretical and technical knowledge only. He holds here that in order to acquire the state at issue—in this case knowledge, or the skills of building or of playing the lyre—the learner must already possess *something of it* [τὸν μανθάνοντα ἄνάγκη ἔχειν τί τῆς ἐπιστήμης ἴσως].\(^{40}\) What this indicates ultimately is

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\(^{39}\) I am grateful to Jonathan Beere and David Bronstein for discussing this passage with me and helping me see that the line of argument that Aristotle uses in *Metaph.* 9.8 for the acquisition of knowledge and skill can also work in the case of the virtues.

\(^{40}\) I am sympathetic to Scott’s (1995) interpretation of this passage.
that the learners occupy an intermediate position between those who are absolutely ignorant and those who possess full knowledge of the science or skill at issue. This passage’s solution to the problem of priority in relation to the crafts is, thus, that although the learner does not possess full knowledge, she does possess “something of knowledge” that functions as a starting point in the process of learning. So learning does not arise out of nothing, but on the contrary, it builds up from things that the learner already possesses. With this clarification, the learning-by-doing claim becomes more intelligible, since it can be read as saying simply that in order to acquire full possession of a disposition the learners have to exercise “something of” that disposition that they already possess.

My proposal is to apply this model from *Metaph. 9.8* to the account of acquisition of virtue that we find in *NE 2*: Learning virtue would be, then, a process in which the learners practice “something of” the virtue that they already have. This model has both textual and

In the sophistic argument to which he refers, we have a version of Meno’s paradox. Someone learning to play the harp must play the harp in order to learn, but to play the harp they must already have the knowledge they hope to acquire. The resolution of the sophism consists in saying that the actualization of the potential, and therefore learning, depends on the existence of prior actuality even within the same individual. His conclusion is that the learner must have some of the knowledge that he is trying to attain (1050a1-2). (132)

Scott discusses *Metaph 9.8*, 1149b29-1150a2 in the context of his broader argument concerning the continuity between higher learning and the concepts of ordinary thinking (Chapter 5, “Discovery and Continuity in Science”).

I am aware that the notion of having “something of” a virtue is a strange one, at least in so far as virtue is a perfection and consequently it seems that virtue is not present except when it is complete; however, since the point here is that agents can have attitudes or tendencies that lead them to act and feel as virtuous people do, and that are like proto-versions of those that virtuous people have, I think it can be justified to talk about their having “something of” virtue. Sherman (1989) also uses the notion of partial possession in her account of habituation:

[It] can none the less be argued that what the learner does gain through habituating actions is not something externally necessary to full virtue, but itself a part (albeit an imperfect or not fully developed part) of what virtue is. To become aware of the circumstances necessary for the specific virtues, and to begin to form the right sorts of emotional responses and decisions for action, is itself a part of having virtue. It is not simply preparation for virtue, but doing something of what virtue requires. (189, my italics)
theoretical advantages. The main advantage, for our purposes, is that with this model we can avoid the problem of the gap that the motivationally-neutral view raises.

One advantage of adopting the model of learning proposed in *Metaph.* 9.8 is that it seems to fit perfectly with the passage from *NE* 2.1 that comes immediately before the learning-by-doing principle, which otherwise would clash with what Aristotle says in *NE* 2.4:

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\text{[Tlk] NE 2.1, 1103a26-32:}
\]

Again, [a] of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity (this is plain in the case of the senses; for it was not by often seeing or often hearing that we got these senses, but on the contrary we had them before we used them, and did not come to have them by using them); but [b] the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well.

In this passage, Aristotle is interested in the differences between natural capacities and virtues with respect to their respective relationships of priority between 'using/exercising $x$' and 'possessing $x$'. He suggests that the directions of priority in the cases of the natural capacities and of the virtues are contrary to one another: (a) in the natural capacities, possessing a capacity is prior to exercising it; (b) in the virtues, as in the arts,

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42 It is important to note that although Ross translates “by first exercising them”, and thus takes for granted that Aristotle is referring to exercise of the virtues, the Greek text does not have the corresponding direct object: τάς δ’ ἄρετάς λαμβάνομεν ἐνεργήσαντες πρότερον. However, in *Metaph* 9.5, where Aristotle discusses in more detail the contrast between innate [συγγενέων] capacities and capacities acquired by habituation [ἐθετέ], he repeats the idea that those capacities that come by habituation must be acquired by previous exercise —he uses the term προενεργήσαντας — while natural capacities do not need to be acquired:

As all potencies [σοφός δὲ τῶν δυνάμεων] are either innate, like the senses, or come by practice, like the power of playing the flute, or by learning, like artistic power, those which come by practice or by rational formula we must acquire by previous exercise [τόσον μὲν ἄναγκη προενεργήσαντας ἔχειν] but this is not necessary with those which are not of this nature and which imply passivity. (9.5, 1147b31-35)
exercise is prior to possession. Therefore, Aristotle confirms here that his view of virtue acquisition is parallel to the process of learning depicted in *Metaph.* 9.8: we do not possess the virtues before we exercise them, but, on the contrary, we are supposed to exercise the virtues before we have them, since only by exercising them do we acquire the corresponding virtuous states.

But before we accept this model, we have to make sure that it does not conflict with the disanalogy between virtues and crafts established in *NE* 2.4, 1105a26-b5. My above interpretation of the disanalogy passage (in Section 3.b) suggests that the text from *NE* 2.4 does not necessarily contain anything that goes against applying this model to the virtues. For, if I am right, the role of the disanalogy passage is mainly to clarify that while in the case of the crafts we need to acquire only (or mainly) knowledge, in the case of the virtues, we aim at acquiring not only knowledge but also the capacity for right choice and stability. In other words, the disanalogy underscores the idea that learning virtue, in contrast with learning crafts, is not just about acquiring knowledge but also about shaping one’s motivational orientation. For this reason, the disanalogy does not block the application of the crafts’ model to the virtues, but instead warns us that we should incorporate this complication regarding motivational factors into our explanation of virtue acquisition.

Therefore, the model from *Metaph.* 9.8 can be used to explain virtue acquisition once we add the relevant considerations about motivation. In the case of learning a science or a craft, the “something of” the knowledge that the learner possesses is not knowledge properly speaking — and indeed it cannot be so, since knowledge is a perfection and a stable disposition — but rather consists in perceptions, memories, notions or true beliefs that are

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43 Nancy Sherman (1989) also refers to *Metaph.* 9.8 in her discussion of *NE* 2.4, but argues that because of the crafts-virtues disanalogy we should not use the craft model to elucidate the acquisition of virtue. (187-188).
significantly related to the knowledge which the learner aims to acquire. Similarly, in the case of acquiring the virtues, the “something of” virtue that the learner possesses will not be virtue properly speaking — since virtue too is a perfection and a stable disposition of the soul — but will rather consist in perceptions, memories, notions, true beliefs, desires or emotions that are significantly related to the virtue which the learner aims to acquire.

In the resulting account of moral development, then, the actions of the learners of virtue are exercises not only of “something of” the knowledge of the virtuous person that the learners already have, but more importantly they are exercises also of “something of” the motivation of the virtuous person that the learners already have.

By understanding the learner’s activities as exercise of proto-virtuous cognitive and motivational states already in the learner, this view provides the continuity that the motivationally-neutral view was missing, between learners’ actions and the dispositions that those actions are expected to produce. This view thus opens the possibility to explain in a non-mysterious way how we become virtuous by performing virtuous actions.

7. The Task for the Next Chapters

In this chapter it has become clear that we need to rethink the requirements that the learners of virtue should fulfill if their actions are to lead to the formation of virtuous dispositions of character. Aristotle does not offer a direct account of the features that the actions of the learners should have to conduce to this development, but he gives some hints that we can use as pointers in our search. I have argued that the texts from NE 2.1 and 2.4 suggest that the actions of the learners of virtue have to be performed well, and that, given the peculiar

44 Some passages that give us useful hints about the “something of” knowledge with which the learners start are e.g. *Physics* 1.1, 184a21-25, where Aristotle talks about the “inarticulate mixes” [τὰ συγκεκχυμένα] that are the starting point of learning and of “the whole better known in perception” [τὸ γὰρ ὅλον κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν γνωριμώτερον]; *Ar. Po.* 2.19 and *Met.* 1.1, where Aristotle presents the progression from sense perception-memory-experience.
character of virtuous actions, this implies not only that the learners have to fulfill a requirement concerning their knowledge, but also a requirement concerning their motivation.

In the chapters that follow I explore the character that the learners’ actions must have, with especial focus on the requirements that the learners themselves must fulfill if their actions are to conduce to the development of virtuous dispositions. My aim is to identify those proto-versions of the conditions for virtuously performed virtuous actions that are available to non-virtuous agents. To this end, I start by laying out in Chapters 2 and 3 the different possibilities which Aristotle himself indirectly presents in his discussion of the different kinds of pseudo-courage in NE 3.8. Through an analysis of the different cases of pseudo-courage, we will be able to conclude that shame is the best candidate available in the Aristotelian repertoire.
CH. 2. PSEUDO-VIRTUOUS ACTIONS, PSEUDO-VIRTUOUS CONDITIONS

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The goal of this chapter is to survey the different ways in which non-virtuous agents can do something virtuous by Aristotle’s own account, and to establish thus a framework for our inquiry about the conditions that learners of virtue must fulfill in their actions. To this end, I look for possible proto-versions of the requirements for virtuously performed virtuous actions that learners exercise in the process of learning-by-doing. I propose to start by examining the accounts of the different kinds of pseudo-courage that Aristotle offers in NE 3.8, since the study of the modalities of pseudo-courage might serve as a useful framework for our inquiry.

I start in Section 1 with a discussion of the notion of pseudo-courage and of the different ways in which actions can be taken to be pseudo-courageous and agents can be considered to have pseudo-courageous attitudes or tendencies. Then, in Sections 2 to 6, I walk backwards through the text of NE 3.8 to discuss all the different kinds of pseudo-courage except for shame-courage, which — given its relevance for my project — I analyze in more detail in Chapter 3.

Our analysis in this chapter and the next will reveal that, of the possible candidates available in NE 3.8, shame is the only one suited to provide a model to understand how learning-by-doing is possible. This result will motivate the investigation in the chapters that follow about the nature of shame and its role in moral development, with the aim of showing that shame is the best candidate to fill the moral upbringing gap in the Aristotelian account.
1. Varieties of Pseudo-Courage: Towards a Solution to the Problem of the Gap

In NE 3.8 Aristotle discusses a number of cases of agents who seem to be courageous but are not actually acting from courage, even though their external behavior might be indistinguishable from that of courageous people. These pseudo-courageous cases are shame-courage, fear-of-punishment-courage, experience-courage, thumos-courage, hope-courage and ignorance-courage, and each is related to the virtue of courage in different ways and degrees of proximity. My proposal in this chapter is to look at these different kinds of pseudo-courage with the aim of expanding our knowledge about how the actions of the learners of virtue should (and should not) be characterized in an account that successfully avoids the moral upbringing gap. After all, we know that the actions of the learners are “such as” those of virtuous people even though they are not done from virtue in the agent.

The present chapter establishes a useful framework for our investigation into the conditions for moral progress by analyzing the relationship and degrees of closeness of various pseudo-courageous actions and pseudo-courageous conditions to genuine courage. By seeing what goes wrong in each of the different cases of pseudo-courage, we will gain a clearer idea of the conditions that the learners should fulfill for their actions to qualify as conducive to the acquisition of virtuous dispositions. Thus, although we will be talking primarily about the particular virtue of courage, the results of the present analysis are applicable to virtue in general.

In addition, the present discussion of the different pseudo-courageous cases will provide further evidence against the motivationally-neutral account of the learners’ actions. For our study of the different pseudo-courageous cases will confirm that doing activities that are “such as” those of virtuous people – in that they are the right things to do in the circumstances but without virtuous motivation – does not produce the corresponding
virtuous dispositions. For although in the present chapter we will discuss examples of agents performing actions that are externally indistinguishable from those performed by courageous agents, in most of these cases the agents have no chance of becoming virtuous through such practices. The reason is that although the actions performed in each case may seem to be the *same actions* as those performed by virtuous agents, they, as we shall see, actually differ in several relevant ways.

Sections 2 to 6 of this chapter discuss each of these pseudo-courageous conditions. We will pay attention in our analysis to divergences between the different kinds of pseudo-courage in relation to two aspects, namely: (a) how close agents who perform pseudo-courageous actions are to being genuinely courageous; and (b) how close actions performed by pseudo-courageous agents are to the actions that are characteristic of genuine courage. More importantly, we will pay special attention to the effect that the exercise of the actions corresponding to each of these kinds of pseudo-courage has in the agents that perform such actions.

1.a. Pseudo-Virtuous Conditions

Aristotle indicates for each form of pseudo-courage a different kind of failure on the side of the agent that explains why the agent cannot be properly called courageous. None of the pseudo-courageous agents has, then, genuine courage, yet each one falls short of courage in a different way: they differ from courageous people in their degree of knowledge or experience; in their motivation; in their sensitivity to the relevant features of the situations; in the reliability of their responses, etc.

45 Of course, these two aspects are intimately connected, since the conditions in which pseudo-courageous agents find themselves (i.e. the dispositions or emotions from which their actions are performed) determine the character of the actions that those agents are able to perform. At the same time, the character of the pseudo-courageous actions (i.e. whether they are voluntary or not, the motive, and in general, what we have called in Chapter 1 “the *how*”) reveals the conditions, emotions or dispositions that lead agents to behave in that way and determine the kinds of dispositions that develop from the practice.
Commentators normally focus on the motivational aspects and tend to believe that all the forms of pseudo-courage are to be distinguished from genuine courage “in respect of their motivational content,” in Taylor’s (2006: 185) words. According to this view, then, the overarching difference is that while people with genuine courage act for the sake of the noble, people with one of the kinds of pseudo-courage act from other motives.

However, as our discussion of NE 2.4 in Chapter 1 has shown, actions can fail to be performed virtuously when agents fail to fulfill any of three requirements concerning knowledge, motivation or stability. Thus, although it is true that motivation is often the main difference between pseudo-courage and genuine courage, it is my contention that this is not always the case. For example, as we will see, in the case of ignorance-courage (Section 2) it is clear that the main differences are to be characterized by appealing to divergences in knowledge instead of divergences in motivation.

In sum, although motivation is one of the relevant factors to distinguish between the forms of pseudo-courage discussed in NE 3.8, we should not neglect the fact that there are also differences concerning the agents’ fulfillment of the other two requirements for virtuously performed virtuous action presented in NE 2.4, namely knowledge and stable disposition of character.

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46 Some examples of this view are Gay (1988): “they produce what looks like the right conduct, but the motivation is not quite the right one” (258, n.9); Irwin (1999): “Aristotle has explained that bravery demands ... the right motives; action must be for the sake of the fine. He now considers the appearances ...”; and Taylor (2006):

In this chapter Aristotle distinguishes from true courage five states which are ordinarily called types of courage, though strictly speaking they are not. They are ordinarily reckoned to be types of courage because they motivate (up to a point) the same kind of behavior as true courage, but are different from the latter in respect of their motivational content. (185)
1.b. Pseudo-Virtuous Actions

The second task of our analysis is to explore how the actions characteristic of each of the kinds of pseudo-courage differ from those performed by courageous agents. In this regard, we will have to pay attention not only to the external behaviour, i.e. not only to the movements realized by the agents or the results of such movements, but also to how the actions are performed. Thus, for instance, although the actions of an agent with shame-courage and those of someone with fear-of-punishment-courage may have a strong external resemblance to one another, and may seem to be the same actions, they in fact differ in several relevant ways: their ultimate goal is not the same, they do not have the same degree of voluntariness, etc.

Here again, my proposal is that when examining the differences between actions, we should look for differences not only in the goal of the actions but also in other regards, including the description under which the actions are performed, voluntariness, completeness, etc.

1.c. Pseudo-Virtuous Practice and Moral Development

Finally, a third, related consideration that we should include in our analysis is that the variations between the cases presented in NE 3.8 — both the variations in the conditions presented by the agents and in the resulting actions — are a consequence of the way in which the different conditions or attitudes are acquired. That is, the practice that leads towards each kind of pseudo-courage generally differs from the practice that leads to genuine courage and from the practice that leads to each of the other categories of pseudo-courage.
By showing that there are correlations between the different kinds of actions that are practiced and the tendencies or dispositions that are subsequently acquired, this analysis will provide support for the basic Aristotelian principle that there is *continuity* between the practices that lead to a condition or disposition and the practices that arise from it.

Attention to this issue puts us in a better position to answer two sets of questions relevant for the general project: (1) a broader set of questions about what has gone wrong in the practice that has brought the agents to each of the pseudo-courageous conditions, so that the result has not brought agents closer to fulfill the conditions of knowledge, motivation and stability characteristic of genuine courage but only to something that merely resembles it; and (2) a more specific set of questions about what is present in the actions of the shame-courageous people that allows the agents to make progress towards virtue.

Let us turn now to the discussion of the different cases of pseudo-courage from *NE* 3.8, and take them up one at a time.

### 2. Ignorance-Courage

The kind of pseudo-courage most distant from genuine courage is the one located in ignorance (*αἰγονοϊα*). This kind of condition results in the agents performing what appears to be a courageous action not because they think it is the noble thing to do, or because it will bring any benefit, but simply because they misread the particulars of their situation:

[T2a] *NE* 3.8, 1117a22-28:

> People who are ignorant [of the danger] also appear brave, and they are not far removed from those of a sanguine temper, but are inferior inasmuch as they have no dignity while these have. Hence also the sanguine hold their ground for a time; but those who have been deceived about the facts fly if they know or suspect that these are different from what they supposed, as happened to the Argives when they fell in with the Spartans and took them for Sicyonians.
The passage indicates three main failures characteristic of this kind of pseudo-courageous condition: lack of knowledge, lack of “dignity” \(aξίωμα\) and lack of stability. These failures in the agents result in actions that are involuntary and only coincidentally courageous.

First, in relation to knowledge, these pseudo-courageous agents are characterized mainly by being “ignorant” \(aγνωστοι\). Indeed, their initial excessive confidence is due to the fact that they are mistaken about the features of their situation. Aristotle gives the example of the battle of Corinth (392), where the Argives mistook Spartans for Sicyonians, since they were carrying Sicyonian shields (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.4.10). This example suggests that the kind of ignorance that Aristotle attributes to these agents is ignorance of at least some of the particulars of the situation. Concretely, in this example the Argives not only err in their assessment of the enemy’s strength, but they lack even the knowledge of who they are fighting against — in the technical terms of *NE* 3.1, they ignore “what or whom [they] are acting on” \(περὶ τὶ ἔν τίνι πράττει\) (1111a4). These agents, thus, appear courageous when they momentarily suffer an excess of confidence due to a misapprehension of the situation; however, once they grasp the actual details their confidence disappears, they become afraid, and they immediately escape, thinking that it is beyond their capacities to stay at their posts and fight.

Secondly, Aristotle says that the behaviour of these pseudo-courageous agents reveals a lack of dignity. What I translate here as “dignity” \(δαξίωμα\) is the expression used for “that of which one is thought worthy”, which might have the sense of “reputation” or
“social position”, or might be simply a word to refer to one’s “worth”.\textsuperscript{47} Aristotle indicates with this claim, then, that ignorant-courageous people do not have the kind of self-reliance or reputation that would justify or support their confidence in the face of danger, and this deficiency renders them unable to hold to their post in a perilous situation. Their initial confidence is based on a mistake about the situation, but there is nothing in them that can give them strength to stay in battle once the mistake is corrected.

Thirdly, a consequence of their lack of dignity is that there is no \textit{stability} or reliability in their behavior. They perform courageous actions only because they are under a false impression, e.g. that it is a “fight with the (weak) Sicyonians”. The moment they realize the actual conditions of the situation, e.g. it is a “fight with the (powerful) Spartans”, they run away. Thus, those who do courageous things on account of their ignorance can persist only as long as they are not aware that the situation is dire; as soon as they realize the danger they immediately flee.

These conditions in the agents are reflected in the kinds of actions that ignorant-courageous people perform. For insofar as they are ignorant of relevant particulars of the circumstances, their actions do not even count as \textit{voluntary}. Indeed, although their actions are not forced, they do not fulfill the necessary requirements for voluntary action concerning knowledge. For this reason (according to the distinction established in Chapter 1, Section 5b), their actions are only coincidently courageous –they are more like mistakes than like genuine actions.

To sum up, then, the pseudo-courageous actions done by agents who ignore the particulars of the situation are (at least initially) externally similar to the actions that

\textsuperscript{47} Cf. the entry for \textit{ἀξίωμα} (A.1-5) in LSJ.
courageous people perform, but they are not genuinely courageous actions insofar as the agents lack knowledge, dignity, and reliability.

2.a. Ignorance-Courage and Moral Development

Our analysis of ignorance-courage has made it clear that the repetition of actions which resemble courageous actions but are done in ignorance would offer a poor method for acquiring a virtuous disposition of character. On the one hand, the agents cannot be said to exercise any of the conditions that are required for virtuously performed virtuous actions, since they have no knowledge of the particular circumstances of the action, they cannot be said to pursue a noble goal, and they lack reliability in their behavior; on the other hand, and more importantly, the actions performed from ignorance-courage are not even voluntary actions and, thus, cannot be properly attributed to the agents.

3. Hope- Courage

The second-last case of pseudo-courage mentioned in the text is that of the “sanguine” or “hopeful people” [οἱ ἐυέλπιδες], who have an excess of confidence on the grounds of having been oft-successful in the past, but who are not really prepared to meet the right dangers properly:

[T2b] NE 3.8, 1117a9-17:

Nor are sanguine people brave; for they are confident in danger only because they have conquered often and against many foes. Yet they closely resemble courageous people, because both are confident; but courageous people are confident for the reasons stated earlier, while these are so because they think they are the strongest and can suffer nothing. (Drunken people also behave in this way; they become sanguine). When their adventures do not succeed, however, they run away; but it was the mark of a courageous person to face things that are, and seem, terrible for a human being because it is noble to do so and disgraceful not to do so.
Sanguine agents directly attribute to themselves a courageous character, even though they are far from being courageous. To use the terms that Aristotle proposes in *NE* 4.3, 1123a34-b8, the sanguine agent is “foolish” [ηλιθίος] (as opposed to “proud” [μεγαλόψυχος]), insofar as she thinks herself “worthy of great things” [μεγάλων αὐτοῦ ἄξιῶν ἄξιος], while in reality she is “worthy of little” [μικρῶν ἄξιος]. This aggrandized self-image makes such a person undertake dangerous activities that are beyond her capabilities.

Thanks wholly to past successes, sanguine people have a mistaken view of their own worth —or in the terms used in the previous section, they have an inadequate sense of dignity. They imagine that they are courageous, and capable of dealing properly with dangerous situations, but against their perception, they lack the conditions that would make them genuinely courageous. The source of their apparent courage is their inflated sense of their own worth, which makes them have an excess of confidence and embark upon dangerous ventures.

This inflated sense of their own worth, however, has a positive side when we compare the sanguine condition with that of ignorant-courageous agents. For sanguine agents’ self-conception sets certain behavioural expectations that push them to try and live up to their own high standards. They believe that they are “the strongest and can suffer nothing” [κράτιστοι εἶναι καὶ μηθέν ἄν παθεῖν] and this provides them with sufficient confidence to throw themselves into battle. Thus, since they have a sense of their own
worth, as well as the desire to embody such worth, they are superior to those who are completely ignorant. In this respect, Aristotle says that sanguine people are “closely resemblant” \( \text{παρόμοιοι} \) to the courageous person, insofar as both sanguine people and courageous people rely on their own condition as the source for their courage. However, sanguine people’s beliefs about their own condition are both unfounded and erroneous, and their confidence is excessive. The confidence of the courageous person, in contrast, is grounded on her own character that guarantees that she has the required knowledge, motivation and stability not to abandon her post when the danger arrives.

This resemblance to the courageous person makes the example of the sanguine more interesting for our purposes than what we found in the case of the ignorant. For, as opposed to the ignorant, these agents have done the right thing in the past, knowing what they were doing, and have emerged successful. In addition, due to their past success they have arrived at an elevated conception of their own virtue and at the belief that they indeed live up to the right standards of value. This indicates that, unlike the ignorant agents, sanguine people in fact care for being courageous. These circumstances might be seen as initial steps in the process of learning by doing; however, sanguine people seem to not to make real progress in the acquisition of genuine courage. This is because they have an erroneous conception of what it is to be courageous, since they think it consists in “being the strongest” \( \text{κρατιστοι ἔιναι} \). Consequently, their actions are misguided at a fundamental level.

Another advantage of the sanguine agent’s exaggerated sense of self-worth is that it gives them a certain measure of stability or reliability in their actions. As Aristotle indicates in \([T2a]\) above, sanguine agents, in contrast with the simply ignorant, “hold their ground for a time” \( \text{μένουσι τινα χρόνου} \), and, even if they realize there is danger, will stay in their posts at least initially thanks to a firm belief in their own capacity for success. Unfortunately,
since their attitude is based on false assumptions, as soon as they realize they are unlikely to succeed, they run away. Thus, although sanguine agents are more reliable than the ignorant-courageous, their degree of reliability is not particularly high.

Finally, Aristotle says that sanguine people differ from courageous people in that their reason for confronting dangers is not “because it is noble to do so and disgraceful not to do so” \(\text{ὅτι καλὸν καὶ αἰσχρὸν τὸ μή}\). He arrives at this conclusion from the fact that sanguine people flee when the dangers seem excessive, which is a sign (as we will see in [T2d] below) that they are more afraid of death than of doing shameful things.

In sum, the condition that characterizes sanguine people most precisely is their erroneous elevated sense of self-worth, which equips them with some tendencies that resemble those of courageous people, like confronting the dangerous situation as dangerous, and holding to their post in moments of danger; nonetheless this condition does not suffice to produce a genuinely courageous disposition in that it does not make their attitudes reliable enough and it provides them only with superficial reasons for action.

In relation to the character of their actions, sanguine people are aware of the particulars of their situation, and therefore, their behavior when they hold to their posts in dangerous situations counts as voluntary. Precisely because they think of themselves as courageous, they confront risky situations wholeheartedly and with a clear sense that the situations are - at least by their own reckoning - dangerous. However, insofar as they have the erroneous conception that courage is simply “being stronger”, and insofar as their goal is not the noble characteristic of courageous actions, it is hard to conclude that their actions are courageous. In other words, because their account of what they are doing, or the description under which they take some of the particulars of their actions, is significantly
different from the account that a virtuous person would give, their actions should not be characterized as courageous. At best, we can say they coincidentally do courageous deeds.

3.a. Hope-Courage and Moral Development

Aristotle’s discussion of hope-courage makes it clear that the courageous doings that have led sanguine people to their condition are useless in relation to virtue acquisition because they have failed to provide the kind of knowledge, motivation or reliability that could bring these agents closer to the possession of virtue.

First, Aristotle suggests that these agents do not have the kind of sensitivity to the requirements of their own situations that would allow them to see what the proper thing to do is; instead, he says that they jump into dangers simply because they think they can handle them without trouble. Further, their motivation to confront dangers seems to be simply because they think of themselves as stronger than the rest so nothing can harm them; thus, they are far from acting for the sake of anything noble. Finally, sanguine people have no stability in their pseudo-courageous tendencies, since they turn into cowards when they see that a situation is beyond their strength. As a result, it seems that if the learners perform actions that resemble those of courageous people in the way that sanguine people do, they will become at best “bold-cowards” \( \theta\rho\alpha\sigma\upsilon\delta\epsilon\iota\lambda\omicron\omicron \) or simply “bold” \( \theta\rho\alpha\sigma\upsilon \), since they will be “precipitate, and wish for dangers beforehand but draw back when they are in them”.\(^{48}\)

4. Thumos-Courage

The next case of pseudo-courageous behavior discussed in NE 3.8, following our reverse order, is thumos-courage. Thumos-courage is particularly interesting for our purposes, since

\(^{48}\) Cf. Aristotle’s discussion of rashness in NE 3.7, 1115b24-1116a9.
some commentators (Cooper (1988, 1996), Gay (1988), Grönroos (2007)) have proposed that our first experience of moral value is related to our innate thumoeidetic desires towards the noble. If this view is right, then thumos would constitute the proto-virtuous condition we are looking for.

4.a. Thumos and the Noble: The Platonic Prejudice

Some commentators (Cooper (1988, 1996), Grönroos (2007)) attribute to thumos a central role in moral development. This view holds that thumos equips agents with their first impulses towards the noble, thereby providing a continuity between thumos and virtue with respect to the agent’s motivation.

Let us turn first to John Cooper’s (1996) proposal, since Gösta Grönroos (2007) follows Cooper’s views in his explanation of the relationship between thumos and the noble (to kalon) that concerns us here. Cooper (1996) holds that our first experience of moral value is related to our thumoeidetic desires:

The specifically moral value, then—the value with which morally virtuous persons as such are specially concerned—is constituted by the order, fittingness and harmony, and determinateness of whatever possesses it. If I am right, this kind of value is for Aristotle the eventual object of one of the two types of non-rational desire that he thinks human beings are all endowed with, thumos. It is through thumos that people are first motivated to experience this kind of value, and so first enabled to know, though haltingly, what is valuable for us in it. The morally virtuous person, in whom reason has taken control, has a reasoned understanding of this kind of value and so is motivated to pursue it simply on the basis of that

49 See also Gay (1988), who appears to substantiate this view in the relationship between thumos-courage and genuine courage expressed in NE 3.8:

[…] there is not only a resemblance in the conduct produced, but a similarity in the motivations which lead to it. It is a similarity, not an identity, as there is a difference; but there is a similarity: ‘For [the angry] do not [act] on account of to kalon [the fine or noble] nor as reason [indicates], but on account of a pathos; but they have something similar’ (1117a8-9). … [I]t sounds as if thumos is the right pathos, and all we need to do to attain courage proper is to add the choice. This seems to be confirmed by ‘The [apparent courage] which results from thumos seems to be most natural [most close to the nature of courage], and when it has prohairesis and the goal added to it [it seems] to be [genuine] courage’ (1117a4-5). (258, n.9)
understanding. But she continues to be motivated to pursue this value also by her thumos-desires, whose satisfaction, indeed, is necessary for her to experience it fully. (113; 1998: 279)

Cooper’s thesis is that thumos is what first motivates individuals to experience the noble and enables them to know it. Thus, non-virtuous people can possess a grasp of the noble and motivation-towards-the-noble if they have a well-oriented thumos, and in this way they are able to identify noble actions and be moved to perform them before they possess virtue.

I am partially sympathetic to Cooper’s attempt to bridge the moral upbringing gap. He recognizes the need to equip the learner with at least a minimal motivation towards the noble, and presents us with a reasonable story from which we can explain moral development as a continuous process. Thus, I agree with Cooper in the general idea that people must experience moral value before they possess full virtue, and with the consequent claim that it is not necessary to be virtuous in order to be motivated-towards-the-noble. However, I am not as convinced as Cooper that the bridging role can be played by thumos-desires.

The main problem with Cooper’s (1996) proposal is that he supports his claims about the role of thumos in moral development on the assumption that there is a direct connection between thumos and the noble. He claims that the kalon is the proper object of thumos, i.e. the kalon is “that for the sake of which” [hōu benēka] the thumos moves. However, the textual evidence suggests that we should not grant that assumption.

The motivation behind Cooper’s assumption that the noble is a proper object of thumos comes from an unwarranted projection of Plato’s views into Aristotle’s scheme. Burnyeat (1980), to whom Cooper (1996) refers directly, establishes this link in his own explanation of the aims and results of the Aristotelian good upbringing:

The fundamental insight here is Plato’s. For in discussing the development in the young of a set of motives concerned with what is noble and just, we
are on the territory which Plato marked out for the middle part of his tripartite soul. The middle, so-called spirited part strives to do what is just and noble (Rep. 440cd), and develops in the young before reason (441a; cf. Ar. Pol. 1334b22-25). It is also the seat of shame: implicitly so in the story of Leontius and his indignation with himself for desiring to look on the corpses, explicitly in the Phaedrus (253d, 254e). The connection with anger, which we shall also find in Aristotle, is that typically anger is this same concern with what is just and noble directed outward toward other people (cf. NE 5.8, 1135b28-29). Aristotle owes to Plato, as he himself acknowledges in 2.3, the idea that these motivating evaluative responses are unreasoned—they develop before reason and are not at that stage grounded in a general view of the place of the virtues in the good life—and because they are unreasoned, other kinds of training must be devised to direct them on to the right kinds of object: chiefly, guided practice and habituation, as we have seen [...]. (79)

Burnyeat, whose main concern in this passage is the notion of shame in Aristotle, directly interprets Aristotle’s notion of shame with reference to the Platonic thumoeides, and thus finds a way of connecting both shame and thumos with the noble. However, we should not fail to notice that there are important textual obstacles against this assimilation of Aristotle’s views to the Platonic framework.

One of these obstacles is that while Aristotle never explicitly connects thumos with the noble,\(^50\) he does appear to establish a clear link between shame and the noble in several passages (NE 3.8, 1116a15-1116b3; 10.9, 1179b4-16).\(^51\)

The problem here is not only that the object of thumos is not easy to pin down in Aristotle, as some authors have pointed out,\(^52\) but rather that the textual evidence suggests that thumos might be merely reactive and might even be lacking a proper goal. As we are

\(^50\) This point is recognized by Grönroos (2007):

The attribution of ὁ καλόν to spirited desire is far from explicit in Aristotle, but I find Cooper’s arguments for this attribution, based on NE 2.3, 1104b30ff., persuasive (“Reason, Moral Virtue, and Moral Value”, 95-98). See also Burnyeat, “Aristotle on Learning to be Good”, 79-86. (261, note 25)

\(^51\) I present arguments in favor of the claim that there is a strong connection between shame and the noble in Chapters 3 and 5.

\(^52\) Nussbaum (1978), for example, says about this issue that “Aristotle nowhere gives a sufficiently clear analysis of the objects of thumos, of its relation to reason and to pleasure, and of its various types and manifestations.” (206)
about to see in our analysis of the section of NE 3.8 dealing with *thumos*-courage, Aristotle says of this kind of pseudo-courage that “it is genuine courage when we add choice and the goal” [προσλαβοῦσα προάρεσιν καὶ τὸ οὕτω ἔνεκα ἀνδρεία εἶναι]. This claim strongly suggests that *thumos* is not naturally oriented towards the *kalon*, and may furthermore be without a proper goal.

The second obstacle to this reading is that Aristotle never connects shame with *thumos*, on the contrary, in direct contradiction to this linkage he gives us an indication that he is aware of important differences between them. Concretely, Aristotle distinguishes between *aidōs*-courage and *thumos*-courage in NE 3.8, where they are treated as two different kinds of pseudo-courage with very distinct characteristics. In NE 3.8 Aristotle clearly associates civic courage and the ability to recognize the value of the noble through honor with *aidōs*, not with *thumos*, while he associates natural courage - which he associates with wild animals and with people who guide their actions “on account of pain” or “on account of passion” in general - with *thumos*. This evidence thus forces us to break with the Platonic view that Cooper’s line of interpretation wants to pursue and to re-think the role of *thumos* in moral development.

4.b. *Thumos*-Courage in NE 3.8

Let us now contrast these points by looking at the details of the discussion of *thumos*-courage in NE 3.8.

[T2c] NE 3.8.1116b23-1117a9:

*Thumos* also is sometimes reckoned as courage; those who act from *thumos*, like wild beasts rushing at those who have wounded them, are thought to be courageous, because courageous people also are passionate; for *thumos* above all things is eager to rush on danger, and hence Homer’s ‘put strength into his *thumos*’ and ‘aroused their spirit and *thumos*’ and ‘hard he
breathed panting’ and ‘his blood boiled’.\(^{53}\) For all such expressions seem to indicate the stirring and onset of thumos. [\(a\)] Now courageous people act on account of the noble, but thumos aids them; while wild beasts act under the influence of pain; for they attack because they have been wounded or because they are afraid, since if they are in a forest they do not come near one. [\(b\)] Thus they are not courageous because, driven by pain and thumos, they rush on danger without foreseeing any of the perils, since at that rate even asses would be courageous when they are hungry, for blows will not drive them from their food;\(^{54}\) and lust also makes adulterers do many daring things. (Those creatures are not courageous, then, which are driven on to danger by pain or thumos.) The ‘courage’ that is due to thumos seems to be the most natural, and [\(c\)] to be courage if choice and goal be added. People, then, as well as beasts, suffer pain when they are angry, and are pleased when they exact their revenge; those who fight for these reasons, however, are pugnacious but not courageous; for they do not act on account of the noble nor as the rule directs, but on account of passion; they have, however, something resembling to courage.

Aristotle concludes his discussion in this section by asserting that people with thumos-courage do not possess genuine courage but have “something resembling it” \[\text{παραπλήσιον δε}'\]
What is the source of this resemblance? And how does the condition of the thumos-courageous person approximate that of the genuinely courageous one? The main similarities that our passage acknowledges between thumos-courage and genuine courage are a common readiness to confront danger, and the pleasure that both thumos-driven agents and courageous agents feel in their activities.

However, there are also important differences between them. The passage quoted above identifies three primary distinctions: (a) that while courageous people act “on account of the noble” [διὰ τὸ καλὸν], and “as reason directs” [ὡς ὁ λόγος], those with thumos-courage act “on account of the pain” [διὰ λύπην] or “on account of passion” [διὰ πάθος]; (b) that those with thumos-courage act “without foreseeing any of the dangers” [οὐθὲν τῶν δεινῶν προορῶντα], while genuinely courageous people are aware of the dangers towards which they are heading; and (c) that thumos-courage does not involve “choice and that for-the-sake-of-which” [προαιρεσίν καὶ τὸ οὗ ἐνεκα].

The first set of differences between thumos-courage and genuine courage concerns, then, their motivation and their relation to reason. Contrary to what we saw above in Cooper’s account, Aristotle maintains several times in our passage that while the cause of the courageous person’s activities is the noble, that of thumos-driven individuals is not the noble. To support this claim, Aristotle mentions as examples the thumos of wild animals, which is due to pain, and that of adulterers, which is due to passion. These examples suggest that the agents that typically follow their thumos are governed mainly by their attitudes regarding certain pleasures and pains and have no concern for the noble. However, Aristotle does not mention what the proper object of thumos is, and his claims towards the end of the passage suggest that thumos might even be lacking a proper goal. In any case, what becomes clear in our text is that the noble is not the object of thumos.
Furthermore, Aristotle makes it clear that while courageous people follow reason in their actions, agents moved by *thumos* act on account of passion and “not as reason directs” [οὐδ’ ὡς ὦ λόγος]. This explicit claim about the relationship between *thumos* and reason in the Aristotelian account clashes with the above-mentioned attempt by some commentators of making *thumos* the ally of reason in a Platonic fashion.55

Sometimes commentators appeal to the text from *NE* 7.6, 1149ba24ff., to argue for a more intimate relationship between *thumos* and reason, since Aristotle says in that passage that “*thumos* seems to listen to argument to some extent” [θυμὸς ἀκούειν μὲν τι τοῦ λόγου]. However, what we find in that text is that, although *thumos* seems to listen to reason, “it mishears it, like hasty servants” [παρακούειν δὲ, καθάπερ οί ταχεῖς τῶν διακόνων]. For that reason, *thumoeidetic* impulses lead agents to respond quickly and unreflectively to situations of offense (or danger, in the examples of *NE* 3.8), and the typical reaction is counterattack or revenge without taking into account the circumstances or the potential results of one’s actions. As Aristotle puts it in our text from *NE* 3.8, *thumos*-courageous agents act “without foreseeing” [οὐθὲν ... προορῶντα]. Thus, the model that we find in *NE* 7.6 together with the examples from our passage lead us to the conclusion that *thumos* is a reactive emotion, and that it does not have a clear relation to reason.

55 Two remarkable cases are Cooper (1996) and Grönroos (2007), who see *thumos* as the element of the non-rational part of the soul that is able to “listen to reason” or take part in reason by listening. See the following quote from Grönroos (2007) as an example:

> [W]hen it comes to the non-rational part’s following reason’s lead, it is in fact only spirited desire, not appetite (*epithumia*), that can do so (*NE* 7.6, 1149b1-3). What makes spirited desire suited to do this work on behalf of the non-rational part is the kind of objects, or values, it is set upon. For Aristotle distinguishes between the two kinds of non-rational desire by the kind of object each strives for; whereas appetite is always set upon pleasure (*hedone*), spirited desire is set upon an entirely different value, viz. what is fine and beautiful (*to kalon*). (260-261)
4.c. Thumos and Moral Development Revisited

In the light of Aristotle’s discussion of thumos-courage in NE 3.8, then, it is clear that Cooper’s proposal of taking thumos as the initial step in moral development should be abandoned. The activities that characterize individuals who are driven exclusively by their thumos are guided by passion and not in any way by reason, and they are far from having the noble as their aim. Consequently, their actions cannot by themselves be in any way analyzed as exercises of conditions that will eventually become virtuous dispositions.

However, Aristotle gives indications that he does not see incompatibility between thumos-behavior and virtuous activity. On the contrary, Aristotle says that courageous people are also passionate or thumoeideis. This stands as an indication that, although the activities associated with thumos-courage do not by themselves help agents make progress towards virtue, thumoeidetic impulses aid virtue of courage once it has been acquired, and contribute somehow to the performance of courageous actions. What Aristotle says is that “courageous people act on account of the noble” [διὰ τὸ καλὸν], “but thumos aids them” [ὁ δὲ θυμὸς συνεργεῖ αὐτοῖς]. In other words, the function of thumos is to encourage and promote courageous activities by adding to the strengths of the brave agents.

5. Experience-Courage

The courage characteristic of those who have experience [ἐμπειρία] is also a merely apparent kind of courage. Aristotle’s discussion of this pseudo-courage not only shows that experience offers an insufficient condition to produce genuinely courageous agents, but makes clear that experience alone cannot bring agents in any way closer to possessing genuine courage. Moreover, by observing that citizen soldiers with no experience are able to present courageous behaviour in extreme situations while professional soldiers flee, Aristotle
also suggests that the kind of experience possessed by professional soldiers is not even necessary for having courage.

There are passages in *NE*, however, that suggest that experience is a key factor in moral development, and even that it might be a likely candidate to bridge the moral upbringing gap.\(^{56}\) Indeed, those commentators who are inclined to emphasize the analogy between crafts and virtues tend to think that the purpose of the good upbringing is to provide the learner of virtue with the relevant experience about the facts of life.\(^{57}\)

Our aim here is to explore the extent to which experience plays a role in the practices that lead learners to the formation of virtuous dispositions. We should not forget that a proper solution to the moral upbringing gap problem requires that the agents perform actions in which they exercise those conditions that when perfected constitute virtue. The present discussion of Aristotle’s treatment of experience in this regard will reveal that experience is not the solution we are looking for.

### 5.a. Some Arguments in Favour of Experience as the Key to Moral Development

Some commentators hold that the goal of habituation is to provide the learner with the relevant experience of the actions in life. The grounds for this approach is that Aristotle often appeals in *NE* to the lack of experience in young people as an explanation of their inability to engage arguments about ethical and political matters. Indeed, Aristotle claims that because young people are “inexperienced in the actions of life” \(\text{ἀπείρος γὰρ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πράξεων} (NE\ 1.3, 1095a3)\) and “the young person lacks experience” \(\text{νέος δ’ ἐμπείρος οὐκ ἔστιν} (NE\ 6.8, 1142a15)\) they are not only unable to be practically wise.

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\(^{56}\) See for example *NE* 1.3, 1095a2-11 and *NE* 6.8, 1142a13-20, discussed in Section 5.a immediately below.

\(^{57}\) Among the authors that emphasize the role of experience in moral upbringing we find especially Broadie (1993) and Annas (1995, 2003).
but are also incapable of listening to arguments about practical issues. Experience, then, at least in some sense, is taken to be a necessary requirement for acquiring *phronēsis* and becoming receptive to arguments about the just and the noble.

There has been abundant discussion in the literature about the requirements that Aristotle establishes for the audience of his lectures in ethics, with particular emphasis on the kind of knowledge that the proper listeners are required to have.\(^{58}\) Aristotle presents an overview of these requirements in *NE* 1.3, 1095a2-11 and *NE* 6.8, 1142a13-20. While he gives slightly different answers in these two passages, we can nevertheless draw the conclusion that there are three necessary factors for someone to be ready to listen to arguments about the noble and the just: (a) “experience” [*ēµειρία*]; (b) life “according to reason” [κατὰ λόγου], as opposed to “life according to passion” [τὸ κατὰ πάθος ζήν]; and (c) “conviction” [πίστις] about at least some claims on practical matters.

The fact that experience is included among these requirements has led more than a few commentators to conclude that experience is the key factor (or at least one key factor) for moral development. Now, although it is undeniable that these authors are correct in giving to experience a central role in moral development, I believe that experience is not what puts learners in a position to engage in the right kind of practice in the process of learning-by-doing. Let me use the passage devoted to experience-courage in *NE* 3.8 to make my point.

\(^{58}\) Most of the discussions of Aristotle’s account of moral development include references to the problem of the audience. Interestingly, the debate about the requirements that the proper audience needs to fulfill turns often around the question about the meaning of Aristotle’s contrast between knowing “the that” and knowing “the why”. Some noteworthy contributions to this debate are Burnet (1900: esp. 19); Hardie (1968: 34-35); Burnyeat (1980); Sherman (1989: esp. 194-196); Broadie (1991: esp. 22-24; 367-371); Vasiliou (1996).
5.b. Experience-Courage in NE 3.8

In NE 3.8 Aristotle presents experience as a weak condition for agents to engage in virtuous activity. He discusses the case of professional soldiers, who have been trained in military matters and have experienced the violence of war, but nonetheless lack the kind of disposition that enables them to confront dangers properly:

[T2d] NE 3.8, 1116b2-23:

Experience with regard to particular facts is also thought to be courage; this is indeed the reason why Socrates thought courage was knowledge. Other people exhibit this quality in other dangers, and professional soldiers exhibit it in the dangers of war; for there seem to be many empty alarms in war, of which these have had the most comprehensive experience; therefore they seem brave, because the others do not know the nature of the facts. Again, their experience makes them most capable in attack and in defence, since they can use their arms and have the kind that are likely to be best both for attack and for defence; therefore they fight like armed men against unarmed or like trained athletes against amateurs; for in such contests too it is not the bravest people that fight best, but those who are strongest and have their bodies in the best condition. Professional soldiers turn cowards, however, when the danger puts too great a strain on them and they are inferior in numbers and equipment; for they are the first to fly, while citizen-forces die at their posts, as in fact happened at the temple of Hermes. For to the latter flight is disgraceful and death is preferable to safety on those terms; while the former from the very beginning faced the danger on the assumption that they were stronger, and when they know the facts they fly, fearing death more than disgrace; but the brave man is not that sort of person.

\[\text{τοιούτου δὲ ἂνλοι μὲν ἐν ἄλλοις, ἐν τοῖς πολεμικοῖς δὲ οἱ στρατιῶται: δοκεῖ γὰρ εἶναι πολλὰ κενὰ τοῦ πολέμου, ἀ \] 
\[\text{μᾶλλον συνεωράκασιν οὕτως φαίνονται δὴ ἄνδρεῖοι, ὅτι οὐκ ἦσασιν οἱ ἄλλοι οἷα ἦσιν. Εἰτα ποιῆσαι καὶ μὴ παθεῖν μάλιστα δύνανται ἐκ τῆς ἐμπειρίας, δυνάμενοι χρῆσαι τοὺς ὑπολοίς καὶ τοιούτα ἔχοντες ὅποια ἂν εἰς καὶ πρὸς τὸ ποιῆσαι καὶ πρὸς τὸ μὴ παθεῖν κράτιστα· ὡσπερ οὐν ἀνόπλοις ὄπλισμένοι μάχονται καὶ ἀβλητὰ ἱδιώταις· καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις ἀγώσιν οὐχ ἂν ἄνδρειότατοι μαχιμωτάτοι εἴσιν, ἀλλ' ἂν μᾶλλον ἰσχύσοντες καὶ τὰ σώματα ἀριστὰ ἔχοντες. οἱ στρατιῶται δὲ δεῖλοι γίνονται, ὅταν ὑπερτείνῃ ο λίβυνυς καὶ λείψωνται τοῖς πλῆθεσι καὶ ταῖς παρασκευαῖς· πρῶτοι γὰρ φεύγουσι, τὰ}
The pseudo-courageous condition that Aristotle attributes to professional soldiers is a kind of familiarity or knowledge about particulars that makes them somehow *praktikoi*. The experienced agents have knowledge of the kind of behavior that is usually considered as courageous in their particular circumstances, and they know how to apply that knowledge to action; for that reason, their actions are often externally indistinguishable from those of truly courageous agents. Concretely, the professional soldiers, who have experience in dangerous situations, are able to identify the risk of a particular circumstance, ponder the actual danger to their persons, and stand firm at their posts in situations that others would find terrifying.

However, Aristotle, acknowledges that the success of these experts in war has limits due to (a) the kind of knowledge that they have, (b) their motivation and (c) their reliability. Although these agents possess sufficient knowledge to differentiate real danger from “the empty alarms of war” [*kena tou polemou*], their knowledge is not sufficient to reveal which situations are worth fighting for and which are not. For example, should the fighting grow too dangerous before their expert eyes, they may be inclined to flee the battlefield with no regard for whether other considerations exist to keep them in the fight. Thus, it is not the case that these agents do the right thing in all dangerous situations, but only in a limited range of cases.

As Aristotle explains, experienced soldiers do courageous things because they know that in a given situation they are well-prepared to succeed –i.e. they know that the situation is not really dangerous. However, as soon as they realize that they are in real peril, these
experienced agents will no longer do courageous things but will readily perform cowardly actions.

The main indication of the defectiveness of their condition is that these experienced soldiers have very limited reliability. They are only reliable when they control the situation sufficiently as to not to feel danger, and insofar as their strength allows them to feel confident through many hardships; but when the battle presents a risk to their own survival, “they turn cowards” [δείλοι γίνονται].

Aristotle locates the source of this defect by comparing professional soldiers to citizen soldiers, and describes how experienced agents will flee when there is danger because they “fear death more than what is disgraceful” [τοῦ αἰσχροῦ]. The citizen soldiers, in contrast, once they are persuaded about the nobility or goodness of an action, will hold steady to their course in the presence of even the worst danger.

5.c. Technical Training vs. Training for Virtue

The first puzzling move made in NE 3.8 occurs when Aristotle associates the claim that courage is “experience about particular facts” [η ἐμπειρία ἡ περὶ ἐκαστα] with Socrates’ claim that “courage is knowledge” [ἐπιστήμην εἶναι τὴν ἀνδρείαν]. This association is strange at first, since the kind of knowledge about particulars involved in experience is very different from the notion of knowledge expressed in Socrates’ ἐπιστήμην. Why, then, does Aristotle associate the claim that experience about particular actions is virtue with the Socratic claim that virtue is ἐπιστήμην?

My view is that Aristotle makes this apparently odd association because he is addressing a similar problem that is involved both in the mistake being made by Socrates (in thinking that virtue is knowledge), and in the mistake made by those who think that virtue is
experience. Concretely, I think that the kind of experience that Aristotle is talking about in this passage, and that he discards as mere pseudo-courage, is the experience that is directly related to the acquisition of *episteme* or *techne*, i.e. theoretical or technical knowledge as opposed to practical. Consequently, Aristotle’s complaint against experience as the kind of exercise that is proper to professional soldiers is rooted in its technical character, which renders this experience not equivalent to what the learner acquires in the process of habituation, precisely because it is not *practical* in the Aristotelian sense.

Aristotle is trying to establish in this passage, then, a difference between those who have received the kind of upbringing that provides respect for the laws and concern for one’s fellow-citizens, and those who have received professional training. The contrast is, as I see it, an exemplification of the contrast between the acquisition of virtues and that of crafts that he presented in *NE* 2.4. For of the three conditions that virtuous agents are supposed to exercise during their formation, the practices involved in professional training exercise but one: the learner’s knowledge. The professional soldiers have received military training and have acquired the relevant skills and knowledge about particulars related to war, yet their training has not provided them with the right motivational tendencies. Thus, while they are able to use the appropriate weapons correctly, can assume the correct poses on the battlefield, etc., they are not able to live up to the standards of courageous behaviour.

Aristotle’s conception of the relation between crafts and virtues is complex, and although he often appeals to the crafts in order to explain by analogy the virtues, he has also outlined important differences between them. As we saw in our discussion of *NE* 2.1-4 in Chapter 1, Aristotle appeals to the analogy between virtues and crafts to explain how we

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59 If I am right about this, then it is not relevant whether Aristotle is talking specifically in the passage about mercenaries or not (Cf. Irwin (1999): ad loc.). The point is to contrast two kinds of formation in courage: one of a predominantly technical kind, and the other practical.
acquire the virtues of character. The learning of character virtues and of crafts is similar in that learners of virtue become virtuous by doing virtuous actions, just as learners of a craft become experts by performing the activities that are proper of that craft. In NE 2.4, however, Aristotle indicates that there is also an important difference between character virtues and crafts: while “the knowing” [τὸ εἰδέναι, 1105b2] is the central element in the acquisition of crafts —so that if one has a sufficient amount of the relevant knowledge, the productive action will be performed properly— in the case of the virtues, “the knowing has little or no force” [τὸ μὲν εἰδέναι οὐδὲν ἦ μικρὸν ἵσχυει, 1105b2-3]. The reason for this, I contend, is that knowledge is not able to lead by itself to the performance of the adequate actions in the right way, and thus, technical training does not provide the agents with the right kind of motive or the stability characteristic of virtue.

5.d. Experience and Moral Development

The discussion of experience-courage in NE 3.8 indirectly presents two reasons why moral upbringing cannot be understood as equivalent to the process of the acquisition of experience: on the one hand, experience is not sufficient to develop the right kind of motivational tendencies; and on the other hand, experience is not even necessary to develop the right kind of motivational tendencies.

We have seen in the previous section the reasons why Aristotle holds that experience is not sufficient to develop the right kind of character dispositions. Aristotle’s argument draws on the fact that while professional soldiers have acquired an abundant experience of war and can generally handle danger quite well, they have not had the proper shaping of their motivational tendencies. Thus, their motivation fails whenever the danger is truly great, and experience alone proves insufficient to keep them at their posts. This lack of reliability is
the sign that Aristotle presents to show that the conditions of professional soldiers are insufficient.

However, Aristotle also shows that experience is not necessary to develop the relevant conditions for courageous behavior.\textsuperscript{60} When Aristotle compares professional soldiers to citizen-soldiers, he says that the latter - even when they are utterly without prior experience on the battlefield - are able to hold their positions and refrain from fleeing when they see that the danger is real. Thus, he acknowledges that it is possible to deal with danger in the proper way and be reliable as a soldier without having the relevant expert training or experience of the facts of war.

To summarize, although Aristotle concedes an important role to experience in moral development, experience by itself does not do the job of transforming the learners into ethical agents, and experience is not the main element that learners should gain from the practice of virtuous actions. In other words, experience is not a suitable candidate to fill the moral-upbringing gap.

6. Civic Courage Due to Punishment

Aristotle starts his discussion of pseudo-courage with an analysis of two kinds of civic courage: a superior kind, due to the sense of shame, and an inferior kind, due to fear of punishment. The distinction between these two kinds of pseudo-courage and Aristotle’s verdict about their relation to genuine courage offers important material to think about the role of shame in moral progress. Concretely, the stark line that Aristotle draws here between

\textsuperscript{60} The claim that Aristotle considers experience as a necessary condition for the development of virtue is not infrequent in the literature. See e.g. Sherman (1989): “For complete virtue, however, sufficient exposure to the various spheres of experience will be required” (192). However, this claim is problematic, since it has undesirable consequences like the fact that it would be impossible to be fully virtuous in times of peace, when experience of war is not available, and consequently agents would be unable to have the experience that is supposed to be required for the development of courage.
shame-courage and fear-of-punishment-courage will allow us to see more clearly the need to be alert against pleasure-based approaches to moral development (as discussed in Chapter 4 below).

Both kinds of “civic” courage are characterized by the fact that agents follow the command of the laws in their actions. However, they differ in their motivation to do courageous things. On the one hand, citizens with shame hold to their posts in battle because of honor; on the other hand, citizens that are afraid of the potential punishments associated with disobeying the laws do the right thing because of fear. One of the main things that Aristotle emphasizes in his discussion, then, is this contrast between deciding what to do when guided by considerations of praiseworthiness and shamefulness, and deciding what to do based on considerations about pleasure and distress.

6.a. Fear-of-Punishment-Courage in NE 3.8

Aristotle’s discussion of fear-of-punishment-courage is brief, and it appears in the text as a coda to the discussion of the primary kind of civic courage due to shame.

[T2e] NE 3.8, 1116a28-b3:

One might rank in the same class even those who are compelled by their rulers; but they are inferior, inasmuch as they do what they do not from shame but from fear, and to avoid not what is disgraceful but what is painful; for their masters compel them, as Hector does:

But if I shall spy any dastard that cowers far from the fight,
Vainly will such an one hope to escape from the dogs.61

And those who give them their posts, and beat them if they retreat, do the same, and so do those who draw them up with trenches or something of the sort behind them; all of these apply compulsion. But one ought to be brave not under compulsion but because it is noble to be so.

\[ \text{τάξαι δ' ἀν τὰς καὶ τοὺς ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχόντων ἀναγκαζόμενους εἰς ταύτ' χείρος δ', ὡς οὐ δι' αἴδω ἄλλα διὰ φόβον αὐτὸ δρώσαι, καὶ φεύγοντες οὐ τὸ σισχρόν} \]

61 Iliad 2.391-3.
This passage suggests that the main difference between pseudo-courage due to fear and genuine courage is that, although people who act from fear of punishment follow the commands of the laws and do the right thing, they do not do it for a virtuous motive—i.e. they do not act “because it is noble” [ὉΙ καλόν]. On the contrary, what moves these agents to do courageous things is fear [διὰ φόβου],62 and the aim of their actions is to avoid “what is painful” [τὸ λυπηρὸν]. For this reason, Aristotle says that their actions are, at least in certain sense, “compulsory” [δι’ ἀνάγκην].

The two main deficiencies of this kind of pseudo-courageous way of acting are, then, (a) that the actions are done in order to avoid punishment, and therefore they are not done for a noble motive; (b) that the actions are done under compulsion.

The fact that these agents’ leading motivation for performing courageous actions is fear, and that the ultimate goal of their actions is to avoid punishment and pain in general, grounds Aristotle’s verdict that this is the most imperfect of the kinds of civic courage. The goal of avoiding punishment that the fear-courageous people pursue is far from the stereotypical goal of courageous actions, namely the noble. In this sense, the actions of people guided by fear-of-punishment are only externally similar to the ones that courageous agents perform, but they differ in their goals, i.e. that for the sake of which the actions are done.

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62 Grant (1885) refers here to Phaedo 68d, “where Plato speaks of most men being courageous from a sort of cowardice”.
Moreover, Aristotle goes further in his criticism of this kind of pseudo-courage, since he claims not only that the aim of these fear-courageous agents is to avoid punishment, but also that the actions performed by these pseudo-courageous people are done under compulsion [δι’ ἀνάγκην]. An important consequence of the compulsive character of these actions is that the actions are not done voluntarily, or at least they are not fully voluntary, as the agents are forced by means of threats to do the right thing.

6.b. Fear of Punishment and Moral Development

Our analysis suggests that performing actions that are forced and done from fear is not a good model for learning-by-doing. On the one hand, repetition of these actions from fear could lead learners to acquire knowledge about what kinds of things are required by the laws; on the other hand, it could provide them with relevant experience to deal with some of the practical situations more efficiently. This might lead someone to the conclusion that these actions could provide a beginning for the acquisition of virtue; however, this is not Aristotle’s view. Although these practices could prepare the learners to be obedient to the laws, they are unable to provide them with the right conditions for performing virtuous actions virtuously.

In NE 10.9 Aristotle brings again to our attention the distinction between people who act from fear of punishment and people who obey their sense of shame, and in his discussion in that last chapter — which we will tackle in more detail in Chapter 5 — he clearly indicates that people who only obey fear of punishment are unable to make progress.
The reason for this, as *NE* 3.8 has shown, is that this practice does not allow learners to develop any tendency to perform virtuous actions for themselves and independently of the presence of threats.\textsuperscript{63}

In our next chapter we will discuss the superior kind of civic courage, which will turn out to be a more promising step towards genuine virtue.

\textsuperscript{63} A more detailed discussion of why threats do not work as a method of moral development can be found in Chapter 4, Section 2 below.
Ch. 3. Shame-Courage in NE 3.8

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I discuss in detail the notion of shame-courage as it appears in NE 3.8 with the aim of exploring the connections between shame and virtuous actions and shame and virtuous dispositions. To this end I criticize a common view according to which love of honor is seen as mere fear of disrepute and desire for external recognition, and propose an alternative interpretation that shows that love of honor is intimately related to love of the noble.

In Section 1, I raise some guiding questions concerning (a) the relationship between shame and virtue, (b) the relationship between shame and the noble, and (c) the proper meaning of love of honor.

I argue in Section 2 against a common interpretation of shame-courage which holds that citizen-soldiers perform courageous actions merely because those actions bring with them honor and the avoidance of disgrace, but not because they are noble or virtuous actions. In this common interpretation, shame-courage aims merely at external recognition, but not at the noble. However, as I shall show, this view is based on an excessively narrow and excessively superficial conception of honor, which is not the one that Aristotle is using in NE 3.8. I identify two sets of failures that commentators tend to commit in their understanding of love of honor: on the one hand, assuming that the learners’ inability to recognize the right things to do in their particular circumstances and their dependence on others in this respect is sufficient proof of their lack of desire to do the right things; and on the other hand, forgetting that love of honor is intimately connected to love of the noble.
In Section 3, I present a reading of *NE* 3.8 that supports the view that shame-courage aims ultimately at the noble and at virtue, and not at the mere appearance of nobility and virtuousness. My view is that, for Aristotle, despite the fact that agents with shame do not have virtuous dispositions of character, citizen-soldiers are directly concerned with performing courageous actions on account of their nobility and not merely with appearing courageous in the eyes of others.

Thus, if my interpretation of shame-courage is correct, and shame provides citizens with motivation to perform virtuous actions for their nobility and avoid shameful ones on account of their shamefulness, then citizens with shame have already the right kind of orientation towards the noble that will allow them to make progress towards virtue.
1. Shame-Courage and Shame

In the first section of *NE* 3.8 Aristotle discusses the best kind of pseudo-courage characteristic of citizen-soldiers, and distinguishes this particular variety of pseudo-courage as possessing three essential attributes: (1) it is due to shame, (2) it is directed towards honor, and (3) it comes to be and is maintained through social practices of praise and reproach established by laws. This chapter is devoted to a separate discussion of this variety of pseudo-courage due to shame because, as I hope to show, we can learn a great deal about Aristotle’s view of the nature of shame by examining his remarks on this topic. Through a careful analysis of the relevant passages, I will aim to clarify the exact relationship of shame to virtue and the noble, and work at finding a proper way to understand the love of honor in Aristotle. This will place us in a good position to assess whether shame is a good candidate to bridge the moral upbringing gap.

1.a. Puzzles about Shame-Courage: Shame, Love of Honor, Virtue and the Noble

Aristotle considers *shame-courage*, i.e. the courage characteristic of the citizen soldiers, to be superior above all the varieties of pseudo-courage and closer to true courage than the rest:

[T3a] *NE* 3.8, 1116a17:

First comes the courage of the citizen-soldier; for this is *most like* <true courage>.

πρώτον μὲν ἡ πολιτικὴ μᾶλλον γὰρ ἔοικεν.

My view is that, for Aristotle, shame-courage can earn this notable distinction because of the strong connection between its underlying conditions (i.e. shame, love of honor, concern with the social practices of honor and reproach) and virtue.

Aristotle even says explicitly that this kind of pseudo-courage is “due to virtue” [δι’ ἀρετῆς] (1116a27). However, he leaves us with a number of unanswered questions about
the nature of this connection, and offers only a rather enigmatic explanation of the claim that the courage of citizen-soldiers is due to virtue:

[T3b] NE 3.8, 1116a27-29:

This kind of courage is most like that which we described earlier, because it is **due to virtue**; for it is **due to shame** and to **desire of something noble** (i.e. honour) and avoidance of disgrace, which is shameful.

What is the connection being established here between shame and virtue? Aristotle gives us some hints in the passage above, when he says that people with shame-courage have “desire of something noble (for it is desire of honor)” [καλοῦ ὀρέξειν (τιμῆς γάρ)] (1116a28). He gives us hints in other lines of NE 3.8 as well, when he indicates that citizen-soldiers are courageous “not under compulsion but because it is noble” [οὐ δὲ ἀνάγκην … ἀλλ’ ὅτι καλόν] (1116b2-3), and they are ready to “die at their posts” [μένοντα ἀποθνῄσκει] (1116b18) if the circumstances require it, because “for them, flight is disgraceful and death is preferable to safety on those terms” [τοῖς μὲν γὰρ αἰσχρὸν τὸ φεύγειν καὶ ὁ θάνατος τῆς τοιαύτης σωτηρίας αἴρετῶτερος] (1116b19-20). He suggests in these passages that for people who obey their sense of shame, considerations about nobility and shamefulness (i.e. considerations about τὸ καλὸν and τὸ αἰσχρὸν) are central in their deliberations, and that people with a sense of shame perform noble actions **because of their nobility**, just as virtuous agents do.

This observation concerning the motivation of citizen-soldiers provides the beginning of an answer to our question about the relationship between shame and virtue, but it is still insufficient. Once again, although these passages suggest that people with a sense of shame attend to considerations about the nobility and shamefulness of their actions,
the texts do not make explicit the exact relationship between shame and the noble; nor does Aristotle detail to what extent and why people with shame are concerned with the nobility or shamefulness of their actions. Do citizen-soldiers aim at the noble in their actions? Or do they simply happen to do noble actions because they aim at something different - namely honor - which also tends to belong to those actions that are noble?

Furthermore, Aristotle says clearly that citizen-soldiers perform their courageous actions “on account of honors” [διὰ τὰς τιμάς] (1116a19). But what does this claim mean? How should we understand the love of honor that Aristotle associates with shame? And how is the honor that citizen-soldiers pursue related to the noble and to virtue?

In what follows, I offer answers to these questions by exploring the details of the peculiar relationship of shame-courage with virtue and the noble.

1.b. Shame-Courage, Obedience to the Laws and the Formation of Character

In his initial explanation of shame-courage in NE 3.8, Aristotle stresses that this first kind of pseudo-courage is “civic” (or “political” [πολιτική]) because it has its source in the influence of the laws. Concretely, he indicates that people acquire and preserve civic courage due to the fact that the laws of their poleis establish that some actions and some people deserve public honor (τιμή) while others deserve public disgrace or reproach (ανδρεία).

In his initial explanation of shame-courage in NE 3.8, Aristotle stresses that this first kind of pseudo-courage is “civic” (or “political” [πολιτική]) because it has its source in the influence of the laws. 64 Concretely, he indicates that people acquire and preserve civic courage due to the fact that the laws of their poleis establish that some actions and some people deserve public honor (τιμή) while others deserve public disgrace or reproach (ανδρεία).

[T3c] NE 3.8, 1116a17-19:

Citizen-soldiers seem to face dangers because of the sanctions imposed by the laws and the reproaches they would otherwise incur, and because of the honors they win by such action.

64 The notion of “political courage” (πολιτικῆ ἀνδρεία) is also present in Plato’s Republic, 430c. As Stewart (1892) points out, Aristotle is at one with Plato in regarding this courage as “a habit acquired by the πολιτεία under the influence of νόμος.” (292)

65 I use the term “sanctions” as the translation of επιτίμια, instead of Ross’ “penalties”, because I think it is important to not to lose sight of the fact that the primary meaning of citizen-courage is directly connected with the honors and reproaches administered by the laws, and not so much with other kinds of penalties like
dokousi gar upomeinei tous kivdunos oi politeai dia taa ek twon nomon epitima kai ta oneidhy kai dia taa tima.

Citizen-soldiers (i.e. those who act from their sense of shame) perform brave actions and avoid cowardly ones “on account of” [dia] “the honors” [tas timas] that the laws confer to courageous actions and “the reproaches” [ta oneidh] that laws impose against cowardice.

But Aristotle also suggests in this passage, I think, that the love of honor and fear of reproach in people with a sense of shame are linked to their orientation towards the noble and away from the shameful. He gives us a hint about this relationship when he says that people with shame-courage have “desire of something noble (for it is desire of honor)” [kalo ou orexi (timhs gar)] (1116a28). And he gives us clearer hints in other lines of NE 3.8 as well, when he indicates that citizen-soldiers are courageous “not under compulsion but because it is noble” [ou dei anakyn ... alli oti kalon] (1116b2-3), and they are ready to “die at their posts” [menouta apodinhskei] (1116b18) if the circumstances require it, because “for them, flight is shameful and death is preferable to safety on those terms” [tois men gar aisxron to feugiein kai o thanatos tis toiauthe surnrias airopeto] (1116b19-20). The relevant point of these claims is, I think, that people who obey their sense

punishments. I avoid the term “penalties” because it suggests that Aristotle may be talking here primarily about punishments, which is clearly not right, since this very chapter (as well as NE 10.9) establishes a strong contrast between people who act “on account of shame” [dei aiddo], who avoid wrong actions because they are shameful, and people who act “on account of fear” [dia fora], who avoid wrong actions due to the possible punishments that they would receive—that is, they avoid wrong actions because of “the painful” [to lupron]. (NE 3.8, 1116a29-32; see also NE 10.9,1180a6-9) It is noteworthy that Aristotle maintains the pair timē - oneidos throughout the passage. (See 1116a18-19)

The entry in LSJ supports my point, since the primary meaning of epitimia is “A. value, price, or estimate of a thing”, with the first sub-entry: “1. the honours paid to a person”, and the second: “2. assessment of damages, penalty or penalties.” Even if it is true that the word has the meaning of “penalty” (2), it seems that “sanction” would be a good rendering if we take it in sense (1). Moreover, the corresponding abstract name “he epitimia” can also be taken to mean “dignity, respect, good name”, or “enjoyment of all civil rights and privileges” (taken as the opposite of “atimia”). Although we also find it in some cases with the meaning “punishment, penalty”.
of shame give priority to considerations about shamefulness (and its correlate, nobility) even over considerations about their own survival, and that, consequently, they have their sight oriented towards those aspects of their actions that make them praiseworthy and blameworthy rather than towards those that make them pleasant or useful.

Most of the commentators who deal directly with this passage (like Irwin (1999), Broadie (1991), Taylor (2006)), however, understand honor as an object of desire independent of considerations about nobility, and argue that Aristotle’s point here is that citizens become inclined to perform praiseworthy actions simply because they want to obtain recognition from others.

I want to challenge this widespread account of shame, and defend instead an alternative that takes into consideration the function of honors and reproaches as guide and encouragement for becoming virtuous. Thus, although I agree with the contention that honors and reproaches are the direct objects of shame, I think the traditional view is mistaken when it denies the connection between love of honor and desire for the noble.

2. Two Problems with the Traditional View of Shame as Mere Desire of Recognition

There are, in my opinion, two main problems with the view that those who act from shame pursue honor and recognition but are not directly concerned with the nobility of their actions. 66

The first problem is that this view analyzes incorrectly the relationship between

*aiming* at a goal and *recognizing* the goal. 67 This line of thinking assumes that citizen-soldiers do

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66 Examples of authors that take motivation to be the root of the difference between shame-courage and true courage are Irwin (1999: 213), Broadie (2002: comm. ad loc.), Taylor (2006: 186), Schofield (2006: 316-317). Although commentators usually acknowledge that the difference between acting from shame-courage and acting from true courage is due to both cognitive and motivational factors, they tend to emphasize the latter. This tendency is partly due, I think, to the common assumption discussed in Chapter 1 that virtuous motives (i.e. acting for the sake of the noble) are exclusive to virtuous agents.

67 See Vasiiliou (2007) for a parallel distinction between *aiming* and *determining*. 
not have a genuine desire to do courageous deeds on account of the nobility of such deeds, as concluded from the fact that citizen-soldiers often lack the knowledge to determine what the noble thing to do is in their circumstances. The second problem is that this view erroneously identifies “love of honor” with mere desire for recognition and disconnects it from the agents’ desire to excel and become worthy of that recognition.

Let me tackle these two problems separately.

2.a. Conflation of two distinctions: Aiming vs. Recognizing

The first major problem concerning the view I am attacking is that it does not sufficiently differentiate between the citizen-soldiers’ defective knowledge of the noble and their defective motivation. Indeed, the main argument in support of this view assumes that since citizens who obey their sense of shame often need to rely on external recognition (and on the opinions of others in general) to determine what actions and characters are praiseworthy or noble, then it follows that these honor-loving citizens do not aim at the noble.

The argument is laid out by Irwin (1999) in his explanation of the failure of the citizen-soldiers:

These citizen soldiers aim at honor, which is fine. But they do not aim at the fine, as the virtuous person does. If they aimed at the fine, they would recognize that the action itself is fine whether or not it receives honor. On the inadequacy of honor, see 1095b23, 1159a22. (213)

Irwin correctly identifies citizen-soldiers as honor-lovers, and he provides good evidence that honor-lovers are often not able to recognize noble actions or characters unless those actions or characters are marked with the stamp of external recognition. However, he incorrectly deduces from the fact that citizen-soldiers are honor-lovers that they do not aim at the noble (or, as Irwin translates it, “the fine”). Irwin’s argument can be schematized as follows:
1. If citizen-soldiers aimed at the noble, they would recognize that an action is noble whether or not it receives honor.
2. Citizen-soldiers do not recognize that an action is noble unless it receives honor.
3. Therefore, citizen-soldiers do not aim at the noble.

The problem with Irwin’s argument is that, to get his desired result, in premise (1) he needs to make the incorrect assumption that the inability of citizen-soldiers to recognize particular noble actions as such implies a lack of motivation towards the noble — or as he puts it: “If they aimed at the fine, they would recognize that the action itself is fine whether or not it receives honor” (213). It is, however, possible that citizen-soldiers aim at the noble even though they do not have yet the cognitive ability to determine the noble thing to do here and now. In other words, Irwin’s assumption is unfounded.

As I see it, the standard view conflates two distinctions: the distinction between (a) having knowledge (or reliable beliefs) about the noble and the shameful and (b) lacking that knowledge, with the distinction between (c) having a sincere desire to live according to nobility and virtue and (d) lacking that desire.\(^6\) However, we have a good reason to keep these two distinctions separate in our interpretation. For although it is true that in Aristotle’s account people who have full practical knowledge necessarily have a sincere desire to live virtuously (i.e. the phronimoi, who have full knowledge about the noble and the good), and it is also true that those who do not have a desire to live virtuously lack proper practical knowledge, Aristotle’s account does not rule out that someone who does not have full knowledge about the noble and the good might have nonetheless a sincere desire to live according to nobility and virtue.

\(^6\) I have borrowed these distinctions from Kamtekar’s (1998b) paper on Stoic shame (see esp. 139). She uses them to characterize the Stoic contrast between aidôs and aischunê, but I think that, although Aristotle does not make use of the contrast between aidôs and aischunê, these distinctions are useful to show the interpretive possibilities in relation to Aristotle’s text.
In sum, although issues of motivation and issues of cognition are linked, when we try to establish the reasons why people with shame depend on external feedback we need to be aware of this distinction between aiming at the noble and being able to recognize the noble thing to do in the circumstances. In general, one can have a genuine desire to do noble things on account of their nobility, and not because of some alternative instrumental motive, but nonetheless still require an occasional external indication of the appropriate course of action.

One point in support of my claim against the assumption that Irwin makes in his first premise, is that the passage from NE 8.8 quoted by Irwin is most naturally read as saying that “those who desire honor” \( \text{o} \text{rego} \text{menoi t} \text{im} \text{es} \) aim ultimately at confirming their own virtue:

\[ \text{T3d} \]  \( \text{NE} \) 8.8, 1159a22-24:

\[ \ldots \text{while those who desire honor from good men, and men who know, are aiming at confirming their own opinion of themselves; they delight in honor, therefore, because they believe in their own goodness on the strength of the judgement of those who speak about them.} \]

\[ \text{o} \text{i} \text{ d'} \text{'up} \text{o} \text{taw} \text{'epieik} \text{aw} \text{ka} \text{e} \text{id} \text{'ota} \text{w} \text{'oreg} \text{omenoi tim} \text{es} \text{bebai} \text{w} \text{as} \text{t} \text{h} \text{ein oikei} \text{an} \text{doo} \text{san ef} \text{ein} \text{ta peri au} \text{taw} \text{'xai} \text{rousi dh, oti eioi a} \text{ga} \text{doi pisteu} \text{on tei tw} \text{na lego} \text{ontow kr} \text{i} \text{sai}. \]

Aristotle says that people who aim at honor depend on the judgement of others for “having conviction” \( \text{pisteu} \text{'ontes} \) about their own virtue: they “believe in their own goodness on the strength of the judgement of those who speak about them.” The passage suggests, then, that honor-lovers seek external recognition and honor as a means through which they confirm

\[69 \text{ Notice that this is the same terminology that Aristotle uses in } \text{NE} \text{ 2.4 to characterize one of the three requirements of virtuously performed virtuous actions: that the agent should be in a “firm and unchangeable condition” } \text{bebai} \text{w} \text{as kai ametakivitowers eixou} \text{ (1105a33).} \]
that their opinion about their own character is correct, i.e. they confirm that they have achieved or are achieving the goal of being virtuous.

The upshot of the passage is, therefore, not — as Irwin suggests — that external recognition is the ultimate goal for lovers of honor, but rather that external recognition in this case provides honor-lovers with a way of recognizing whether they are on the right track in relation to the achievement of virtue. The text, thus, supports my view that love of honor indicates a concern of the agent for virtue and nobility itself.

I do not intend to deny here that honor is the direct goal of honor-lovers. My point is that our seekers of honor are aware of the fact that the value of honor proceeds from its relation to virtue, and that in that sense, honor is not the ultimate goal of their actions. This brings me to my second objection against the standard view.

2.b. Love of Praise vs. Love of the Praiseworthy

The second main problem of the traditional interpretation arises from the way in which love of honor is cashed out. The central thesis of this view is that citizen-soldiers love honor in the sense that they desire external recognition, but they remain unconcerned as to whether their actions are genuinely noble or not.70

70 Some defenders of this view are Irwin (1999: 213), Broadie (2002: comm. ad loc.), Taylor (2006: 186). As we have seen in the above-quoted text, Irwin (1999) claims that the difference between the shame-courage of citizen-soldiers and genuine courage is that people with shame-courage do not aim at the fine, but merely at receiving honor.

Broadie (2002) equates acting from shame and acting “from fear of what others will think”, as opposed to “the moral person’s autonomous sense of what would be shameful” (comm. ad loc.). In Broadie’s reading, similarly as in Irwin’s view, the ultimate concern of shame is, then, external recognition, something that falls greatly short of aiming at the noble.

Taylor’s (2006) commentary to NE 3.8 also claims that the central goal of the shame-courageous person should be characterized as external recognition and should be opposed to the goal of the virtuous person, which is the noble, independently of what other people think:

The primary motivations of the civically courageous person are the desire for honor and the desire to avoid disgrace, i.e. to be favorably regarded, or to avoid being unfavorably regarded, by others. […] The courageous person cares above all about doing what he or
I think that commentators miss the mark when they depict the motivation of people with shame exclusively as a concern with whether their actions receive external recognition. This view misreads the function that honor performs as a goal by disregarding the possibility that citizen-soldiers desire to do what deserves honor, and not just what will bring them honor independently of whether one deserves it or not.\(^71\)

Thus, by reducing love of honor to mere desire for what receives honor, this interpretation limits unnecessarily (and incorrectly) the scope of love of honor. For although it is possible to do actions that resemble virtuous actions only for the public honors that these receive, it is clear that the goal of the practices of honors and reproaches established by law should rather be that citizens become lovers of the noble actions for themselves. Thus, we should expect that, when things go well, citizens become attracted not only to the honors conceded by the laws, but also to the nobility and virtue to which those honors render tribute.\(^72\) This non-superficial kind of love of honor is, as I contend, the kind at play when Aristotle talks about acting for honor in these passages.

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71 This objection refers roughly to the above-mentioned distinction made by Kamtekar (1998b) between (a) having a sincere desire to live according to a given standard of nobility and virtue and (b) lacking that desire.

72 Here I use against Irwin’s position an argument similar to the one quoted below, which was used by Kamtekar (1998a) against his parallel view in relation to the virtue of the auxiliaries in Plato’s Republic:

Second, [Irwin] argues that well-educated auxiliaries would not be able to stand firm in the face of tests involving dishonor because they are at bottom honor-lovers and depend for their virtue on being honored. As evidence, he cites the case of the individual in a timocracy, who does not stick to true virtue, but succumbs to the timocracy’s standards of honor, because he lacks the “reason mixed with musical training” which alone preserves virtue (232, cf. Republic 548b-50b).

However, the analogy between the auxiliary and the timocrat is inexact, since the auxiliary has been educated properly, but the timocrat’s education has been neglected (Republic 546d). Timocrats, Socrates says, secretly amass the wealth they are not allowed to possess openly, because they have been educated by force rather than persuasion (548ab). There is no doubt that bad education can corrupt an honor-lover raised in a degenerate society, but this does not show that an auxiliary, educated to value virtue, would be similarly corrupted should he find himself in an unjust society. (316-317)
Irwin (1999) exploits this problem concerning the ascription of honor, and he uses it to show that love of honor is an inadequate sort of motivation. In contrast, Irwin would add, the value of nobility (as opposed to honor) is intrinsic to the virtuous action and independent of other people’s opinions.

However Aristotle suggests that there is more to honor than what that initial superficial attitude might suggest. Indeed, he shows that there is a way of loving honor (which here he treats as the primary kind) by which people seek honor “on the ground of their virtue” [ἐπ’ ἀρετῇ].

[T3e] NE 1.5, 1095b26-31:

Further, people seem to pursue honor in order that they may be assured of their goodness: at least it is by people of practical wisdom that they seek to be honored, and among those who know them, and on the ground of their virtue; clearly, then, according to them, at any rate, virtue is better. And perhaps one might even suppose this to be, rather than honor, the end of the political life.

Thus, Aristotle claims here that those who seek honor, in reality think that “virtue is better” [ἡ ἀρετὴ κρείττων], and what they really seek is virtue itself. In other words,

73 Aristotle is making use here of the following means-ends principle that he formulates in NE 7.9, 1151a35-b2:

If any one chooses or pursues this for the sake of that, per se he pursues and chooses the latter, but incidentally the former.

This is a familiar principle the gist of which is formulated by Socrates in his conversation with Polus in Plato’s Gorgias (467c4-6):

Do you think that when people do something, they want the thing they are doing at the time, or the thing for the sake of which they do what they are doing?

Πότερον ὁμοι δοκούσιν οἱ ἀνθρώποι τούτο βούλεσθαι ὃ ἂν πράττουσιν ἔκαστοτε, ἢ ἐκείνο ὃ ἕνεκα πράττουσιν τοῦθ’ ὃ πράττουσιν;
people love honor insofar as they take honor to be a sign of their own virtue; consequently, their concern with honor is not primarily a concern with their reputation but a concern with their virtue. Therefore, contrary to the view that love of honor is mere desire for external recognition, Aristotle’s view is that the ultimate goal of those who love honor is to possess virtue — “they pursue honor in order that they may be assured of their own goodness” —, and they do not want merely to appear to possess virtue or merely “to stand well in the eyes of the others”\textsuperscript{74,75}

We can find further confirmation of this point in the description of Hector’s attitude in one of the passages from the \textit{Iliad} that Aristotle quotes as an example of civic courage: “First will Polydamas be to heap reproach on me” (\textit{Iliad} 22.100). Here, the direct concern of Hector is focused upon Polydamas’ reproach for his actions. But what Hector feels shame about is not simply that Polydamas will have a bad opinion of him, but rather that Polydamas — who had already given good advice to Hector about what to do, which Hector had failed to follow — will be able to correctly reproach him that he has failed to protect the

\textsuperscript{74} This expression is used by Taylor (2006: 236) to characterize love of honor and shame.
\textsuperscript{75} I agree, thus, with Cairns’ (1993) general conclusion about the scope of the love of \textit{timē}:

\textit{[…]} to be concerned for one’s self-image in Greek is to be concerned for one’s \textit{timē}, but at no stage does this necessarily imply concern for one’s outward reputation to the exclusion of one’s image in one’s own eyes. The code of honour to which \textit{aidōs} relates demands individual determination actually to possess an excellence, not merely that one should seem to others to possess it. (432)

It is important to emphasize this distinction between the good love of \textit{timē} and the mere desire to be honored, and to take into account that the former is the primary sense for Aristotle, unless we want to commit the same kind of “silly mistake” that Bernard Williams denounces in \textit{Shame and Necessity}:

The silly mistake is to suppose that the reactions of shame depend simply on being found out, that the feeling behind every decision or thought that is governed by shame is literally and immediately the fear of being seen. Suppose someone invites us to believe that Homeric Achilles, if assured he could get away with it, might have crept out at night and helped himself to the treasure that he had refused when it was offered by the embassy: then he has sadly misunderstood Achilles’ character, or what Alexander Pope called his “Manners” […] (80-81)

As Williams indicates, the mere fear of bad reputation without reference to nobility or virtue, then, is empty even in the case of Homeric heroes.
Trojans as he should. It is justified censure that Hector fears, and not simply his potential loss of status. This is because he is ultimately concerned with his own virtue, and is worried about his status insofar that status is a sign of his own nobility.

3. Alternative View of Shame-Courage and Love of Honor

If I am right in my criticisms of the superficial view of shame-courage, then some important consequences for our interpretation of the notion of shame must follow. Concretely, my objections against the traditional view not only reveal that people who obey their sense of shame act with their sight turned towards the nobility of their actions, but it also provides the beginning of an explanation for why this is so. For what is shown by the above passages ([T3d] and [T3e]) about the relationship between love and honor and virtue is that honors and reproaches are not only goals and anti-goals for honor-lovers, but that they also function as guide and encouragement for character formation.

3.a. Praiseworthy Actions, Praiseworthy Characters

We can understand more clearly the multiple function of honors and reproaches if we pay attention to the fact that the practices of praise and blame affect citizens at two

76 Cairns’ (1993) explanation of this passage from the Iliad supports this point:

Hector … in Book 22, when it is his parents who attempt to dissuade him from going into battle … sees his choice to remain in the field in terms of aidōs. This time, however, his aidōs is not directed at the implication of cowardice, but at the charge that he has failed in his duty to protect Troy and its people. He cannot return to the city, he claims, because Polydamas will be the first to set up elenebeiē (disgrace) for him (100). Polydamas had urged him to lead the host back to the city when Achilles had made his initial return to the fray, and Hector had disregarded his advice; the result was disaster, and now Hector is afraid to return within the walls (104-7): “But now that I have destroyed the host by my own recklessness [atasthaliai], I feel aidōs before the Trojans and their wives of the trailing robes, lest some baser person than I should say, "Hector trusted in his might and destroyed the host."

[…] He does not have to await the actual disapproval of the Trojans. Nor is he simply upset or resentful at the prospect of censure, an unpleasant consequence of his mistake, for he is aware that any censure that may be forthcoming is justified, by his own standards, he knows he has failed, and he applies the pejorative word, atasthaliai, to his own conduct. (81-82, emphasis added)
related levels: they are not just directed at their actions, but are also directed at their dispositions of character. Aristotle indicates this by claiming not only that people face dangers on account of the honors that brave actions receive, but also that the practice of praising courageous individuals and shaming cowards has the effect of promoting courageous character among the population.

[T3f] NE 3.8, 1116a20-21:

And therefore those peoples seem to be bravest among whom cowards are held in dishonor and brave people in honor.

καὶ διὰ τούτο ἄνδρειότατοι δοκοῦσιν εἶναι παρ’ οἷς οἱ δειλοὶ ἄτιμοι καὶ οἱ ἄνδρεῖοι ἑντιμοὶ.

Aristotle supports in [T3f] the claim that honors and reproaches affect not only people’s actions but also their characters, by observing that the social practices of holding courageous people in high esteem and cowards in low esteem increase the presence of courageous dispositions. This observation suggests that the practices of praise and blame do not just produce behavioral transformation by providing a new goal (honor) and rules about how it is distributed, but that they also have an effect on character.77

This character transformation occurs — I think — because the system of honors and reproaches assumes an intimate connection between attribution of honor and nobility of the actions, and between noble actions and virtuous character. Attribution of honor is

77 Aristotle indicates in other passages of his ethical writings that making citizens virtuous is the most important achievement of a good legislator, and that promoting virtuous character in the citizenry is the one goal that good laws achieve successfully. See, for example, NE 2.1 where Aristotle claims that good laws aim at “making citizens good by forming habits of conduct in them” [τοὺς πολίτας ἐθέσοντες ποιοῦσιν ἀγαθούς]; and he adds that “this is the wish of every legislator, … and it is in this that a good constitution differs from a bad one” [καὶ τὸ μὲν βούλημα παιντὸς νομοθετοῦν τοῦτ’ ἐστίν, …, καὶ διαφέρει τούτω πολιτεία πολιτείας ἄγαθη φαύλη] (1103b2-6).

See also NE 10.9, 1180a5-8: “This is why some think that legislators ought to stimulate men to virtue and encourage them by the motive of the noble, on the assumption that those who have been well advanced by the formation of habits will attend to such influences” [διόπερ οἴονται τινες τοὺς νομοθετοῦντας δεῖν μὲν παρακαλεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν ἁρετὴν καὶ προτρέπεσθαι τοῦ καλοῦ χάριν, ὡς ἐπακουομένων τῶν ἐπιεικῶς τοῖς ἔθεις προηγμένων.]
ultimately a way of signalling that the actions performed are noble, and that the agents performing the praised actions are themselves virtuous agents. (This is the kind of confirmation that the agents in the above-quoted passages are expecting.)

Heroes in Homeric societies provide here the best illustrations of the effects that praise and blame exert upon people’s actions and character.

[T3g] NE 3.8, 1116a22-26:

This is the kind of courage that Homer depicts, e.g. in Diomede and in Hector:

First will Polydamas be to heap reproach on me then;

and

For Hector one day ’mid the Trojans shall utter his vaulting harangue:

Afraid was Tydeides, and fled from my face.

toióutous de kai’ Ὄμηρος ποιεί, σίων τὸν Ἰομήδην καὶ τὸν Ἐκτόρα:

Ποιλυδάμας μοι πρῶτος ἐλεγχεὶν ἀναθήσαι:

καὶ [Ἰομήδης]

’Ἐκτόρ τῶν ποτέ φήσει ἐνὶ Τρώαις ἀγορεύων

“Τυδείδης ὑπ’ ἐμεῖο.”

First, the two examples from the Iliad (22.100 and 8.148-9) in [T3g] show the significant weight that considerations about praise and blame hold in the deliberations and actions of individuals in a society where practices of honor and reproach are prevalent: both Hector and Diomedes are determined to face risks of death to avoid the reproaches they would receive if they acted otherwise. Thus, the system of honors and reproaches in Homeric societies provides these heroes with a framework to think about the demands of practical situations, as the praiseworthiness or shamefulness of their actions occupy the center of the considerations for action. The social practices of praise and blame are precisely shaped by the social criteria of nobility and shamefulness, and they are for this reason a
practical guide for those who require external input on the right things to do in the circumstances.

There is, however, something deeper than a simple love of honor and hatred of reproach that regulates the behavior of Homeric heroes. It is important to remember that honor and reproach are attributed respectively to stereotypically courageous actions and stereotypically cowardly actions, which in turn are supposed to be expressions of one’s courageous or cowardly character.

Thus, the second insight we can draw from these examples is that agents in societies where praise and blame are prevalent are aware that the nature of their actions reflects directly on how other people perceive their character. Both Hector and Diomedes are afraid that if they perform stereotypically cowardly actions — for example, fleeing in battle — those actions will lead other people to think that they are cowards. Moreover, Hector and Diomedes are themselves aware of the fact that if they perform stereotypically cowardly actions they would then become cowards. The examples show that the systems of praise and blame assume a reliable link between types of actions and attribution of character.

In sum, praise and blame function as a guide by providing agents with information about what kinds of actions are noble and what kinds are shameful; and by presupposing a connection between actions and character, they at the same time encourage those agents who already care for considerations about nobility and shamefulness. In other words, although it is true that Aristotle establishes that people with shame perform virtuous actions on account of the honor that those actions bring, and to avoid disgrace, he also accepts that honor is not simply the goal of those who act from shame, but also functions as a guide and encouragement for the performance of virtuous actions on account of their nobility.
Consequently, we have good reasons to understand shame not as mere fear of disapproval and desire for recognition, but as an emotion ultimately concerned with virtue and the noble. If I am right about interpreting shame in Aristotle in this way then its role in moral development becomes clearer, since now we can better understand why Aristotle says that shame is a praiseworthy possession in young people, who do not yet have virtue. In light of my analysis, we can see how shame can provide the learners of virtue with desire of the noble and hatred of the shameful under the form of a non-superficial love of honor and hatred of reproach.

Learners who obey their sense of shame, then, can perform actions that are not only externally indistinguishable from those performed by virtuous people, but that are also ultimately oriented towards the same noble goals. They, thus, fulfill at least partially the second requirement for virtuously performed virtuous action, and for this reason their actions constitute the right kind of practice towards the acquisition of virtue.
SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter I discuss the role of pleasure and pain in moral development. My main claim is that although Aristotle assigns a relevant place to pleasure in moral development and in the virtuous life, pleasure is not the guiding force of moral progress. The present analysis of the role of pleasure and pain serves to prepare us for the interpretation of shame that I propose in Chapter 5. I argue that moral development should not be interpreted merely as the acquisition of an ability to enjoy the pleasure of the noble and suffer distress in relation to the shameful, but rather as the formation of the cognitive and motivational tendencies that allow learners to grasp adequately the notion of the noble and be attracted towards it. As a result, pleasure in the noble will be seen not as the goal towards which learners of virtue aim, but instead as the confirmation, or “sign”, that they are on the right track.

Section 1 is devoted to a preliminary discussion of textual evidence in support of the claim that pleasure and pain are of great importance in Aristotle’s accounts of the virtuous life and of moral development, with the aim of establishing a number of distinctions that are required for the rest of our analysis.

In Sections 2 and 3 I argue against what I take to be the two main kinds of pleasure-based interpretations of Aristotle’s view of moral development. Both of these views emphasize pleasure and pain as playing the central guiding role in moral development, although they understand this guiding role differently. On the one hand, in the account that I shall call “the brute conditioning view” (Section 2), commentators argue that Aristotle views the good upbringing as consisting mainly in attaching pleasure and pain to the right kinds of objects – namely to noble and shameful objects and activities respectively. On the other hand, defenders of what I shall call “the refined pleasure-based view” (Section 3), hold that for
Aristotle the good upbringing consists *mainly* and *primarily* in learning to enjoy noble objects and actions properly. This view is more sophisticated than the first because, instead of understanding habituation as a process of association of pleasure to objects and activities, it pays attention to the proper enjoyment of the objects or activities themselves. However, as I contend, both pleasure-based approaches lead to inadequate accounts of Aristotle’s view of moral development because they appeal to strategies that clash with central Aristotelian tenets about pleasure and its relationship to virtuous actions.

In the alternative interpretation that I propose in Section 4, pleasure and pain are not what moves learners to make progress in the process of upbringing but rather function as confirmatory “signs” [σημεῖα] which allow learners to check that they are on the right track. Furthermore, the noble pleasures proper to virtuous activities have the capacity to encourage learners to engage in such activities, insofar as they complete the activities or make them perfect; however, the pleasures that arise from virtuous activities are not what makes those activities attractive to them – i.e. they are not “that for the sake of which” the learners act, or “that on account of which” they do what they do.

Thus, in my account, the main transformation that learners undergo during moral upbringing is that their attitude towards pleasure and distress as reasons for actions is radically modified; as a result, pleasures are not goals or in any way motives for their actions, but rather pleasures are epiphenomena that arise from and complete virtuous activities, the goal (*hous heneka*) and motive (*dia ti*) of which is ultimately the noble. The central idea is that learners, thus, come to give priority in their motivations to considerations of nobility and shamefulness over considerations of pleasure and distress. For people with a good upbringing, considerations about nobility and shamefulness silence (or at any rate render irrelevant) considerations of pleasure and distress.
1. Preliminary Thoughts about Aristotle on Pleasure and Moral Development

It is undeniable that Aristotle gives a preferential place to pleasure in his accounts of the virtuous life and of moral development. The textual evidence makes this point, I think, uncontroversial. However, what is at issue is how precisely this preferential place for pleasure takes shape.

Many commentators assume that pleasure and pain are the motors of moral upbringing, and they consider that pleasure and pain provide sufficient explanation for the continuity between the conditions of children (who act mostly at the whim of their appetites and other immediate passions), and those of people who have been well-brought-up and acquired the relevant set of dispositions. Against this approach, the conclusion of the present analysis will be that while Aristotle attaches great importance to pleasure and pain in moral development, he does not take them to be the guiding forces in the process of virtue acquisition.

1.a. Aristotle on the Importance of Pleasure

There is abundant textual evidence of the importance of pleasure in the virtuous life and in moral development. Indeed, we find in NE multiple claims to the effect that “the life of the virtuous person is in itself pleasant” [ὅ θής αὐτῶν καθ' αὐτῶν ἡδὺς] (NE 1.8, 1099a7); that “the person who does not enjoy performing noble actions is not even good” [οὐδ' ἐστὶν ἁγαθὸς ὁ μὴ χαίρων ταῖς καλαῖς πράξεις] (NE 1.8, 1099a16-17; NE 9.9, 1069b31-32); that “virtuous actions are in themselves pleasant” [καθ' αὐτᾶς ἄν εἶν αἱ κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεις ἡδεῖαι] (NE 1.8, 1099a21; 4.1, 1120a26-7); that “virtue of character

78 There are two main versions of this view that I discuss in more detail below. Some examples of a hedonistic approach to Aristotle’s moral development can be found in Hardie (1968); MacIntyre (1980); Burnyeat (1980); Annas (1980); Curzer (2002).
is concerned with pleasures and pains” [περὶ ἡδονὰς γὰρ καὶ λύπας ἐστὶν ἡ ἡθικὴ ἁρετή] (NE 2.3, 1104b8-9); etc.⁷⁹

In addition, and more importantly for our purposes, when Aristotle talks about pleasure in connection with moral upbringing, he also assigns to it a central role. For example, he says that pleasures and pains are a “sign” — or “mark” [σημεῖον] — of the agent’s character (NE 2.3, 1104b4-5); that we ought to be brought up from our early years “so as to delight in and be pained by the things that we ought” (NE 2.3, 1104b11-13); that it “is on account of pleasures and pains that men become bad, by pursuing and avoiding these” [δι’ ἡδονὰς δὲ καὶ λύπας φαῦλοι γίνονται, τῶ διώκειν ταύτας καὶ φεύγειν] (NE 2.3, 1104b11-13); that “in educating the young we steer them by the rudders of pleasure and pain” (NE 10.1, 1172a21); that the pleasure that arises from the performance of some actions encourages such performance (NE 10.5, 1175a31-36; 1175a36-b24; 1105a3-7); etc.⁸⁰

Moreover, Aristotle says in NE 7.13, 1153b25-31, that everyone aims at pleasure – beasts and humans alike. This claim, supported by the others above, has led some commentators to assume that pleasure and distress are the criteria for action not only in the case of children, but even in the case of those who fully possess virtue of character.⁸¹

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⁷⁹ The list of passages is too long to present it exhaustively here. Some other relevant quotes are: that the good person tends to be right, and the bad person wrong, about all objects of choice, but particularly about pleasure (NE 2.3, 1104b32-33); that enjoying abstinence from bodily appetites is a sign of a person’s temperance and enjoying (or at least not being pains) holding to one’s post in battle is a sign of courage (1104b4-9); that enjoying (or not feeling pain in) giving for its own is a sign of someone’s generosity (1120a25-31); that the virtuous person is the criterion for the assessment of what is really pleasant (NE 10.5, 1176a15-19); that shameful pleasures are not really pleasant (NE 10.5, 1176a15-24); etc.

⁸⁰ See also NE 2.9 1109bl-5; 3.4, 1113a31-33; 4.1, 1120a26-27; 10.1, 1172a20-23.

⁸¹ Annas (1980) explicitly attributes to Aristotle the view that “in the good life [pleasure] is something to be pursued” (285). Her view is that, once we make some clarifications about how to understand pleasure, we can attribute to Aristotle the view that pleasure is the guide of the good life:

The accounts in Books 7 and 10 notoriously differ over what pleasure is, but they agree in the thesis that pleasure is not a bad thing. In the good life it is something to be pursued, not shunned. Qualifications are necessary, … But it is wrong to think of pleasure as something that only the bad man goes in for while the good man has something better to
In other words, some commentators hold that pleasure is in a way the guide of the agent’s actions at every stage of life and that, at every stage, people choose activities and things in general because they are pleasant, and avoid them because they are painful. This assumption, in turn, leads to pleasure-based interpretations of moral development, which depict habituation as a process in which just and noble things and activities become desirable for the learners because they find pleasure in them. The learners of virtue, according to this kind of interpretation, desire noble actions “under the guise of the pleasant,” so to speak.

Indeed, some of the above-referred passages might lead one easily to attribute to Aristotle some such pleasure-based approach. For example, commentators who favor this explanation of moral development often appeal to Aristotle’s claims in NE 2.3 and 10.1:

[T4a] NE 2.3, 1104b11-13:

> For this reason, we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought; for this is the right education.

διὸ δὲ ἠχθαὶ πῶς εὔθυς ἐκ νέων, ὡς ὁ Πλάτων φησίν, ὡστε χαίρειν τε καὶ λυπεῖσθαι οἷς δεῖ: ἡ γὰρ ὀρθὴ παιδεία αὕτη ἐστὶν.

[T4b] NE 10.1, 1172a19-23:

> After these matters we ought perhaps to discuss pleasure. For it is thought to be most intimately connected with our human nature, which is the reason why in educating the young we steer them by the rudders of pleasure and pain; it is thought, too, that to enjoy the things we ought and to hate the things we ought has the greatest bearing on virtue of character.

Μετὰ δὲ ταύτα περὶ ἡδονῆς ἴσως ἐπεται διελθεῖν. μαλιστά γὰρ δοκεῖ συνωκειώθαι τῷ γένει ἰμῶν, διὸ παιδέουσι τοὺς νέους οἰκίζοντες ἡδονῆ καὶ λύπη δοκεῖ δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ἡθους ἁρετὴν μέγιστον εἶναι τὸ χαίρειν οἷς δεῖ καὶ μισεῖν ἃ δεῖ.

aim at. What matters is not to avoid or minimize pleasure; this attitude is indeed castigated as a mistake. What is supremely important is to be right about pleasure, because it is only the appropriate pleasure that will lead in the right direction. (285-286)
These passages might in fact suggest that Aristotle believes that the main point of moral upbringing is to shape the tastes of children through pleasure and distress so that they are attracted to the right kinds of objects and activities. On the one hand, we have Aristotle’s reference to Plato’s familiar characterization of the good upbringing as learning to “delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought” \[\chi\alpha\iota\rho\varepsilon\upsilon\ \tau\varepsilon\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \lambda\upsilon\mu\pi\epsilon\iota\sigma\beta\alpha\iota\ \delta\epsilon\iota\] (2.3, 1104b12-13); at the same time, Aristotle makes the even stronger claim that “in educating the young we steer them by the rudders of pleasure and pain” \[\pi\alpha\iota\delta\epsilon\iota\omega\upsilon\nu\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \nu\epsilon\omicron\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\ \\omicron\iota\alpha\iota\kappa\iota\zeta\omicron\omicron\upsilon\tau\eta\upsilon\ \kappa\alpha\iota\ \lambda\upsilon\pi\nu\] (10.1, 1172a20-21).

Moreover, this initial observation appears to be emphasized by the claims that Aristotle makes in both of his main discussions of pleasure in \textit{NE} 7 and 10, to the effect that the pleasure that arises from each activity \textit{encourages} agents to keep performing that activity:

\textbf{[T4c]} \textit{NE} 7.12, 1153a20-23:

Neither practical wisdom nor any state of being is impeded by the pleasure arising from it; it is foreign pleasures that impede, for the pleasures arising from thinking and learning will make us think and learn all the more.

\[\epsilon\mu\pi\omega\delta\iota\zeta\iota\ \delta\varepsilon \ \omega\upsilon\tau\epsilon\iota \ \iota\epsilon\zeta \ \sigma\omicron\delta\epsilon\mu\iota\ \eta \ \alpha\omicron\iota \ \epsilon\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\tau\sigma\varsigma \ \eta\delta\omicron\omicron\upsilon, \ \alpha\lambda\lambda \ \alpha \ \alpha\lambda\lambda\omicron\omicron\tau\omicron\iota\iota, \ \epsilon\tau\epsilon\iota \ \alpha\iota \ \alpha\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron \ \tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron, \ \kappa\alpha\iota \ \mu\alpha\nu\theta\aupsilon\epsilon\iota\nu\ \mu\alpha\lambda\lambda\nu \ \pi\omicron\iota\nu\sigma\omicron\sigma\omicron\upsilon\upsilon \ \tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron \ \tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron \ \kappa\alpha\iota \ \mu\alpha\nu\theta\aupsilon\epsilon\iota\nu.\]

\textbf{[T4d]} \textit{NE} 10.5, 1175b14-15:

… activities are made precise and more enduring and better by their proper pleasure, …

… \[\eta \ \mu\epsilon\nu \ \omicron\iota\kappa\epsilon\iota \ \eta\delta\omicron\omicron\upsilon \ \iota\epsilon\alpha\kappa\rho\iota\beta\omicron\iota \ \tau\omicron\ \epsilon\nu\epsilon\rho\gamma\epsilon\iota\sigma\varsigma \ \kappa\alpha \ \chi\rho\omicron\iota\nu\omega\tau\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma \ \kappa\alpha \ \beta\epsilon\lambda\tau\iota\omicron\upsilon\varsigma \ \pi\omicron\iota\epsilon, \ \ldots\]

Again, these two passages seem to offer further evidence in favor of a pleasure-based reading. It seems that if pleasure can play the role of encouraging the performance of the activities from which it arises, and of making them “precise” \[\iota\epsilon\alpha\kappa\rho\iota\beta\omicron\iota\], “more enduring”
Thus, the defenders of pleasure-based accounts of moral development argue, it is by making the performance of virtuous activities pleasant to the learners of virtue, or by making shameful activities painful, that the good upbringing motivates learners to keep performing virtuous actions and avoiding shameful ones. Consequently, the role of the good educator is to attract the learners to virtuous activities by making them see that there is something pleasant about them. In some cases it is by attaching pleasure to virtuous activities that learners become motivated to perform such activities properly; in others by discovering their pleasant character or by “learning to enjoy” them.

There are, however, a number of relevant aspects contained in Aristotle’s conception of the role of pleasure in moral development that in my opinion get lost when we attempt to interpret the process from this pleasure-centered perspective. On the one hand, one of the main versions of this approach tends to ignore or to misinterpret the basic distinction between the pleasures of the noble and the pleasures characteristic of children. On the other hand, this approach does not make proper use of the difference between pleasure as the goal at which the activity aims and pleasure as an integral part of the activity – or perhaps more accurately, as an integral element of the activity that it completes.

Although the different pleasure-based approaches acknowledge these distinctions to different degrees, they tend to fail to take full account of them.

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82 Sherman (1989: 184), who talks about the “limited motivational role of pleasure”, uses this claim that “it is the pleasure proper to a particular activity that impels us to perform that activity the next time with greater discrimination and precision” to argue in favor of her views about the motivational role of pleasure in learning in general, and in moral upbringing in particular.

83 This is the expression used by Burnyeat (1980: 76).
1.b. Noble Pleasures vs. Base Pleasures

The first distinction that is central to Aristotle’s discussion about the relationship between pleasure and virtue is the distinction between noble pleasures, “derived from noble sources” [αἱ ἀπὸ τῶν καλῶν], and base pleasures, “derived from shameful ones” [ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσχρῶν]:

NE 10.3, 1173b28-31:

Perhaps pleasures differ in kind; for those derived from noble sources are different from those derived from base sources, and one cannot have the pleasure of the just man without being just, nor that of the musical man without being musical, and so on.

This distinction is sometimes characterized as the difference between pleasures that arise from appetitive or bodily desires (like the pleasures of eating or sex), and the noble pleasures that arise from stereotypically virtuous actions (like the pleasure of giving money for a new concert hall, or that of cultivating an old friendship). However, bodily pleasures and noble pleasures are not mutually exclusive categories. For there are noble pleasures that arise from fulfilling bodily appetites in the right way, such as the noble pleasures that arise from eating the right thing, at the right time, in the right amount, etc. Furthermore, it is

84 Both Burnyeat (1980: 77) and Annas (1980: 290) have noticed that Aristotle acknowledges that there is a right and a wrong way even of enjoying food, wine and sex (cf. NE 7.14, 1154a17-18) and that it is therefore not the case that a pleasure is non-noble simply because it is bodily. They consider, correctly in my opinion,
also possible that some of the pleasures that arise from performing actions that are the right thing to do in the circumstances are not noble pleasures, such as when the pleasure that a business person gets from giving money for a new concert hall is produced by the savings she will make on her taxes, or the pleasure that a kid gets from sharing her sandwich is produced by the toy that she gets as a reward for it.

1.c. Pleasure as Aim vs. Pleasure as Integral Element of an Activity

There is a second distinction concerning Aristotle’s conception of the relationship between pleasure and action. This distinction is well expressed in the following passage from Dorothea Frede (2006):

Aristotle has come up with a kind of pleasure that is well integrated into moral action and that is immune to the complaint just ventured against hedonism. *Pleasure in this case is not the ultimate motive of an action, but a characteristic of its performance*. . . .

*Pleasure is no longer an aim beyond the action itself; it does not constitute an end of its own.* (259, my italics)

According to Frede’s analysis, we should differentiate in Aristotle between (a) pleasure as “the ultimate motive of the action”, i.e. pleasure as that at which the action aims, and (b) pleasure as “a characteristic of [the] performance [of an action]”, i.e. pleasure as an integral part of the action.

These two kinds of pleasures have different relations to our virtuous actions:

[I]n certain moral actions pleasures and pains play a significant role at *two* different levels. For pleasure and pain figure not only as *integral parts* of moral attitudes, but also both as their objects. Aristotle must have been aware of this distinction. For in his discussion of some of the moral virtues, he treats pleasures and pains (a) as the subject matter of acts of pursuit and

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that the relevant difference does not depend so much on the object from which the pleasure arises, but on the *way* in which the object is enjoyed.

85 Frede indicates here that there is a problem with NE 10.4, 1174a31-3, where Aristotle “misleadingly depicts pleasure as if it were an additional end of a perfect natural activity”. She assumes, with others, “that he wants to say no more than that the pleasure is part and symptom of such an activity.” (For a summary of this issue cf. van Riel (2000) *Pleasure and the Good Life: Plato, Aristotle and the Neoplatonists* (Leiden:Brill), 52-58.)
avoidance alongside the noble (kalon) and beneficial (sumpheron) (2.3.1104b30-32), and (b) as the characteristics of the activities themselves (1105a6-7). (Frede 2007:270)

This second way of understanding pleasure as a characteristic of the performance of an action is, according to Frede, “Aristotle’s ingenious device of integrating pleasure and pain in ethical thought” (259).

In conclusion, then, we should avoid attributing to Aristotle the claim that pleasure is a goal for Aristotle’s moral agent. On the contrary, pleasure should not be that because of which the corresponding activities are performed, but something that results from the activities when they are performed properly and completes them. As Frede succinctly puts it (with an unfortunate Kantian tone, but not for that reason un-Aristotelian): “our actions should be done with inclination rather than because of inclination.”

As I expect to show in the following sections, one of the most serious failures of the pleasure-based approaches to moral development is that they do not take sufficiently seriously this ingenious distinction, and they make pleasure — in one way or another — to be the aim of all our actions.

2. The Brute Conditioning View

Let us begin with the most simple of the pleasure-based approaches to moral development: the “brute conditioning view”, as I have dubbed it. Some commentators tend to see conditioning

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86 A similar view is expressed by Broadie (1991: 93) in her comments on how to understand Aristotle’s claim that, as she puts it, “a virtuous agent characteristically delights in virtuous actions”. Broadie’s views coincide with Frede’s in that she also sees doing virtuous actions, or acting for the sake of the noble as being incompatible with doing something “because” it is pleasant:

Aristotle’s standard contrast between the noble and the pleasant must be read to accommodate the thesis that a virtuous agent characteristically ‘delights in’ his virtuous actions. Thus the acting for pleasure that is excluded by acting for the sake of the noble has to do with logically antecedent pleasure. Someone who does A simply because he feels like it or feels he would enjoy it (these are not the same, but Aristotle tends to merge them) is not doing A for the sake of the noble. Again, if he chooses to do A on the ground that it is pleasant or would lead to something pleasant, doing it is not acting for the sake of the noble. (93, my italics)
by association as a point of departure for the process of leading the learners to find noble activities attractive.\(^{87}\)

The main tenet of the brute conditioning view is that the acquisition of a taste for the noble occurs in the initial stages of upbringing, when the noble activities become linked somehow—most commonly by means of punishments and/or rewards—with familiar, antecedent pleasures. The child's sense of pleasure and pain is the point of departure and the means of moral upbringing, and once shaped by the relevant training, i.e. once associated with the right objects and activities, the sense of pleasure and pain—now transformed into the sense of noble joy and noble hatred—will also be the guide for virtuous action.

What is characteristic of this view is that pleasures are taken to be noble simply by the fact that they are associated to the right objects or activities. More specifically, the conditioning view holds that pleasures become associated to certain objects or activities \textit{due merely to their simultaneous exercise}. Thus, the reason that noble activities become attractive for the learner is that they become associated with pleasant feelings, although these pleasant feelings do not arise directly from the noble activities themselves but from “external

\(^{87}\) See, for example, Hardie (1968):

A person who starts by obeying a rule through fear of penalties, or hope of rewards, \textit{may} end by obeying it, thinking it right and reasonable, for better reasons. (106, my italics)

A more unusual version of the brute conditioning view, which focuses mainly on the role of pain and punishment (rather than pleasure and rewards) is defended by Curzer (2002):

How does performing virtuous acts over and over under the threat of pain induce the many to progress? Aristotle does not say. I suggest that the many progress through the familiar mechanism of internalizing the punishment. … (159)

On my interpretation, however, pain rather than pleasure drives moral development. Aristotle proposes to improve moral beginners (the many) through external punishments; he does not mention external rewards. (162)

Taylor (2006) talks about the value of “positive reinforcement” and “negative reinforcement”:

While the details of the controversy go beyond the scope of the present discussion, it is clear that Aristotle’s insistence that correct education proceeds via pleasure and distress (1104b9-16) stresses the importance both of positive reinforcement of desirable character traits via pleasure and negative reinforcement of undesirable traits via distress …. (81, n. 5)
rewards”, i.e. appetitively pleasant activities that are performed in conjunction with the noble ones.

2.a. MacIntyre’s Chess Example: A Case of Reward-Based Upbringing

An example frequently quoted in support of this view is Alasdair MacIntyre’s (1980) famous example of how to attract a child to practice chess for itself, and like it for those goods specific to it, by offering candy as a reward:

Consider the example of a highly intelligent seven-year-old child whom I wish to teach to play chess, although the child has no particular desire to learn the game. The child does, however, have a very strong desire for candy and little chance of obtaining it. I therefore tell the child that if the child will play chess with me once a week I will give the child 50 cents worth of candy; moreover I tell the child that I will always play in such a way that it will be difficult, but not impossible, for the child to win, and that, if the child wins, the child will receive an extra 50 cents worth of candy. Thus motivated the child plays to win. Notice however that, so long as it is the candy alone which provides the child with a good reason for playing chess, the child has no reason not to cheat, but every reason to cheat, provided that he or she can do so successfully. But, so we may hope, there will come a time when the child will find in those goods specific to chess, in the development of a certain highly particular kind of analytical skill, strategic imagination and competitive intensity, a new set of reasons, reasons now not just for winning on a particular occasion, but for trying to excel in whatever way the game of chess demands.  

Here MacIntyre presents a case of conditioning, where a child is expected to acquire a taste for the specific goods of chess (and a new set of reasons for action), by being initially attracted to the game mainly by the prospect of external reward. MacIntyre’s hope is that, after a number of repetitions, the child will be attracted to playing chess for itself without the need of the extra reward of the candy.

The idea is that this point applies equally to the case of virtuous activities: according to this view of upbringing, learners perform virtuous actions initially only insofar as these actions are associated to other activities that produce the pleasures that learners desire and

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are familiar with, namely appetitive pleasures, and by repetition they get to be attracted by the intrinsic goods of virtuous activity. For example, another child can learn to appreciate the intrinsic value of ceding her seat in the bus to an elderly person by initially performing that activity only insofar as it is associated to enjoying the candy that her parents give her as reward. This view assumes that the repetition of virtuous activities prompted by external rewards must be what does the transformative work, by getting the learner habituated to performing such activities and making them part of their repertoire.

One important detail is that, as MacIntyre notes in the chess example, the motivation provided by the external pleasure is not motivation to perform the new activity well but is merely an incentive to do whatever it takes in order to get the reward. And so in our examples the candy does not offer the child any motivation to play chess well, but merely acts as a spur to win the game by any means necessary, for “so long as it is the candy alone which provides the child with a good reason for playing chess, the child has no reason not to cheat, but every reason to cheat, provided that he or she can do so successfully”.

We can add here that if the candy alone is the child’s reason to play chess, then the child does not even have a real reason to play chess. Again, if she could get the candy from some other source, she would not bother to play chess at all. For in MacIntyre’s scenario it is clear that the final goal of the child’s action is not to play chess well, and not even to win, but to get the candy. Thus, if the child starts by playing chess only because she gets to eat some candy if she plays, then she will only play chess insofar she gets to eat some candy. And this means that, unless there is another mechanism in play, the child will not come to enjoy playing chess independently of the candy and for its own intrinsic value as the experiment aims to show.
The point I want to emphasize is that in the model presented by MacIntyre there is a discontinuity in the motivations for action, and that there is no explanation of how this kind of conditioning might lead to developing a taste for chess (or for virtuous activity) in itself except for the hope that repetition has that effect on us due to some hard fact about human nature — in other words, the transformation occurs because this is how our psychology works. However, there is no justification to assume that Aristotle thinks that simple repetition has that power, and I think that his views about the relationship between pleasures and activities forbid this move.

2.b. Aristotle’s Rejection of Associative Learning: Proper vs. Alien Pleasures

Aristotle’s discussion of the relationship between pleasure and activity in *NE* 10.5 helps to explain why the candy method does not provide a good model for how the child might develop a genuine taste for chess (at least in an Aristotelian framework); and in general, of why the conditioning view is not Aristotle’s preferred model for moral upbringing. The explanation is based on the following two principles:

[T4f]  *NE* 10.5, 1175a29-30:

Each of the pleasures is bound up with the activity that it completes.

φανεῖ θ' ἄν τούτο καὶ ἐκ τοῦ συνωκείωσθαι τῶν ἡδονῶν ἐκάστην τῇ ἑνεργείᾳ ἴν τελειοί.

[T4g]  *NE* 10.5, 1175b25-26:

Activities differing in kind are completed by things differing in kind.

τὰς ἑνεργείας τὰς διαφέρουσας τῷ ἑιδεί ὑπὸ διαφέροντων ἑιδεὶ τελειούσθαι.

89 One might complain that this is an empirical question and that it might just be a fact about our psychology that repetition has indeed that power. The central problem with attributing this view to Aristotle, particularly in the case of learning virtue, is that at least initially the learners would be performing the corresponding actions mechanically and they would not be exercising the relevant features of the acting and feeling characteristic of virtue. (Cf. Broadie 1991:108, quoted below in p, 120).
These two claims about pleasure, namely [a] that pleasures are “bound up” or intimately united with their activities (from [T4f]), Aristotle uses the verb \( \text{συνωκειόμοσθαι} \), and [b] that pleasures that complete activities that are different in kind are themselves different in kind (from [T4g]), reveal the limitations of the brute conditioning view. Indeed, brute conditioning precisely requires the attachment of external pleasures to activities in a way that Aristotle rules out with these two principles: namely by associating to the new activities pleasures which do not belong properly to them, but which arise from other activities that the individual already finds attractive. However, the idea of hooking certain pleasures initially derived from activities of one type onto a different type of activity is an unintelligible notion within the Aristotelian framework established by the principles above.

Indeed, Aristotle uses the principle expressed in [T4f] about the intimate relationship of pleasure and activity to introduce a distinction between “proper” [\( \text{οἰκεῖαι} \)] and “alien” [or “foreign”, \( \text{ἄλλοτριαι} \)] pleasures and pains.\(^9\) This distinction allows him to show that not all pleasures encourage the performance of a given activity and not all pains hinder the performance of a given activity. He suggests that only those pleasures that “supervene on the activity in virtue of its own nature” [\( \text{ἐπὶ τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ καθ’ αὐτὴν γινόμεναι} \)], i.e. the proper pleasures, do in fact encourage the corresponding activities; while those pleasures that arise from different sources, i.e. the alien pleasures, hinder (or “destroy” [\( \text{φθείρουσι} \)]) the exercise of an activity:

\[ \text{[T4h]} \quad \text{NE 10.5, 1175b20-24:} \]

So an activity suffers contrary effects from its proper pleasures and pains, i.e. from those that supervene on the activity in virtue of its own nature. And alien pleasures have been stated to do much the same as pain; they destroy the activity, only not to the same degree.

\(^9\) Aristotle refers to this distinction between proper pleasures and alien pleasures also in \( \text{NE 7.12, 1153a19-23} \) (quoted above as [T4c]).
The basic principle expressed here is succinctly put by Urmson (1988):

The pleasure proper to an activity promotes that activity, whereas the enjoyment of something else, what Aristotle calls ‘a foreign pleasure’, impedes it. (104)

This principle explains why Aristotle makes claims to the effect that pleasures and pains play the important roles of encouraging a good upbringing, and claims to the effect that they also might hinder moral development. Only the pleasures that are proper of the virtuous activities encourage moral development, while the “pleasures that are external” [αἰ δ’ ἀλλότριαι ἡδοναί] to the virtuous activities, or merely added to them, distract the learners from engaging in the activities properly.

Finally, this distinction also helps us to understand the extent of Aristotle’s claim that pleasures make their corresponding activities “precise, more enduring and better” (1175b14). In that case, the pleasures that can encourage the agents to perform a certain activity are those that are proper to the activity. Of external or “alien” pleasures Aristotle says that they “destroy” [φθείρουσι] the activities that they accompany. Thus, contrary to what the defenders of the conditioning view propose, brute conditioning (i.e. the candy method) would be counterproductive.

In his discussion of the principle expressed in [T4f], Aristotle offers an example about flute-lovers that will help us see this point:

[T4i] NE 10.5, 1175b1-10:

This will be even more apparent from the fact that activities are hindered

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91 NE 10.5, 1175b13-24.
by pleasures arising from other sources. For people who are fond of playing the flute are incapable of attending to arguments if they overhear some one playing the flute, since they enjoy flute-playing more than the activity in hand; so the pleasure connected with flute-playing destroys the activity concerned with argument. This happens, similarly, in all other cases, when one is active about two things at once; the more pleasant activity drives out the other, and if it is much more pleasant does so all the more, so that one even ceases from the other.

As this example shows, the presence of external or alien pleasures, especially if these are more familiar or dear to the agents than those arising from the activities at hand, serves to distract agents from the performance of those activities. Similarly, then, in the case of learning and acquiring a taste for new activities, the presence of external pleasures or rewards not only will not promote the acquisition of a taste for the new activity, as the conditioning thesis suggests, but moreover it will distract the learner from paying attention to the proper pleasures of the new activity.

2.c. A ‘Punishment-Based’ Conditioning View

Before I conclude my discussion of the brute conditioning view I would like to consider the punishment-based approach recently defended in Howard J. Curzer’s (2002) paper about Aristotelian moral upbringing. Curzer argues against the view that “pleasure is the guide to
and proposes instead that the guiding role in moral development, and in the performance of virtuous actions in general, is played by pain and punishment.

Curzer’s picture of the mechanisms of moral development is not significantly different from the standard brute conditioning view presented above, at least in that it relies on the same behaviorist assumptions about the power of association. Curzer’s view can thus be ultimately characterized as another variety of the conditioning view, in that the initial steps in an individual’s moral development occur through threats with “punishment and penalties” and, in general, through “negative reinforcement”.

This view is clearly open to the same kind of criticism as the reward-based version of the brute conditioning view, since it also fails to make the distinction between proper and alien pains and consequently violates the principles about pleasure and pain established by [T4f] and [T4g]. Indeed, just as the reward-based version of the brute conditioning view did with pleasures, Curzer’s punishment-based version proposes that the right upbringing consists in some process of associating external pains (punishments, κολάσεις) with shameful actions, so that the learner ends up internalizing the pains and hating the shameful actions on account of the painful character that they have acquired during the process of conditioning. Thus, the mechanism that Curzer introduces as an explanation of the acquisition of the desire to perform virtuous actions for their own sake is as implausible within the Aristotelian framework as the reward-based version of the conditioning view.

Broadie (1991) has expressed the problem as follows:

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93 Curzer (2002) focuses mainly on Burnyeat’s (1980) discussion of the role of pleasure in moral development. As we will see in the next section, although Burnyeat (1980) defends a pleasure-based interpretation of Aristotle’s view, he uses a more refined account than mere conditioning by introducing the distinction between proper and external pleasures. (See below Section 4 of this Chapter.)

94 See Curzer (2002): “I shall argue that according to Aristotle, both the many and the generous-minded make moral progress through pain rather than pleasure” (158); and also: “The many come to choose virtuous actions for their own sake through habituation motivated by punishment and threat of punishment” (158).

95 See Curzer (2002: 159).
However many times [the learner] does [virtuous things] against his will or under threat of punishment, he will not end by identifying himself with the action in the way characteristic of virtue. (108, my italics)

The method proposed by Curzer will produce, at its best, people who perform virtuous actions coincidentally, and only from fear of the potential punishments that threaten to occur if they are caught doing something wrong.96

2.d. Conclusion about the Brute Conditioning View

The discussion above has shown that the conditioning view, in all of its variants, is an unsatisfactory reading of Aristotle’s account of the relationship between pleasure and moral development. Given Aristotle’s account of the relationship between pleasures and activities, we should conclude that not even in the initial stages of upbringing does it make sense to say that children should develop an attachment to the right objects and the right activities through the association of familiar pleasures.

The two main failures of this view are (1) lack of attention to the distinction between appetitive pleasures and noble pleasures; and (2) overlooking the principle that pleasures are intrinsically connected to the corresponding activities, and consequently failing to make the distinction between proper and alien pleasures.

There is, however, a more refined pleasure-based reading of Aristotle’s view that has greater success in dealing with the puzzle raised by MacIntyre’s case. In this alternative pleasure-based view, which I shall call “the refined pleasure-based view”, what MacIntyre refers to as “the new set of reasons” is seen as a new set of pleasures that the learners discover by performing the noble activities. Thus, the problems derived from attaching the pleasures corresponding to activities of one type to activities of another type do not arise, and the

96 Hursthouse (1988) says about this method (in reference to a similar interpretation proposed by Engberg-Pedersen (1983), that “on this account, even under the most generous interpretation, habituation will not yield much more than enkratieia.”
claims that “activities differing in kind are completed by things differing in kind” (in \[T4g\]) and that “each of the pleasures is bound up with the activity that it completes” (in \[T4f\]) are respected.

3. The Refined Pleasure-Based View

The refined pleasure-based view holds that acquiring virtue consists in acquiring a disposition to enjoy and hate a different kind of pleasure and distress, namely the pleasure characteristic (or proper) of noble activities and the distress characteristic of shameful ones. This view, which is the dominant interpretation of Aristotle’s account of the relation between pleasure and moral development,\(^7\) is often confused with the mere brute conditioning view;\(^8\) however, this version is significantly different from brute conditioning, and it is superior in that it respects Aristotle’s account of the relationship between pleasure and virtue to a much greater degree.

\(^7\) Its most representative defenders are Burnyeat (1980) and Annas (1980). Also McDowell (1996) seems to think that learning to take pleasure in certain activities is what leads learners to develop a concept of the noble:

> The relevant habituation includes the imparting of conceptual apparatus, centrally the concept of the noble. That concept crystallizes the pleasure that an agent has learned to take in certain actions into the form of a reason for undertaking them. (28)

\(^8\) One example of this confusion can be found in a recent paper by Grönroos (2007):

> I here disagree with Burnyeat’s suggestion (‘Aristotle on learning to be Good’, 80) … that the spirited desire is brought about and developed through a learning process in which pleasures and pains are associated with fine things. (267, n. 33, my italics)

It is true that at some points Burnyeat expresses his view in a way that might give the impression that he is proposing a version of the conditioning view. For example, the following passage can be misleading:

> [T]he underlying idea is that the child’s sense of pleasure, which to begin with and for a long while is his only motive, should be hooked up with just and noble things so that his unreasoned evaluative responses may develop in connection with the right objects. (80)

The expression “hooked up” makes it seem as if Burnyeat was talking about mere association of preexistent tendencies to feel pleasure and pain in relation to certain things with the new noble and shameful things and actions. However, what Burnyeat is saying here is that the child’s sense of pleasure should be modeled with the aim that the child finds pleasure in just and noble things and actions. More importantly, Burnyeat is not interpreting the process as one of association of already familiar pleasures and pains, but as one of discovery of new pleasures and new pains.
The main feature that distinguishes this interpretation from the previous one is that in the refined view the pleasures that play an important role in moral development are not external pleasures merely associated with noble activities, but instead are pleasures characteristic of the noble activities themselves. As a consequence, in this account, learning to be virtuous does not involve associating first-natural appetitive pleasures to new activities, but — to use Burnyeat’s (1980) expression— “learning to enjoy” the pleasures of the noble. Or as Julia Annas (1980) puts it, following Burnyeat (1980),

> Learning to be virtuous involves learning to take pleasure in virtuous activities; the latter is not something added on to the former but it is part of it and bound up with it. (289)

According to this interpretation, then, by performing and practicing noble activities the learners discover and acquire a taste for the new pleasures that belong to them as “part of [them] and bound up with [them]”. Then, since the learners find the new pleasures enjoyable, they come to value the noble activities to which the pleasures belong and see them as desirable.

Thus, this approach is also pleasure-based insofar as it is the pleasure characteristic of noble activities that motivates the learners to perform the corresponding activities. However, this view acknowledges different kinds of pleasures and allows not only the possibility of distinguishing between noble pleasures vs. merely appetitive ones, but also between pleasures as “something added” to the activities and pleasures as something intimately “bound up” with the activities. In this way, this view avoids some of the problems to which the mere-conditioning view was easy prey.

Insofar as the refined pleasure-based view takes these Aristotelian points into account, it is superior as an interpretation of Aristotle’s view than the mere conditioning view. However, the refined pleasure-based view is not free of problems, precisely because it
concedes to pleasure in the noble a guiding role in the process of moral development that — in my opinion — Aristotle’s account does not grant.\(^99\)

### 3.a. Distinctive Features of the Refined Pleasure-Based View

One of the advantages of the refined pleasure-based view is that it emphasizes the distinction between mere bodily pleasures and the noble pleasures and is able to provide a good criterion to differentiate clearly between them.

A second relevant refinement of this view in relation to the brute conditioning view is that it acknowledges that the nobility of the noble pleasures does not depend only on the object or activity that produces them, i.e. that from which the pleasure arises, but also on the way in which the activities are performed.\(^100\) In relation to this point, Burnyeat (1980) uses the distinction between “learning to enjoy something properly” and “merely taking pleasure in it” (76) in order to explain the pleasures at stake in the Aristotelian account of moral development. The main point of this distinction is to signal that what matters is not so much to build attachments to certain objects and activities, but to introduce the learner to new ways of enjoying.

An immediate advantage of this approach is, then, that it provides elements to show that the proposed mode of upbringing brings the learner to enjoy the virtuous actions “in the way characteristic of virtue” to use Broadie’s above-quoted expression (1991:108). For learning to enjoy an activity properly means acquiring a taste for the proper pleasures of that activity, as opposed to acquiring a taste for the activity insofar as other alien pleasures are associated to it. Since the proper pleasures of virtuous activities are precisely those that the

\(^99\) I agree here with Broadie (1991: 122, note 46).

\(^100\) Burnyeat expresses this point by saying that “what the virtuous man enjoys … is the practice of the virtues undertaken for its own sake” (77, my italics).
virtuous person enjoys, the good upbringing would be the upbringing that guides the learner to enjoy the proper pleasures of virtuous activities.

3.b. Arguments against the Refined Pleasure-Based View

Although the refined pleasure-based view is right about the fact that the relevant step in moral development involves silencing the demands of the appetitive pleasures and becoming able to perceive a new and different kind of pleasure, and moreover, although this view correctly acknowledges the fact that the relevance of pleasure is not so much that it encourages the performance of certain activities, but that it encourages their performance in a certain way, I think that the role that this view concedes to pleasure in the learners’ motivation for action is still incompatible, on the one hand, with Aristotle’s account of the relationship between pleasure and virtuous action in general; and on the other hand, with his views on the relation between pleasure and virtuous dispositions.

Concretely, the first problem of the refined pleasure-based interpretation lies in that it proposes to take the pleasure’s intrinsic to virtuous activities as the goal of the learners’ behavior. Thus, although this view correctly holds that learners should not only become able to enjoy the right objects and the right activities, i.e. the noble ones, but they also are supposed to learn to enjoy those objects properly, it nonetheless maintains (mistakenly, in my view) that learners come to find those noble actions attractive mainly because they have come to enjoy them. However, if Frede’s (2006) above-mentioned views on the distinction between pleasure as aim and pleasure as integral part of the activity are correct, then those able to perceive the pleasures of the noble as such relate to those pleasures not as their objects of pursuit, but simply as something that belongs to the noble activities that they desire to perform independently of whether they are pleasant or not.
The second problem with the refined pleasure-based interpretation is expressed by Broadie (1991) as follows:\textsuperscript{101}

I depart from Burnyeat, however, in not postulating, as he does, \textit{enjoyment of the action as the explanatory link between doing it and coming to believe, of oneself, that this is the sort of thing it is noble to do}. On this view, pleasure in performing, e.g., just actions leads to the stable disposition to act so; but Aristotle’s view of the relation between pleasure in acting justly and a just disposition seems to be that the pleasure is in the exercise of the already established disposition. (This fits in with his general view about pleasure: see, e.g., 1153 a 14-15.) Burnyeat must assume that there is a special pleasure in doing what one takes to be just; for the point is hardly that we learn to pay our debts spontaneously by coming to enjoy, through doing it, the handing over of banknotes, etc. But on that assumption \textit{the agent’s pleasure presupposes, hence cannot be thought to explain, the love of just dealing that is characteristic of the virtue}. (122, note 46)

I sympathize with this objection, although I do not fully agree with Broadie’s position. Concretely, I think that Broadie is right when she claims that, since Burnyeat takes the relevant pleasure to be the pleasure intrinsic to just activity, it follows that pleasure cannot play the explanatory role that Burnyeat attributes to it. In other words, I agree with Broadie that pleasure in the noble presupposes love of the noble, and not the other way around, and that consequently our ability to enjoy noble actions cannot be the explanation of how we get to find those actions attractive.

However, I disagree with Broadie’s claim that the pleasure is only “in the exercise of the already established disposition”. My view is intermediate between Burnyeat’s proposal

\textsuperscript{101} Also Curzer (2002) raises a similar criticism against Burnyeat’s view, although he puts it in more extreme terms:

By definition, learners are not yet virtuous. In particular, they lack the right passions and the right tastes. They find some vicious acts pleasant and some virtuous acts unpleasant. Medial action is typically unpleasant for a person with excessive or defective passions and tastes. Standing fast in battle is unpleasant for anyone experiencing excessive or defective fear. Spending and giving the right amount of money is unpleasant for people who love money too little or too much. Eating the right amount is unpleasant for people whose appetites are too large or too small. And so on. “One cannot get the pleasures of a just man without being just” (1173b29-30). So learners do not learn that virtuous acts are pleasant by performing and enjoying them, because learners do not enjoy them. Indeed, virtuous action is painful for learners. It certainly does not positively reinforce the desire to perform virtuous acts. (149)
and Broadie’s objection: although I agree that pleasure in the noble presupposes love of the
noble, I think that learners can indeed have pleasure in the noble before they have stable
dispositions of character in so far as they are able to have love of the noble.

Let me conclude my criticism of the pleasure-based view by presenting my version of these two arguments briefly in the next section.

3.b.1 Argument from the Activity’s Aim

Aristotle has a good reason to warn us against making pleasure our object of pursuit precisely because of the intimate relationship that he establishes between the virtuousness of actions and the nobility of their goals. Since — as it became clear in Chapter 1 — actions are virtuous only if they are performed for the sake of the noble, it follows that if actions are performed on account of the characteristic pleasure that typically supervenes on them, they will lose their proper noble character. As a consequence, the pleasure arising from these non-virtuous activities will not be the characteristic pleasure that typically supervenes on virtuous actions, but something different. For instance, the pleasure that arises when I help someone in order to obtain for myself the pleasure of helping is different from the pleasure that arises when I help someone because it is the noble thing to do in the circumstances; only the second pleasure can be considered as the characteristic pleasure that typically supervenes on virtuous actions.

102 Gerd van Riel (2000) presents a similar argument against Gauthier-Jolif (1959) and others in his discussion of the definition of pleasure in NE 10:

[P]leasure cannot straightforwardly be considered as a final cause: it is not the end to which an activity aspires. Clearly, we do not always perform all our activities in order to obtain pleasure. It even seems to be the case that a straightforward aspiration to achieve pleasure would in fact prevent us from obtaining any pleasure whatsoever. (55, my italics)

103 This problem cannot be avoided by the refined hedonistic view, since its central claim is that learners aim at the noble activities insofar as these are pleasant for them.
This objection is inspired by Henry Sidgwick’s discussion of the “fundamental paradox of hedonism” in his *Methods of Ethics* (1874), which he encapsulates in the claim that “the impulse towards pleasure, if too predominant, defeats its own aim.” Sidgwick’s argument runs as follows:

> Of our active enjoyments generally, whether the activities on which they attend are classed as ‘bodily’ or as ‘intellectual’ (as well as of many emotional pleasures), it may certainly be said that we cannot attain them, at least in their highest degree, so long as we keep our main conscious aim concentrated upon them. It is not only that the exercise of our faculties is insufficiently stimulated by the mere desire of the pleasure attending it, and requires the presence of other more objective, ‘extra-regarding’, impulses, in order to be fully developed; we may go further and say that these other impulses must be temporarily predominant and absorbing, if the exercise and its attendant gratification are to attain their full scope. ([1874], 1907: 48, my italics)

Although Sidgwick’s argument is about pleasures in general, it can be applied to our particular concern with the noble pleasures that complete noble activities. The general idea is that, in relation to the pleasures that arise from the performance of activities, only when the agents do not pursue getting pleasure from them (i.e. when they do not have enjoying the activity as their aim), then they are able to enjoy the characteristic pleasure of the corresponding activities. But if the agents aim at the pleasure, and do not focus on the activities that bring pleasure, the pleasure will never come.

This situation becomes even more evident in the case of virtuous actions, where the motivation of the agent plays an important role in her actions being genuinely virtuous. Thus, whenever the agents focus on the pleasures that arise from the noble activities and they aim at them, they lose the focus from the proper performance of the activities themselves and, more importantly, they do not aim at their nobility; and this has as a consequence that the activities so performed will not produce their characteristic pleasure.

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10 Sidgwick ([1874], 1907), 48.
If this argument is correct, then, pleasure (even the characteristic pleasure of the noble activities) cannot be what motivates the learners of virtue to perform noble actions. For if pleasure is the learners’ aim in performing noble actions, then, learners are impeded from fully enjoying the characteristic pleasure that supervenes and completes that action.

3.b.2 Argument from Priority

The main reason behind my insistence that it is misleading to say that learners should aim at enjoying the pleasures that are proper to noble activities is that it seems to me that such a view inverts the order of priority between loving the noble and taking pleasure in it. In this point I agree with Cooper (1999), who indicates in his discussion of the moral motive that the experience of the nobility of the virtuous actions has to be prior to the discovery of the pleasure that arises from it:

Here one should notice that in Burnyeat’s account (and the principal texts of the *Nicomachean Ethics* on which it is based)\(^\text{105}\) Aristotle says that a young person must become habituated to take pleasure not just in the doing of just actions (and others required by the virtues) but in these as ‘noble’—to take pleasure in these actions for the order, symmetry, and determinateness that is found in them, therefore. How are they to come to do that? *Evidently they must first become aware of and experience the nobility and fineness of the actions required by the virtues, before discovering a pleasure in that nobility (and their experience of it).* (277, my italics)

I think that Cooper’s intuition in this passage is correct, and that we cannot have the proper enjoyment of noble activities that Burnyeat puts at the center of his account of moral development without having first awareness and experience of the nobility of the actions. In other words: enjoying something as noble requires having a previous minimal grasp of the noble.

\(^{105}\) Cooper refers here to *NE* 1.3, 1095a2-13, b12-13; 10.9, 1179b4-31 (277, note 37).
Moreover, I think we should go beyond Cooper’s proposal and acknowledge that the learners not only should “become aware” or “experience” the nobility of the actions before they can take “pleasure in that nobility”, but also they should already have some love for the nobility of the virtuous actions if they are to find pleasure in such activities. My point is, thus, that the order of priority is the inverse of the one that Burnyeat (1980) proposes: it is not that learners have to come to “love [what is noble] because it is what is truly or by nature pleasant” (76), but rather that learners get to enjoy what is noble precisely because it is a proper object of love for them.  

4. Alternative View: With Pleasure but Not For the Sake Of Pleasure

The previous analysis has presented some of the problems that arise when pleasure is taken as a goal or as motive of virtuous activities. However, as it has become clear in Section 1 of this chapter, pleasures and pains have an ample presence in the virtuous life and in moral development. Now, if pleasure and pain do not function as motivational factors, what then is their role?

Aristotle says in NE 2.3, 1104b4 that pleasures and pains are a “sign” [σημειῶν] of the agent’s character. They confirm or negate the virtuous character of the agents, or, in the

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106 In NE 3.10, 1117b29-30, Aristotle expresses this idea of the priority of the “love of x” over “pleasure in x” by saying that “each person delights in that of which he is a lover” [ἐκάτερος γάρ τούτων χαίρει, οὐ̂ φιλητικος̄ς ἐστιν].

A similar point is made by Butler in the following argument against hedonism:

That all particular appetites and passions are towards external thing themselves, distinct from the pleasure arising from them, is manifested from hence — that there could not be this pleasure, were it not for that prior suitableness between the object and the passion; there could be no enjoyment or delight from one thing more than another, from eating food more than from swallowing a stone, if there were not an affection or appetite to one thing more than another. (Sermon IV, “Upon the Love of our Neighbor”, in Five Sermons, §6, 47.)
case of young people, they confirm or call into question whether learners are on the right track towards the acquisition of virtuous dispositions.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{107} Burnyeat (1980) also interprets Aristotle’s view in \textit{NE} 2.3, 1104b3-13 in the same way: “it is in the light of whether a man enjoys or fails to enjoy virtuous actions that \textit{we tell} whether he has formed the right dispositions toward them” (77, my italics). See also: “enjoyment or lack of it is the \textit{test} of whether [someone] really has the virtues” (77, my italics).
SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter I analyze Aristotle’s account of the nature of shame in *NE* 4.9 and 10.9, and explore his views on the relationships between shame and virtue, and between shame and virtuous actions. This study will shed light on the role of shame in moral development and support my proposed solution to the problem of the moral upbringing gap. My central claim is that Aristotle considers shame to be the praiseworthy emotion that enables learners to acquire virtue through practice because shame provides learners of virtue with the right kind of motivational and cognitive capacities that allow them to do the right actions in the circumstances with the right orientation towards the noble. In this way, shame substantiates the required continuity between the virtuous actions and the virtuous dispositions that those actions eventually produce.

After a characterization in Sections 1 and 2 of the most frequent sources of tension encountered in the analysis of shame, I proceed in Sections 3 and 4 to analyze separately the aspects of shame presented in *NE* 4.9 and 10.9 respectively. My aim here is to arrive at an account of the complexities of shame that can provide a satisfactory explanation of how shame enables moral development.

Aristotle’s notion of shame is complex, and the texts where shame is discussed seem to present conflicting claims. The main obstacle to elucidating Aristotle’s account of shame in *NE* is the apparent difficulty in harmonizing the descriptions of shame that we find in *NE* 4.9 and 10.9. These two chapters present two very different images of shame which seem, at first glance, to be in conflict with one another. However, I contend that these apparent divergences are not a reflection of real tension (or of Aristotle’s use of two separate
notions of shame), but rather are a consequence of the necessarily complex character that shame embodies as a proto-virtuous emotion in the Aristotelian framework.

My analysis aims at making it clear why shame is the “semivirtue of the learner” (a term coined by Burnyeat for this purpose\textsuperscript{108}) by showing that, although Aristotle clearly expresses in *NE* 4.9 (and *NE* 2.7) that he does not consider shame to be a virtuous disposition of character, he nonetheless acknowledges both in *NE* 4.9 and 10.9 that shame is praiseworthy in young people, and —in the reading that I propose— enables learners to perform virtuous actions for the sake of the noble, and to exercise thus the kinds of motivational and cognitive tendencies that, once integrated and perfected, will constitute virtue.

The present analysis of the two central passages on shame from *NE* reveals a notion of shame as an emotion oriented towards the noble that allows learners to attend in their actions to considerations different from pleasure and pain (in this case, expectation of rewards and fear of punishment). These passages confirm the view that we advanced above, in Chapter 3, of shame as a kind of love of the noble and hatred of the shameful informed and reinforced by the social practices of praise and reproach. As Aristotle indicates in *NE* 10.9, the sense of shame includes already the relevant grasp of the noble, and brings with it a readiness to listen to arguments about the noble and the good. For this reason, shame is —as indicated in *NE* 4.9— praiseworthy in young people, even though it is not a virtue. Thus, in guiding their actions by their sense of shame, learners tread a middle path between merely following passions on the one side, and acting from fully-formed virtuous dispositions on the other.

\textsuperscript{108} Cf. Burnyeat (1981) calls shame “the semivirtue of the learner” (78). Aristotle does not use the term “semivirtue” but he classifies it among the non-virtuous means (*NE* 2.7), at the same time that he notices that shame is a praiseworthy possession of the learners of virtue (*NE* 2.7; 4.9), and that it elevates learners above those who live merely “as passions direct” (*NE* 4.9; 10.9).
As we saw in Chapter 3, commentators have often expressed worries about attributing a positive role to shame in Aristotle’s account of the acquisition of virtue. Given the association of shame with love of honor and fear of reproach, detractors are often led to emphasize the connection between shame and the opinions of others and thus bring to the fore the heteronomous character of actions guided by shame. In the present chapter, we will tackle the risks involved in the fact that learners will indeed depend on others for their notions of the noble and for encouragement, and we will observe that this is an unavoidable feature of the way in which Aristotle conceives the process of learning as a process in which the teacher has to actualize the disposition that the learner is acquiring.

I will also argue that Aristotle has good reasons to maintain a conception of shame as an emotion (pathos) and not a disposition (hexis), since shame has to be available to learners of virtue, who (by definition) do not yet have stable virtuous dispositions of character.

The conception of shame as a proto-virtuous emotion oriented towards the noble that results from NE 4.9 and 10.9 will be the last step in my argument in favor of shame as a viable candidate to bridge the moral upbringing gap. Indeed, unlike the other candidates discussed in Chapter 2, shame provides a viable mechanism to explain the relation between the virtuous actions of the learners and the virtuous dispositions that those actions eventually produce, since the learners who obey their sense of shame fulfill the motivational and cognitive requirements for performing virtuous actions well.
1. The Alleged Tension between NE 4.9 and NE 10.9

The central difficulty in Aristotle’s account of shame in the *NE* is the alleged tension between the accounts that we find in *NE* 4.9 and 10.9, the two major passages in which Aristotle explicitly expresses his views about shame. At first sight, these two passages seem to provide a relatively disjointed notion: On the one hand, *NE* 10.9 presents shame as a quasi-virtue, a praiseworthy possession, and a necessary requirement for young people to be receptive to ethical arguments. On the other hand, *NE* 4.9 argues that shame is far from being a virtue, and explains why shame is not praiseworthy or even appropriate in virtuous people. Moreover, in *NE* 10.9 the difference between possessing shame and possessing virtue seems to be a matter of degree — that is, shame seems to bring its possessor very close to virtue and to provide learners of virtue with an important part of the capacities and tendencies that we find in virtuous people. In contrast, in *NE* 4.9, where Aristotle insists that shame is not suitable for the virtuous person, there seems to be a difference in nature between shame and virtue.

The contrast between these chapters has led some commentators to conclude that there are two different notions of shame at play in the *NE*: one shame that is praiseworthy and not in conflict with the possession of virtue; and another shame that is reprehensible and at odds with virtuous character. Thus, these commentators solve the apparent tension between our passages by drawing a dividing line between two different kinds of shame. However, precisely because this view emphasizes a difference between two kinds of shame where Aristotle does not say anything explicit about such distinction, its defenders have to

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109 See e.g. Irwin (1999) and Taylor (2006), who think that there is a tension between the two passages, as discussed in more detail below. Konstan (2006) does not discuss *NE* 4.9 and 10.9 directly in his chapter on shame (91-110), but he (a) suggests that Aristotle uses two different notions of shame that can be roughly identified with *aidōs* and *aischynē*, and (b) expresses concerns about the coherence of these notions (see especially 2006: 93-96).
perform some interpretive pirouettes. For example, these commentators tend to be puzzled by Aristotle’s reasoning in *NE* 4.9, where they see him shifting from one sense of shame to the other. Moreover, this view seems to clash with Aristotle’s claim in *NE* 4.9 that shame is only praiseworthy in young people.

My view is, however, that *NE* 4.9 and 10.9 do not present essentially different notions, but rather outline *two sides of shame* that Aristotle is consciously retaining as one concept because only something with that kind of complexity can do the job that shame is required to do in moral development. Thus, in my view, these two chapters simply have a difference in perspective and emphasis: whereas *NE* 4.9 mainly investigates the reasons why shame should not be considered to be a virtue, and emphasizes shame’s shortcomings by pressing on the differences between the person with shame and the virtuous person, *NE* 10.9 focuses on the positive and indispensable role that shame plays in moral development as a necessary requirement for acquiring virtue. This latter characterization emphasizes shame’s positive features by pressing on the differences between the person with shame and the person who merely follows her immediate appetitive impulses. In each of these chapters, then, Aristotle deals with a very different aspect of shame precisely because he is comparing shame to very different cases — that of the virtuous person in *NE* 4.9, and that of the person with fear of punishment in *NE* 10.9. However, these two aspects of shame are not so irreconcilable as to be treated as different kinds, but are simply coexisting sides of the same complex emotion.

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110 Cairns (1993: 424) and Burnyeat (1980) agree with this claim. Burnyeat (1980: 75-79) uses both passages as keystones for his account of shame, and he does not seem to think that there is any conflict between them.

111 The unity of the notion of shame in Aristotle is defended also by Cairns (1993). See particularly his discussion of Aristotle’s use of the terms *aidōs* and *aischunē* to refer to “distinguishable aspects of a single emotional concept” (415). If the view I present here is distinctive, it is because I try to establish a connection between the complexity of shame and its role in moral development, and to show thus that such complexity should not be taken as a difficulty but rather as a merit of Aristotle’s account of shame.
Furthermore, I believe that these two aspects of Aristotelian shame are not only compatible, but — as is important for our purposes — they are necessary conditions if shame is to provide the relevant sort of continuity between the not-yet-virtuous learners and virtuous people. For this central role in the learners’ moral development can only be played by something that places learners in an intermediate position between those who merely follow their immediate passions and those who possess virtue.

2. Sources of the Tension: The Double Face of Aristotelian Shame

The three most frequent complaints against Aristotle’s treatment of shame are: (a) that Aristotle uses two different terms to talk about shame, *aidōs* and *aischunē*, and he appears to alternate between drawing a distinction and using them interchangeably; (b) that Aristotle seems to be aware of the distinction between *prospective* and *retrospective* shame, but occasionally does not acknowledge this distinction and derives general conclusions about shame by employing premises that use shame in only one of these senses; and (c) that Aristotle’s claim that shame is, at least in some cases, a praiseworthy possession seems to clash with the fact that shame is directly dependent on external recognition and, for this reason, is supposed to orient the agents towards considerations of honor and reproach instead of orienting them towards considerations about goodness or badness.

We have discussed point (c), i.e. the relationship between shame and external recognition, in Chapter 3 above, where I have argued that the strict separation between love of honor and love of the noble is artificial and does not belong to Aristotle’s framework. In what follows I make some preliminary remarks about points (a), i.e. the use that Aristotle makes in *NE* of *aidōs* and *aischunē*, and (b), i.e. the distinction between prospective and retrospective shame. An analysis of these issues will be useful to disentangle many of the
difficulties concerning more substantial questions about Aristotle’s conception of the nature of shame.

2.a Aidōs vs. Aischunē

Commentators have often puzzled over the fact that Aristotle frequently uses the terms aidōs and aischunē interchangeably, even though occasionally he seems to want to establish a difference in meaning between them. NE 4.9 is paradigmatic in this respect insofar as the first argument in the chapter seems to depend on an identification of aidōs and aischunē, while the final arguments are often interpreted as making a point about aischunē, but not about aidōs.

The first noteworthy detail concerning the use of aidōs and aischunē in NE 4.9 is that Aristotle switches from one term to the other throughout the chapter as if he is talking about the same thing — from talking about aidōs (1128b10, translated by Ross as “shame”) to talking about boi aischunomenoi (1128b13, “people who feel disgraced”), and then tacking back to tous aidēmonas (1128b19, “people prone to shame”), and again switching to the terms aischuntēlos (1128b20, “prone to disgrace”) and aischunē (1128b21, “sense of disgrace”), etc.113

112 Cairns (1993) has noted this puzzlement in the literature (415, see full quote in note 118 below). A clear example is Konstan (2006: 95-96), who questions Grimaldi’s (1988: 105) claim that there is no “discernible difference” in Aristotle’s use of the terms aidōs and aischunē in his ethical writings, and who argues, in contrast, that Aristotle reserves aidōs for prospective or inhibitory shame while he uses aischunē in both senses, prospective and retrospective, such that sometimes aischunē may even appear to be an incoherent notion. Other examples are Irwin (1999: 227); Taylor (2006: 235).

In the other camp we find Williams (1993), who does not deal directly with Aristotle’s notion of shame, but claims about the distinction between aidōs and aischunē in “the Greeks” in general that “[n]ot much turns on the distinction, for [his] purposes, and, in particular, many of the variations are diachronic.” (194, note 9). Also Gauthier & Jolif (1970) insist that Aristotle does not differentiate between aidōs and aischunē “les deux concepts sont en effet pour lui identiques” (322).

113 Translations of these passages also reveal some confusion about whether or not we should make a difference between aidōs and aischunē. While some translators — e.g. Ross (1984), Irwin (1990) and Rowe (2002) — maintain the difference between “shame” for aidōs and “disgrace” for aischunē, others render both terms as “shame” at some points, or both as “disgrace” — see, e.g. Crisp (2000):

We praise the young for being properly disposed to feel shame (αἰδημονας), but no one would praise an older person for having a sense of shame (αἰσχυντηλός), since we think
The clearest evidence of this interchangeability comes in the first argument of *NE* 4.9 (1128b10-15), in which Aristotle makes an analogy between shame and fear of danger that works only if we assume that *aidōs* and *aischunē* are the same thing.

[T5a]  *NE* 4.9, 1128b10-14:

Shame should not be described as a virtue; for it is more like a passion than a state of character. It is defined, at any rate, as a kind of fear of dishonor, and it produces an effect similar to that produced by fear of danger; for people who feel disgraced blush, and those who fear death turn pale.

The reasoning here is that *aidōs* is similar to fear of danger because they both produce similar effects: those who suffer fear of danger turn pale, and “those who suffer *aischunē*” [οἱ *αισχυμόμενοι*] blush. It is clear that the argument would be fallacious if *aidōs* and *aischunē* were not taken to be the same thing.114

However, despite this initial interchangeability and the fact that Aristotle seems to switch from one term to the other throughout the whole chapter, it is possible to detect some (maybe apparent) differences in the use of the two terms in the rest of the chapter (*NE* 4.9, 1128b15-33). Indeed, it seems that Aristotle prefers to use *aidōs* and its cognates when he is talking about a positive trait: “we think young people should be *aidēmones*” (1128b16-17), people are restrained from their errors by *aidōs* (1128b17-18), “we praise that he should do nothing to feel shame (αἰσχύνη) for. ... And if not feeling shame (ἡ ἀναίσχυντια) and disgrace (ἡ αἰδείσθαι) at doing disgraceful actions is bad, that does not make it good for someone to do them and then feel shame (αἰσχυνέσθαι). (79)

See also Taylor (2006: 57): “being the sort of person who feels ashamed (αἰσχύνεσθαι) at doing something of that sort, and thinking oneself good on the strength of that is absurd”, “one is ashamed of what is voluntary” [ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐκουσίοις γὰρ η ἀιδῶς], etc.

114 Irwin (1999) agrees with this point: “Aristotle’s argument … seems to depend on the identification of *aidōs* with *aischunē*” (227).
young people for being *aidēmones*" (1128b19), “*aidōs* may be said to be conditionally a good thing” (1128b29-30). Whereas instead he reserves *aischunē* and its cognates for cases that fall short of something good: “no one would praise an old person for being *aischunēto*” (1128b20), “an old person should not do anything that need cause *aischunē*” (1128b21), “*aischunē* is not even characteristic of a good person” (1128b22), it is absurd to think oneself good just because one is constituted as to *aischunesthai* when one does something base (1128b26-28), “if shamelessness—i.e. not to *aideisthai* of doing base actions—is bad, that does not make it good *aischunesthai* of doing such actions” (1128b31-33).

Thus, and probably for this reason, in the arguments in *NE* 4.9 against the praiseworthiness of shame in older people (1128b19-21) and against the appropriateness of shame in virtuous people (1128b21-23), Aristotle is sometimes taken to be presupposing a distinction between two kinds of shame that could easily be correlated to our two terms: *aidōs*-shame, which is forward-looking and praiseworthy; and *aischunē*-shame, which is backward-looking and reprehensible.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ For example, Taylor (2006) claims that “the lack of distinction between the backward-looking reactive attitude and the forward-looking sense of restraint is reflected in Aristotle’s treatment of *aidōs* as interchangeable with *aischunē*, the latter term … primarily designates the reactive attitude.” (235) Taylor seems to think that this lack of distinction is a failure on Aristotle’s part, since he refers to *Anonymi in Ethica Nicomachea ii et Commentaria, (ed. G. Heylbut, Berlin, 1892)* to note that the commentator “correctly distinguishes the backward-looking attitude (*aischunē*) from the forward-looking (*aidōs*) as follows”:

It seems that *aidōs* differs from *aischunē* in this way, that *aischunē* is for bad things that have been done, but *aidōs* is fear of disgrace at the thought of disgraceful deeds. (Taylor’s translation, 235)
Some have even accused Aristotle of making a tricky move in these arguments by leaving *aidōs* outside of his reasoning. Concretely, Aristotle is taken to be supporting here the claims that shame is not praiseworthy in older people and that it is not appropriate in virtuous people, by appealing to a restricted sense of the term *aischunē* that does not fit well with the term *aidōs* in its positive inhibitory sense, namely *aischunē* as “consequent on bad actions”. Interpreted this way, it is easy to form the impression that the arguments might be directed only against *aischunē*-shame in that restricted sense and not against shame in general.

What should we, then, conclude from these considerations? I think that to get a clear grasp of Aristotle’s strategy we need to look at the main argument of the chapter as a whole (1128b15-33). Concretely, we should pay attention to the fact that passage 1128b19-29, which argues generally that *aischunē* is not appropriate in virtuous people (and consequently, that *aischunē* is not praiseworthy in older people), is an explanation (introduced by the particle *γὰρ*) of the claim that Aristotle makes in the immediately preceding lines: that “the emotion” [τὸ πάθος] under investigation, i.e. shame, “is only becoming to youth and not to every age” (1128b15-16). If we attend to the argument as a whole, we can see that Aristotle switches from *aidōs* to *aischunē* at first, and returns to *aidōs* towards the end of the argument (1128b28, 32). More importantly, even if it is true that there are differences in the use that

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116 Taylor (2006) seems to agree on this issue with the anonymous commentator, who claims that Aristotle fails to attribute *aidōs* to the virtuous agent because he shifts in *NE* 4.9 from discussing *aidōs* to discussing *aischunē* (204.7-11). We should note that if Taylor agrees with the commentator, as it seems he does, this position would conflict with the treatment of *aidōs*-courage that Taylor makes in his commentary to *NE* 3.8, where he insists that the motivation involved in shame is mere desire for recognition. For, if *aidōs* is mere desire for recognition, then why should Aristotle attribute *aidōs* to the virtuous person?

117 *NE* 1128b28: “… for it is for voluntary actions that *aidōs* is felt, and the good man will never voluntarily do bad actions”; *NE* 1128b32: “But *aidōs* may be said to be conditionally a good thing ….”
Aristotle makes of the terms, it is also clear that he thinks that the points he raises about aischunē support his general claim about “the emotion” [πάθος] in general.

Thus, my conclusion is that Aristotle does not draw a sharp line between the two terms, and his arguments do not turn on this terminological distinction; rather that his arguments are about shame in general, even if they focus on different aspects of the emotion. This approach, preferred also by Cairns (1993), is additionally supported by the fact that ordinary Greek language in the times of Aristotle treats both terms as synonyms.

2.b. Prospective vs. Retrospective Shame

Some commentators have attempted to resolve the tension between NE 10.9 and 4.9 by appealing to the distinction between prospective and retrospective shame, i.e. between a kind of shame that looks towards the future and restrains agents from performing bad actions and one that is consequent on having done bad actions: (This distinction is linked to the distinction between aidōs and aischunē but does not depend on it, so that one can believe

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118 I agree here, then, with the conclusion of Cairns’ (1993) analysis in this respect:

It is frequently suggested that this passage trades on an illegitimate identification of aidōs and aischunē, characterizing the former in terms proper to the latter. The situation, however, is not so straightforward, for Aristotle neither identifies aidōs and aischunē nor treats them as two distinct concepts; rather he uses the two terms, for the purposes of this passage, to refer to distinguishable aspects of a single emotional concept. In ordinary Greek aidōs and aischunē are synonyms, except when the latter refers to a disgraceful state of affairs rather than the individual’s reaction to that state, but aidōs is the older and more poetic term, and it draws its claim to be considered as a virtue from its use in highly poetic contexts where something of the importance originally accorded the concept is preserved. Aischunē, on the other hand, is the regular prosaic word of Aristotle’s own day, the one which would generally be used to do the work of aidōs both as affect and as a trait of character, although as a trait of character aischunē does not bear the exalted connotations of aidōs. Aristotle’s moves from aidōs to aischunē, then, are not in any way underhand — ordinary language, in fact, goes further than he does in this passage, in so far as it treats the two as synonyms. (415)

119 Irwin (1999) holds that Aristotle’s claim in NE 4.9 that shame is not appropriate in good people only refers to retrospective shame:

Aristotle is concerned here with retrospective shame at actions we have done, and, reasonably enough, denies it to the virtuous person. He does not consider the anticipatory shame of 1115a16, where I am properly ashamed when I even think of the possibility of
Aristotle is differentiating between prospective and retrospective shame and at the same time deny that he maintains a terminological distinction.) However, this distinction does not fit smoothly with the texts, and like the distinction between *aidōs* and *aischunē*, it results more in distraction than in illumination.

The view is, roughly, that *NE* 4.9 is concerned exclusively “with retrospective shame at actions we have done” (Irwin, 1999: 227), and consequently, its rejection of shame does not affect prospective shame. Defenders of this view rely on the fact that Aristotle’s argument in *NE* 4.9, 1128b21-35, takes as a premise the claim that shame “occurs in the case of bad actions” [*γίνεται ἐπὶ τοῖς φαύλοισ*] and they see in this premise an indication that Aristotle is referring here only to cases of shame about past shameful actions, and thus, only in a retrospective sense. Consequently, in this view the argument from the second section of *NE* 4.9 (1128b21-35) shows only that *retrospective* shame cannot be appropriate in virtuous people, because *retrospective* shame is always about base things that the agent has done and virtuous people do not do base things.

In this reading the argument does not preclude the possibility that prospective shame, which is a good kind of shame inhibitory of bad actions, could belong to the virtuous doing a wrong action. He need not be rejecting that type of shame here, since it will apparently be a motive for the virtuous person (though not one of his virtues). (227)

Taylor’s (2006) position is very similar:

The claim that shame is not appropriate in older people, or in good people generally, assumes that shame is exclusively a reactive attitude to one’s own past misdeeds, thereby neglecting the notion of *aidōs* as a sense of shame, in which it is in effect an aspect of the wider notion of *sophmosynē* as soundness of mind (cf. note on 1123b5). Aristotle is right to say that the reactive attitude cannot be a characteristic of someone who is by his standards completely good. But *aidōs* as a sense of shame is not that attitude; rather, it is a sense of restraint inhibiting possible future action, a sense that one would be ashamed to do something like that. Since sensitivity to what it would be fine or noble to do necessarily involves comparison with what it would be disgraceful or shameful to do, Aristotle’s insistence on that sensitivity as central to the motivation of the virtuous person ought to lead him to give a correspondingly prominent place to a sense of shame in that sensitivity. Cf. X.9, 1179b7-13. (235)
person. Therefore, the conclusion that we should derive from NE 4.9 is not that shame in general is not appropriate in virtuous people, but only in the restricted sense of retrospective shame. In other words, Aristotle would be allowing here that, even if retrospective shame is an inadequate emotion for virtuous people, prospective shame might be compatible and aligned with virtue.\(^\text{120}\)

However, there is in our text at least one sign that this interpretation is on the wrong track. For although it is true that Aristotle places more weight on retrospective shame in constructing his argument for why shame is not appropriate in virtuous people at 1128b21-26, in the first part of the passage he also talks about prospective shame and says that this kind of shame is indeed praiseworthy only in young people.\(^\text{121}\) Thus, again, when we take the argument as a whole it becomes clear that Aristotle is deriving conclusions about “the emotion” in general, and not about a particular aspect of it. The same emotion, shame, is

\(^\text{120}\) See quotes from Irwin (1999) and Taylor (2006) in the previous note.

\(^\text{121}\) Cairns’ (1993) also refers to this point. He claims that although the argument from 1128b21-26 talks exclusively about shame in the retrospective sense, Aristotle also discusses the case of prospective shame in the initial part of the chapter, and that in that passage Aristotle disqualifies also prospective shame and says that it is only appropriate in youth but not adequate in older people:

In the present passage aischnē is used in an exclusively retrospective sense. That aischnē (and āidōs) can, by this time, have such a sense obviously helps Aristotle’s case, since he is able to use retrospective shame as a sign of imperfection of character — if someone is ashamed of what he has done, then he has done something aischron, something that the good man should never do. But the passage does not simply slide from prospective āidōs, the rejected candidate for consideration as a virtue, to retrospective aischnē, a sign of moral imperfection; rather Aristotle feels that each implies the other, and therefore feels justified in treating them as aspects of the whole. For it is clear that Aristotle has not simply failed to consider prospective āidōs as a quality of real moral worth. The young, for example, live by pathos and so make mistakes, presumably because their emotional response to situations is not guided by the moral insight of the man of practical wisdom; but another aspect of their living by pathos is their propensity to āidōs, which can prevent their doing wrong (1128b1618). Thus the āidōs that is disparaged as appropriate for youth but not for adults is prospective; it may actually inhibit the action that is aischron, but it is not therefore, according to Aristotle, an unqualified good. We must assume, then, that the mature adult, if he is ‘decent’, is no more prone to prospective āidōs than to retrospective. (414-5)

Cairns’ (1993) reading of our passage is, then, more adequate than the traditional reading. His conclusion is that in this passage Aristotle is rejecting the adequacy of shame for the virtuous person in all possible senses of the word (prospective and retrospective).
said to be becoming to young people and not becoming in older people or people with virtue.\textsuperscript{122}

For this reason, I believe that we should not dismiss the arguments from \textit{NE} 4.9 on the basis that they are only related to retrospective shame. On the contrary, we should pay attention to the limitations that this passage imposes on the positive role of shame, and consider the reasons why Aristotle claims in this chapter that shame \textit{as a whole} (i.e. including both retrospective and prospective shame) is not appropriate in the virtuous person, but rather is a praiseworthy possession for the young.

2.c. Shame, Fear of Disrepute and Love of the Noble

The third main source of conflict regarding the notion of shame in Aristotle results from a frequent tendency among commentators to emphasize the connection between shame and external recognition. After all, Aristotle claims in various occasions that shame is “a fear of disrepute” [\textit{phóbous} τις ἀδοξίας],\textsuperscript{123} and it is indisputable that he acknowledges that shame depends on the opinions of others.

My view on this point, as I expressed it in Chapter 3, is that when this connection is placed at the center of the notion of shame we are easily led to the erroneous conclusion that

\textsuperscript{122} See below, in Section 3 of this Chapter, for my analysis of the reasons why shame cannot be appropriate in virtuous people. Cairns (1993) offers the following supplementary argument against using the distinction between retrospective and prospective shame to interpret the passage from \textit{NE} 4.9:

The objection, then, that Aristotle can only deny \textit{aidōs}, a prospective character trait which inhibits disgraceful action, the status of a virtue by wholly identifying it with the retrospective shame which occurs in those who do perform \textit{airebra} is unfounded. If, instead, we recognize that \textit{aidōs} and \textit{aischunē} refer to different aspects of the same concept, and therefore that they are not used interchangeably, we shall see not only that Aristotle’s argument is clear and precise, but that it is convincing. For it is, in fact, true that retrospective shame is (by now) part of the concept of \textit{aidōs}, and we should agree with Aristotle that one who is so disposed as to experience distress with regard to conduct which is \textit{aischunē} is disposed to experience that distress whether the conduct is past, present, or future. (417)

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{NE} 4.9, 1128b10-11; \textit{NE} 3.6, 1115a13-14. Cf. \textit{EE} 1230a20-24.
Aristotle thinks we should not attribute shame to virtuous people because shame turns agents’ attention to the wrong kind of considerations (i.e. considerations about how they appear in the eyes of others), or that shame makes agents put excessive weight on their reputation and the opinions that others have of them.

In Chapter 3 I argued that this approach is misleading because when we focus our attention on the pursuit of recognition, we tend to forget that the ultimate object of shame is the noble or shameful character of one’s actions. Thus, as an alternative to the common approach, I proposed that we think about shame as a concern not with mere external recognition but rather with the nobility and shamefulness of our actions. This point is confirmed by Aristotle’s remarks in the present passage. For example, Aristotle says that one of the reasons why shame is not appropriate in an older person is that “we think he should not do anything that need cause this sense” [οὐδὲν γὰρ οἰόμεθα δεῖν αὐτὸν πράττειν ἐφ’ ὁıs ἐστὶν αἰσχύνη] (1128b20-21) — he does not say that older people should have a different attitude towards other people’s opinions, but that they should not do shameful things. Again, in 1128b22-23 he says that shame “is consequent on wrong actions (for such actions should not be done)” [ἐἶπερ γίνεται ἐπὶ τοῖς φαύλοις (οὐ γὰρ πρακτέον τὰ τοιαύτα)]. If I am right, then, fear of disrepute in Aristotle need not be the mere fear of disapproval by others, but it is rather the fear of doing shameful things.124

We should, therefore, avoid reducing shame to mere fear of disrepute in the mentioned narrow sense. On the contrary, whenever shame is characterized as fear of disrepute, we should keep in mind that this notion is often broader than the mere fear of being held in contempt by others. For, indeed, shame is understood as a good source of

124 This is why in the Rhetoric Aristotle defines shame as “pain or disturbance in regard to bad things, whether present, past, or future, which seem likely to involve us in discredit; and shamelessness as contempt or indifference in regard to these same bad things.” (Rhet. 2.6, 1183b15-17)
motivation in young people, insofar as the agent’s care for the praiseworthiness and blameworthiness of the action is a sign of her concern with its nobility or shamefulness. Such care expresses thus a sincere desire to perform virtuous actions — as opposed to being a sign of the agent’s desire merely to look favourable in the eyes of others.

With these clarifications in mind, let us now start our analysis of the relevant passages from \textit{NE} 4.9 and 10.9. My working hypothesis is that in these texts we will find a coherent notion of shame that includes both prospective and retrospective shame and that involves the right attitude towards the noble and the shameful.

\textbf{3. Shame in \textit{NE} 4.9}

In the general introduction to the one-by-one discussion of each of the particular virtues of character in \textit{NE} 2.7, Aristotle classifies “shame” \[\alpha\iota\delta\omega\varsigma\] together with “righteous indignation” \[\nu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma\] as a “mean” \[\mu\epsilon\sigma\omicron\omicron\tau\eta\varsigma\] not only “\textit{about} passions” \[\pi\epsilon\ri\tau\alpha\pi\alpha\theta\eta\]\ but also “\textit{in} the passions” \[\epsilon\nu\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \pi\alpha\theta\eta\mu\alpha\sigma\iota\] (1108a31).\textsuperscript{125} Aristotle indicates thus that although shame is praiseworthy, it is a mean of a peculiar character insofar as it is a passion and not a virtue:

\textsuperscript{125} In the parallel passage from \textit{EE}, in chapter 3.7, Aristotle talks about \[\mu\epsilon\sigma\omicron\omicron\tau\eta\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \pi\alpha\theta\eta\tau\iota\kappa\iota\alpha\iota\] (1233b18), and includes in the list not only shame and righteous indignation, but also “friendship” \[\phi\iota\lambda\iota\alpha\iota\], “dignity” \[\sigma\epsilon\mu\omicron\nu\omicron\omicron\tau\eta\varsigma\], truthfulness (i.e. the quality of the “truthful person” \[\iota\omicron\alpha\lambda\ieta\theta\ieta\varsigma\]) and “wittiness” \[\epsilon\upsilon\tau\rho\alpha\pi\rho\alpha\lambda\iota\alpha\iota\] (1233b16-1234a23). In \textit{NE} 2.7, of these, friendship, truthfulness and wittiness appear classified as virtues, and dignity is completely dropped, so that only shame and righteous indignation make it to the list of means in the passions that are not virtues.
It is not until NE 4.9 that Aristotle gives an explanation of the peculiar character that NE 2.7 attributes to shame: not a virtue, and yet praiseworthy. Aristotle’s explanation in NE 4.9 begins with arguments in support of the claim that shame is not a virtue (1128b10-21), which rest fundamentally on his classification of shame as a passion (as opposed to capacities and virtues). He then proceeds to clarify in what sense and to what extent shame is praiseworthy. He limits the context in which he thinks shame is praiseworthy by indicating that shame is a passion appropriate only in young people, who are not yet virtuous, but that it is not appropriate in virtuous agents (1128b15-35). Shame is, then, praiseworthy only when it is present in those who are in the process of formation; however, when we find it in mature individuals, we should suspect that something has gone wrong in their moral development.

Let me take up the two central tenets of NE 4.9 separately: (a) shame is not a virtue, but (b) it is a praiseworthy possession in the young.

3.a. Shame is Not a Virtue

As some commentators have noted, when Aristotle argues that αἴδως is not a virtue he is breaking, at least partially, with a long Greek tradition. Indeed, the conception of αἴδως

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126 I thank Rachana Kamtekar for bringing the relevance of this point to my attention in conversation. See Irwin (1999): “Though he sometimes commends shame (1115a14, 1179b11), he denies that it is a virtue. He thereby rejects a long Greek tradition (see also EE 1233b27)” (347); Nielsen (2007) holds that when Aristotle denies that shame is a virtue, he is “breaking with Greek tradition” (277). Aristotle might be trying, however, to introduce only some slight changes in the traditional notion of shame to fit it to his theory of virtue and moral development.

An excellent account of the ancient Greek conception of aίδος as virtue can be found in Cairns’ (1993) detailed monograph. Find a summary of his position on this issue in the following note:
as virtue can be traced back to the Homeric and Hesiodic poems, and it is outstandingly represented in Protagoras’s “Great Speech” in Plato’s Protagoras (320c-322d), where we find the view that shame is one of the two virtues, together with justice \( \delta\iota\kappa\eta \), that Zeus sends to humans so that they are able to live in society.\(^{127}\)

The main reason why Aristotle has to deviate from this traditional view is that he has established a number of theoretical constraints for what counts as a virtue of character that the notion of shame is unable to fulfill. First, Aristotle conceives virtues as perfections; however, people who follow the commands of their sense of shame are open to error – that is, shame is sometimes a response to bad action, or to the thought of one being tempted to bad action, and in general, as Aristotle puts it, shame “occurs in connection with bad action”. Furthermore, “character virtue” \( \acute{\eta} \acute{\theta}\iota\iota\kappa\acute{\eta} \acute{\alpha}\rho\acute{e}t\eta \), as Aristotle states famously in NE 6.2, “is a stable disposition concerned with choice” \( \acute{\epsilon}\acute{\xi} \acute{\iota} \acute{\sigma} \pi\acute{\sigma} \acute{\alpha} \iota \iota \acute{e}t\kappa\iota \acute{\iota} \) \( (1139a22) \), and in NE 6.13 \( (1144b30) \) he claims that virtue is intrinsically connected with the possession of practical wisdom \( (p\acute{h}r\acute{a}n\acute{e}t\acute{i}k\acute{i}) \). Yet the fact that children and young people can have a sense of shame makes it clear that shame’s presence does not require practical wisdom, and does not even require the capacity for choice. Finally, virtues are stable dispositions to choose the right activities for their own sake; however, shame is not a disposition but an emotion. This last point is the main focus of the first part of our chapter.

\[^{127}\] The conception and role of \( \acute{a}i\partial\acute{o}s \) expressed in Protagoras’ myth represents a whole tradition that takes respect for acquired reciprocal obligations in particular, and for the laws of the city in general, to be one of the first things that should be cultivated by the person who aspires to virtue.
The discussion of shame in NE 4.9 provides Aristotle’s central reason in support of the claim that shame is not a virtue: shame is not the same kind of thing as virtue because virtues are “states” or “dispositions” [ἐξείτο] of the soul, while shame is among the “passions” [πάθη]

NE 4.9, 1128b10-15:

Shame should not be described as a virtue; for [I] it is more like a passion than a state of character. [1a] It is defined, at any rate, as a kind of fear of dishonor, and [1b] it produces an effect similar to that produced by fear of danger; for people who feel disgraced blush, and those who fear death turn pale. Both, therefore, seem to be in a sense bodily, which is thought to be characteristic of emotion rather than of a disposition.

3.a.1. “Shame is more like a pathos than like a hexis”

Aristotle supports in [T5d] the claim that “shame is more like a pathos than like a hexis” [πάθει γὰρ μᾶλλον ἔοικεν ἢ ἔξει] by appealing first, in in (1a), to his general definition of shame as “a kind of fear” [φόβος τίς], and more concretely fear “of disrepute” [ἀδοξίας]. Secondly, he argues in (1b) that shame is like a passion also because “in a sense” [πώς] shame is “bodily” [σωματικά] like other passions, as it is shown by shame’s intimate connection to the bodily reaction of blushing.

Now, we must be careful not to overlook the fact that in [T5d] Aristotle does not say directly that shame is not a disposition, but says instead that it is “more like a passion than

128 The characterization of shame as a good kind of fear goes back to Plato’s Laws 1.646e, and it is used by Aristotle in NE 3.6, 1115a12-14.
like a disposition” [πάθει γὰρ μᾶλλον ἐοικεν ἡ ἔξει]. I think that it is not a coincidence that Aristotle puts his claim in these cautious terms. The reason for his careful formulation is, I contend, that shame is a sui generis kind of passion, and as such it has a special relationship with the other passions and with virtue.

Let me explain this last point in some detail. The basic idea is that, although shame is very much like a passion because it lacks the stability or fixity that dispositions have, and because — unlike dispositions — shame does not involve choice (prohairesis), shame is something in-between passion and virtue in the sense that, like the virtues, shame is praiseworthy (in the case of young people). We will see the peculiar character of shame more clearly after reviewing the reasons why Aristotle thinks that pathē are not good candidates for virtues:

NE 2.5, 1105b28-1106a6:

Now neither the virtues nor the vices are pathē, [1] because we are not called good or bad on the ground of our pathē, but are so called on the ground of our virtues and our vices, and [2] because we are neither praised nor blamed for our pathē (for the man who feels fear or anger is not praised, nor is the man who simply feels anger blamed, but the man who feels it in a certain way), but for our virtues and our vices we are praised or blamed. Again, [3] we feel anger and fear without choice, but the virtues are modes of choice or involve choice. Further, [4] in respect of the pathē we are said to be moved, but in respect of the virtues and the vices we are said not to be moved but to be disposed in a particular way.

The sentence can also be translated as “resembles a passion rather than a disposition”. In any case, what matters for our purposes here is that Aristotle does not say directly “shame is a passion and not a disposition”. I think that the expression μᾶλλον ἐοικεν indicates that Aristotle is trying to be careful here and signal the fact that the classification of shame is not straightforward. Another interesting place where Aristotle uses the expression μᾶλλον ἐοικεν for a hard-to-classify case is the passage about mixed actions at NE 3.1, 1110b6, where he claims that mixed actions are “more like voluntary actions” [μᾶλλον δ’ ἐοικεν ἐκουσιοίς] (cf. also NE 3.1, 1110a11-12: ἐοικασι δὲ μᾶλλον ἐκουσιοίς). For further evidence in support of this point see NE 3.12, 1119a21: “self-indulgence is more like a voluntary state than cowardice” [ἐκουσιοίῳ δὲ μᾶλλον ἐοικεν η ἀκολοίᾳ τῆς δειλίας]; 7.9, 1151b13-15: “the opinionated … are more like the incontinent than like the continent person” [μᾶλλον τῷ ἀκρατεῖ ἐοικασιν ή τῷ ἐγκρατεί]. In all these examples the thing classified falls between the options at hand insofar it is in a sense like one option, but in a sense like the other one.

Note that Cairns (1993) preserves Aristotle’s careful expression (“more like a pathos”) in his analysis: “[T]hat ἀίδος is an emotion is, I take it, uncontroversial; Aristotle regards it as more like a pathos, an affect, than anything else.” (5)
Aristotle presents here four main reasons in support of the claim that virtues cannot be pathē:

1. Having pathē is not enough to “be called good or bad” [λεγόμεθα ... σπουδαίοι ἢ φαύλοι], while having virtue is;
2. Simply experiencing pathē is not sufficient “to be praised or blamed” [οὔτ’ ἐπαινούμεθα ὡτε ψεγόμεθα], insofar as pathē can be felt adequately or inadequately, while virtue is always adequate and possession of virtue is always sufficient ground for praise;
3. Pathē do not occur on account of choice — in Aristotle’s terms they are “without choice” or “non-prohairetic” [ἀπροαιρέτως], while virtues are “some kind of choice” [προαιρέσεις τινὲς], or at least “not without choice” [οὐκ ἄνευ προαιρέσεως]; and finally,
4. That pathē are episodes on account of which agents “are moved” (or “move”) [κινεῖσθαι], that is, they are occurring as opposed to dispositional, while virtue is something on account of which agents “are disposed in a certain way” [διακείσθαι πῶς], i.e. something on account of which agents have a relatively stable tendency to act and feel in certain ways.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ I say “relatively stable” because the expression that Aristotle uses is “to be in some condition” [διακείσθαι πῶς], which requires only a minimal degree of stability. See e.g. Cat. 8b37-9a8, where Aristotle emphasizes the connection between διάκεισθαι and “conditions” [διαθέσεις]: “A man is disposed in a certain way in virtue of these (diathēses), but he changes quickly” [διάκειται μὲν γὰρ πῶς κατὰ τούτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ταχὺ δὲ μεταβάλλετ]; whereas he loosens the link between διάκεισθαι and having a “state” or “disposition” [ἐξῆς], and between διάκεισθαι and “having natural capacity” [δύναμιν ἐχειν φυσικὴν]. For those who lack full mastery of a branch of knowledge and are easily changed are not said to be in a state of knowledge, though they are of course in some condition, a better or a worse, in regard to that knowledge, because one has a natural capacity for doing something easily or for being unaffected.
Of these criteria it is clear that shame meets well at least criterion (3). As already noted, insofar as we can find shame in children and young people whose deliberative capacities are not fully developed, it is clear that shame is aprohairetōs.

Secondly, although the relation of shame to criterion (4), i.e. the occurrent (as opposed to dispositional) character of emotions, is not straightforward, Aristotle has good reasons to maintain that shame is occurrent and not dispositional. Some reservations against this point arise due in part to several passages where Aristotle talks about the aidēmōn — usually translated as “the person prone to shame” — who seems to be someone with a tendency to feel shame on the right occasions, in the right amount, etc. Furthermore, in NE 10.9 Aristotle divides young people into those who obey their sense of shame and those who do not, giving thus the impression that the former have some tendency that the latter are lacking. Thus, these passages raise reasonable doubts about whether Aristotle really denies that there is such a thing as a dispositional sense of shame.

The possibility of talking about “the aidēmōn” seems in itself a good reason to think of shame as a disposition, yet Aristotle has a stronger reason to resist this view. For — as Aristotle is about to argue in the second part of the chapter — shame belongs properly only...

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I think that Cairns (1993: 397ff) is correct in holding that Aristotle’s pathē are occurrent affects, as opposed to dispositions: “A pathē is an affect, and it is always occurrent, but behind pathē lie capacities (dunameis), and settled states (hexeis), both of which may involve some kind of non-occurent disposition towards the various emotions” (398).

131 See NE 2.7, 1108a30-35; NE 3.6, 1115a12-14.

to young people, which means that, if things go well, shame is expected to disappear once those young people become mature (virtuous) individuals. Thus, even if we could talk about a tendency to feel shame, the stability of this tendency would not be enough to allow us to consider shame as a disposition of the soul in the relevant sense. We can conclude, then, that shame is occurrent or episodic rather than dispositional, and in this sense it is adequate to classify it as a passion and not a virtue.

However, things are more complicated in relation to criteria (1) and (2) from T5e. For these criteria are in tension with one of the central characteristics of shame as presented in NE 4.9, and mentioned by Aristotle in other passages as well: shame’s praiseworthiness. Indeed, in NE 4.9 Aristotle admits that, even though aidōs is not a virtue, it is a praiseworthy possession for some people – concretely, he says that “we praise it” [ἐπαινοῦμεν] when we find it in young people.

Aristotle is not unaware of this tension. After all, as mentioned above, shame and righteous indignation [ψῆμος] are the only two pathē that are included in the discussion of praiseworthy means between extremes in NE 2.7, where shame is first said to be praiseworthy but not a virtue. It is also remarkable that shame is the only pathos that receives its own independent discussion in the treatise following the discussion of the different virtues of character. Moreover, in NE 3.6, 1115a12-14, Aristotle equates the “good person”

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133 D. S. Hutchinson has suggested to me in conversation that is possible that the discussion of righteous indignation was written by Aristotle and subsequently lost in a later moment of the transmission of the text. It is indeed strange that Aristotle includes it in the list of means between extremes but, unlike all the other cases, he does not offer any discussion of it. Note that NE 4.9, about shame, ends abruptly, and it is immediately followed by NE 5 where Aristotle makes a fresh start with the discussion of justice. Cf. EE 3.7; Rhet. 2.6, 9-10.

Stewart (1892) offers the following reasons in support of this view:

(1) “The Fourth Book, as we have it, ends without even mentioning ψῆμος. It seems probable that the accident which deprived us of the Nicomachean books answering to v, vi, vii, deprived us of the last part of iv, treating of ψῆμος (iv.9.8 is perhaps an editor’s interpolation).” (369) It is equally probable, adds Stewart, that the same accident also deprived us of part of the present chapter about shame.
and the “person with shame” [αἰδήμων], and he calls fear of disgrace “right and
noble” [καὶ δὲ ... καὶ καλόν].

Thus, the praiseworthiness of shame introduces some doubts about the classification
of shame as a pathos. As Cairns (2003) puts it, if aidōs is praiseworthy and passions in general
are not, then aidōs “cannot (simply) be a pathos” (412).

The result is, then, that although shame has some of the main features that allow us
to classify it as a pathos, it presents some peculiarities, like its praiseworthiness, and it is for
this reason a sui generis pathos. This peculiar character of shame is, I think, not a failure in

(2) “It is to be noted that there is no mention of the ἀναισχυντος and καταπληξ as
extremes, where the αἰδήμων is μέσος. ... At the same time, we cannot feel sure that it
was Aristotle’s intention here to represent the αἰδήμων definitely as μέσος. So far as the
discussion goes, αἰδὸς appears merely as a provisionally good feeling, admirable only in the
young; whereas in the EE and MM the αἰδήμων is evidently regarded as a mature
man, no less than the φίλος, ἀληθῆς, and εὐτραπέλος,—as the man who has just the
right amount of self-assurance, who is not either regardless of what people think of him,
or too shy and sensitive to put himself forward at all. See MM 1.29.1193 a. 1 sqq. [i.e. it is
definitely one of the ἀρεται, so-called, of “one’s deportment in society”]. See also EE
3.7.1233b26 sqq.” (369)

However, we find in Aquinas’s commentary to the NE (ad. loc.) a not less plausible explanation for the
brevity of the chapter about shame and the absence of discussion of righteous indignation:

We must take into account that the Philosopher previously treated the praiseworthy
passion of righteous indignation (nemesis), and that here he does not mention it because it is
not his intention to treat these passions on this occasion. This matter pertains rather to
rhetoric, as it is clear from the second book of the Rhetoric (Ch. 9, 1386b9sq.). Hence,
neither does he here consider shame except to show that it is not a virtue. He leaves the
same thing to be understood about righteous indignation.

In favor of Aquinas’ explanation we should notice that Aristotle says in NE 2.7 that there will be an
opportunity of describing the means in the passions “elsewhere” [ἄλλοθι] (1108b6-7).

NE 3.6, 1115a12-14 : “[F]or to fear some things is even right and noble, and it is base not to fear them —
e.g. disgrace; he who fears this is good and modest, and he who does not is shameless.” ἐνία γὰρ καὶ δὲ
φοβεῖσθαι καὶ καλὸν, τὸ δὲ μὴ αἰσχρὸν, οἶον ἀδοξίαν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ φοβοῦμενος, ὁ δὲ μὴ φοβοῦμενος
ἀναισχυντος.

Cairns (1993) expresses this tension as follows:

[Aristotle] seems not to have faced up to the contradiction between his insistence that
aidōs is a pathos and his denial that a pathos can be praiseworthy, and so a suitable candidate
to be a mean. Aidōs, it seems, can be both a pathos and a praiseworthy mean, even though
the formal requirements of the elements of this classification conflict. (413)
Aristotle’s account, but rather a necessary condition if shame is expected to be able to help young people make progress towards virtue.

3.b. Shame is Praiseworthy in the Youth

In the second part of *NE* 4.9, Aristotle insists on the peculiar character of shame’s praiseworthiness to offer further support to his claim that shame is not a virtue. This argument, again, has two subparts: first, Aristotle shows that shame is only becoming to young people and explains why; secondly, Aristotle argues that shame is not appropriate for the virtuous person.

[T5f] *NE* 4.9, 1128b15-35:

This passion is not becoming to every age, but only to youth. For we think young people should be prone to the feeling of shame because they live by passion and therefore commit many errors, but are restrained by shame; and we praise young people who are prone to shame, but an older person no one would praise for being prone to the sense of disgrace, since we think he should not do anything that need cause this sense.

For the sense of disgrace is not even characteristic of a good man, since it occurs in connection with bad actions (for such actions should not be done; and if some actions are disgraceful in very truth and others only according to common opinion, this makes no difference; for neither class of actions should be done, so that no disgrace should be felt); and it is a mark of a bad man even to be such as to do any disgraceful action.

To be so constituted as to feel disgraced if one does such an action, and for this reason to think oneself good, is absurd; for it is for voluntary actions that shame is felt, and the good man will never voluntarily do bad actions. But shame may be said to be conditionally a good thing; if a good man does such actions, he will feel disgraced; but the virtues are not subject to such a qualification. And if shamelessness—not to be ashamed of doing bad actions—is bad, that does not make it good to be ashamed of doing such actions.

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136 Here I disagree with Cairns (1993), who thinks that the insistence that shame is not a disposition is a problem in Aristotle’s view. Cairns even claims that Aristotle does not manage to establish the point in a sufficiently convincing manner:

Aristotle’s attempt to deny *aidōs* the status of hexis is unsuccessful; even on his own account *aidōs* emerges, malgré lui, as a state of character, as an appropriate object of praise; in particular, his observations that *aidōs* involves ‘being in such a condition as to *aischunesthai* were one to do something *aischron*’ (1128b26-7) in itself requires a hexis which is related to *aidōs* and *aischunē*, and Aristotle should accommodate ordinary Greek usage in designating this hexis as *aidōs*. (428)
Continence too is not virtue, but a mixed sort of state; this will be shown later. Now, however, let us discuss justice.

Aristotle argues [T5f] that shame is only appropriate in young people, but not in older people or good people. Why is shame becoming in young people? And why would Aristotle think that the virtuous person should not have shame?

The two main reasons why shame is said to be praiseworthy only in the youth are (a) that it signals that although young people live mainly by passions, their obedience to shame confers upon them an ability to listen to arguments and restrain their passions accordingly, and (b) that shame is associated with the presence of certain deficiencies that can only be compatible with praise in the case of young people.
3.b.1. Shame as Restraint

The first consideration in [T5f] that supports the claim that shame is praiseworthy in the youth is the claim that shame restrains agents from bad actions: those who “live by passion” [διὰ τὸ πάθει ζῴντας] are “restrained” [κωλύεσθαι] by aidōs from many possible errors to which their passions may lead them. One thing that this claim suggests is that the person with shame has not yet fully shaped her passions to accord with her reason and that she has to keep them in check.

Although this claim is usually taken as a sign that the learners with aidōs also live by passion,138 Aristotle’s claim has rather the opposite implication. For those who obey their sense of aidōs are already in a significant way ready to oppose the commands of their passions, and in this sense, they can be said to live not by passion. Indeed, although shame belongs properly to those whose deliberative capacities are not yet fully formed, those who have a sense of shame do not act following their passions wherever they take them. On the contrary, they follow their sense of shame, which, despite being a passion, is a mean “in the passions” [ἐν τοῖς παθήμασι] and “about passions” [περὶ τὰ πάθη] (NE 2.7, 1108a31). and it is responsive to considerations about nobility and shamefulness. Consequently, people who obey their sense of shame are praiseworthy because shame restrains their passions and leads them to perform the kinds of actions that are recommended by the advice of others.

137 The fact that Aristotle uses here the verb κολύω is important. Cf. Plato’s passage from Rep 4 (439a7- 439d1) about the distinction between reason and appetite. In this passage Plato associates κολύω with reason and κελεύω with appetite, and calls them respectively “the thing that restrains” (τὸ κωλύω, 436b6) and “the thing that commands” (τὸ κελεύω). For an analysis of this passage with especial attention to the terms κολύω and κελεύω see: Pedriali (2008), 64-65. See also Plato, Timaeus 70a2-c1, quoted by Pedriali, 66.

138 This is Burnyeat’s (1980) reading of this claim (78-9).
3.b.2. Shame and Error

A second consideration that explains why shame is only praiseworthy in young people, but not in virtuous agents, is that shame is associated with the possibility of error in action – or as Aristotle puts it shame “occurs in connection with bad actions” [ἐπὶ τοῖς φαύλοις].

One of the manifestations of shame is the distress that agents with shame suffer as a consequence of having performed a bad action. Aristotle makes it clear that the kinds of practical errors that he considers relevant in this case are those that do not render the actions involuntary. He does so by using the claim that “the good person will never voluntarily do bad actions” [ἐκεῖνον δ’ ἐπιείκης οὐδέποτε πράξει τὰ φαύλα] as a reason in support of his view that virtuous people do not have shame. In contrast, agents with shame can sometimes perform bad actions voluntarily, since they are susceptible to being led to act in accordance with their passions and not as reason commands. They may fail to do the noble thing in the circumstances, or fail to do the noble thing for the right reasons (i.e. for the sake of its nobility). They are, therefore, subject to suffer the distress produced by the awareness of the shamefulness of the action once performed.

Now if the actions at issue are voluntary actions, then how can this association of shame and bad actions be compatible with our characterization of shame as the emotion that leads agents to direct their behavior according to considerations about the nobility and shamefulness of their actions? The passage suggests that the failure of people with shame to do the right thing in the circumstances cannot be attributed to the kinds of errors produced by ignorance of the particulars of the actions, since their actions are voluntary. To answer this question we must consider, instead, the occasional character of shame, i.e. the fact that shame is not a stable disposition but a pathos. The kind of errors that Aristotle attributes to agents with shame are not errors committed “on account of shame”, i.e. they are not actions performed in obedience of their sense of shame, but rather are failures to obey their sense of shame — i.e. errors committed when the agents’ sense of shame arrives too late or is
overpowered by their passions instead. In these cases, the agents fail to feel shame before the action is performed because they fail to see the action as shameful; instead they feel shame only after the bad action is performed, either because someone else makes them see that the action was shameful or because by seeing the wrong thing done, they come to see its shamefulness. What characterizes people with shame in these cases is that, as opposed to virtuous people, they are occasionally susceptible to failing to perceive a bad action as shameful (and consequently fail to feel the prospective shame that would have stopped them from performing it); yet as opposed to non-virtuous people without shame, they do feel distress once they realize that the action performed was a shameful one.

Although the kind of distress associated with having done something shameful is inappropriate in a virtuous person, it is considered by Aristotle as praiseworthy in the case of young people who are learning to become virtuous. The distress consequent on bad actions is praiseworthy because it is a sign that the learners are on the right track: it shows that they are able to identify (although tardily) what is shameful about the actions performed and furthermore do not feel that such shamefulness conforms to their own natures.

3.c. Shame is a Proto-Virtuous Pathos

The main point of the final section of *NE* 4.9, is then, that shame performs an important function when it is present in the youth precisely because it is a *sui generis* emotion. The behaviour of young people has to be guided then by a passion because, on the one hand, young people do not have their deliberative capacities fully developed, and they live life according to their passions; and on the other hand, young people are expected to be still in process of formation, and consequently they do not yet have fully formed dispositions of character. For this reason, then, in the case of young people (as opposed to the case of mature agents), it is of great importance that there be a passion present that is able to restrain other passions and turning agents towards noble goals by making them pay attention to the nobility and shamefulness of their actions and of their own character.
Some commentators have complained that Aristotle’s reasons for insisting that shame has to be a *pathos* are unconvincing,\(^ {139} \) others hold that he has no reasons to deny that virtuous people can be “properly ashamed when [they] even think of the possibility of doing a bad action”.\(^ {140} \) I think, however, that once we become aware of the intimate connection between shame and the possibility of error, and between shame and the restraint of other passions, it should be more clear why shame has no proper place in virtuous people, even though it is fundamental for moral progress. More importantly, it is precisely because shame is an emotion and not a disposition that shame can provide learners with the kind of flexibility that allows their transformation into virtuous agents.

4. Shame in *NE* 10.9

In *NE* 10.9, a chapter concerned mainly with moral education and the requirements for being a good listener of lectures about ethics, we find an unambiguously positive characterization of shame. Here Aristotle makes some explicit claims about why shame is a necessary step in the progress towards virtue, he contrasts young people who obey their sense of shame to those who obey mere fear, and he identifies those with shame with true lovers of the noble:

[T5g]  *NE* 10.9, 1179b4-16:

Now if arguments were in themselves enough to make people good, they would justly, as Theognis says, have won very great rewards, and such rewards should have been provided; but as things are, while they seem to have power to encourage and stimulate the generous-minded among our youth, and to make a character which is gently born, and a true lover of what is noble, ready to be possessed by virtue, they are not able to encourage the many to nobility and goodness. For these are not disposed by nature to obey the sense of shame, but fear, and do not abstain from bad actions because of their baseness but through fear of punishment;

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\(^{139}\) See Cairns (1993: 248), quoted in note 136 above. Cairns also quotes Alexander of Aphrodisias (*Ethical Problems* 21, p. 142. 14 Bruns = Sharples (1990), 55-6), who “agrees that Aristotle should concede that *aidos* is that particular sort of *diatheis* which is a *beks*” (Cairns, 1993: 248, note 255).

\(^{140}\) See Irwin (1999: 277), quoted in note 119 above. See also the quote from Taylor (2006), who holds a similar view, in the same note.
living by passion they pursue their own pleasures and the means to them, and avoid the opposite pains, and have not even a conception of what is noble and truly pleasant, since they have never tasted it.

This passage establishes a contrast between (a) the “generous-minded among the youth” [τῶν νέων τοὺς ἐλευθερίους], who are able to “be encouraged towards nobility and goodness” [πρὸς καλοκαγαθίαν προτρέψασθαι] through “arguments” (or maybe, simply, through “words”) [λόγοι]; and (b) “the many” [τοὺς δὲ πολλοὺς], who are not susceptible to such encouragement. Aristotle’s explanation — introduced by the particle γὰρ — is that the many lack receptivity to arguments about “nobility-and-goodness” [καλοκαγαθίαν] because they “are disposed by nature” [πεφύκαιν] to obey “fear” [φόβω] instead of “shame” [αἰδοὶ], and they abstain from bad actions only “because of the punishment” [διὰ τὰς τιμωρίας], and not “because of the shameful” [διὰ τὸ αἰσχρὸν] (1179b10-13). Thus, Aristotle establishes an intimate connection between obeying one’s sense of shame and being susceptible to encouragement towards nobility-and-goodness during one’s process of formation.

141 Note the word πεφύκαιν at 1179b11: the tendencies to obey fear or shame at issue here are “natural” not in the sense that they are innate, but in the sense that they have been acquired in the person’s natural development or in her upbringing.
In the many, the lack of receptivity to arguments about the noble and the good refers not only to the defective motivational makeup of agents without a sense of shame, i.e. it refers not only to the fact that arguments about nobility and goodness are unable to move them, but also to the shortcomings of their cognitive abilities, since, as he says some lines below, the many do “not even understand” [οὐδ’ ... συνείη] those arguments (1179b27). Their lack of shame makes them blind to the relevant kinds of considerations that would enable them both to care for and understand arguments about the noble. In contrast, they are only able to be moved by “their own pleasures” [τὰς οίκειας ἡδονᾶς] and “the opposite pains” [τὰς ἀντικειμένας λύπας], i.e. bodily pleasures and pains, and are unable to even grasp the notion of the noble or even experience the true pleasures of the noble—as Aristotle puts it, they lack “a conception of what is noble and truly pleasant, since they have never tasted it”.

On the other hand, those who obey their sense of shame are able to see the strength of arguments concerning nobility-and-goodness, and to be affected (i.e. “encouraged and stimulated” [προτρέψαοθαί ... καὶ παρορμήσαι]) by such arguments. In Aristotle’s view, young people with a sense of shame differ from those who obey only fear in having a grasp of the noble and an ability to enjoy the pleasures characteristic of the noble, and they are identified with the “generous-minded” [ἐλευθερίους] and “true lovers of the noble” [ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλόκαλων], who are “ready to be possessed by virtue” [κατοκώχιμον ἐκ τῆς ἀρετῆς].

In sum, the text establishes three main intimately related factors that make learners with a sense of shame susceptible to being encouraged by arguments about the noble and

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142 I am indebted to Vasiliou’s (1996) discussion on this issue. Vasiliou calls attention to the fact that Aristotle claims in several passages that “a proper upbringing is a necessary prerequisite for understanding the Ethics” (772, my italics).
the good: (1) love of the noble and repulsion for the shameful — I call this the motivating aspect; (2) conception of what is noble and truly pleasant — I call this the cognitive aspect; and (3) pleasure in the noble — I call this the hedonic aspect. \(^{143}\) What we find here, then, is a confirmation that the view of shame that I proposed in Chapter 3 is on the right track: people with a sense of shame are ultimately oriented towards the noble, although their love of the noble and grasp of nobility are imperfect and consequently they need to be guided and encouraged by external advice. Moreover, the present passage clarifies that the reason why people with a sense of shame can be at all guided and encouraged by external advice is that they are already oriented towards the noble.

The three factors that Aristotle presents here are, then, the conditions that allow learners to be guided and encouraged by external advice, and enable them to perform in the right way the kinds of actions that will eventually lead them to the achievement of virtuous dispositions. For love of the noble and a conception of the noble places learners who obey shame in a position to fulfill the motivational and cognitive requirements for virtuous actions, while the tendency to take pleasure in the noble is an indication that the agent with shame has already progressed toward developing a better relation to her passions.

Let me explain these points in more detail by looking at each of these three elements of shame separately.

4.a. Motivating Aspect of Shame

\(^{143}\) Burnyeat’s (1980) characterization of the learner with shame as depicted in this passage also distinguishes these three main factors (although he does not mention explicitly the repulsion for the shameful):

He [the noble nature described in NE 1179b4-31] is someone who already loves what is noble and takes pleasure in it. He has a conception of what is noble and truly pleasant which other, less well brought up people lack because they have not tasted the pleasures of what is noble. This is what gives his character a kinship to virtue and a receptiveness to arguments directed to encouraging virtue. (75)
Let us tackle first Aristotle’s claim in [T5g] that a young person who obeys his sense of shame is generous-minded and “truly a lover of the noble” [ἀληθῶς ϕιλόκαλον]. This claim reveals that Aristotle does not conceive the person with a sense of shame as a mere enemy of the shameful, but rather as someone who also cares for and is strongly attracted to the noble. In other words, the notion of shame that is at work here is not restricted to the emotion triggered in relation to shameful actions, but as an emotion that includes concern with both the shameful and the noble. This is the scope of shame at least in our passage.

What, then, is it to be a true lover of the noble and obedient to one’s sense of shame? The contrast with those who merely fear punishment indicates that one of the main features of obedience to shame is that of paying attention in one’s actions to considerations about the noble and the shameful instead of considerations about immediate pleasure and pain. Thus, those who obey their sense of shame reject shameful actions “on account of the shameful” [διὰ τὸ αἰσχρὸν], instead of abstaining from them “on account of the punishments” [διὰ τὰς τιμωρίας]. And as lovers of the noble, they also are attracted towards noble actions because of the nobility of such actions, as opposed to being attracted to them because of the expectation of rewards and appetitive pleasures in general.

In sum, shame enables a different source of motivation, which consists in an aversion to

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144 This further identification of those with shame with the philokaloi should not be surprising or strange when we take into account the broader meaning of shame mentioned in the previous note.

145 The idea that shame allows agents to act contrary to the demands of their first-natural inclinations is discussed in detail in Velleman (2001) in relation to the myth of the initial chapters of the Genesis, and by Moss (2005) in relation to Plato. Burnyeat (1980) also suggests that shame provides a new source of motivation in Aristotle, but, as I have shown in Section 3 of Chapter 4 above, his interpretation of why and in what way this source is new and different from the appetitive or non-acquired pleasures and pains is different from the one I propose in the present Chapter.

146 Curzer (2000) also notes that the learners pictured in this passage not only have an aversion to the base, but also love of the noble:

In this passage, habituation has a different role [than in Book 2]; it provides the learner with a love of the noble and hatred of the base. What Aristotle means by ‘the noble’ and ‘the base’ is not obvious. … In any event, ‘loving what is noble’ surely includes desiring to perform virtuous acts for their own sake. (146)
shameful actions as such and love for the noble actions as such, so that the person with a sense of shame will not act or refrain from acting due to attraction or repulsion by the pleasant or painful consequences of an action, but by its noble or base qualities.

People who obey their sense of shame, unlike those who obey fear of punishment, attend to considerations that differ from pleasure and pain; indeed, people with shame are able to silence (or at least compensate for) the pleasant or painful consequences of their actions and to feel instead the requirements regarding the nobility and shamefulness of their actions, to which they have been introduced by the social practices of praise and blame.147 Thus, we should expect the learners with shame to be able to prefer noble actions even in cases where noble actions might involve painful consequences (as in the case of most courageous actions), or where noble actions might involve renouncing certain pleasant consequences (as in temperate actions).

The main point is that, even though learners with a sense of shame do not have practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) and their orientation towards the noble may be less articulate and self-aware than that of virtuous agents, the central concern of these learners who obey shame is the nobility of their actions and not the consequential pleasure or the gain that they will derive from the action. For this reason, these learners are able to be encouraged and stimulated by arguments regarding nobility and goodness. Moreover, also for this reason, insofar as learners with a sense of shame are able to pay attention to the relevant elements of the advice they receive and appreciate the value of the nobility of actions, learners who obey shame will be able to perform virtuous actions in a way that allows them to make progress towards virtue.

147 This general view of the effects of the possession of shame is very similar to the view that Moss (2005) attributes to Plato. The main difference is that in Aristotle we cannot find strong connections between this notion of shame and the soul’s tripartition. In relation to this issue, see the discussion in Chapter 2, Section 4 of Cooper’s (1988) and (1996) conception of *thumos* as the starting point of moral development in Aristotle.
4.b. Cognitive Aspect of Shame

Young people without a sense of shame are presented in our passage as falling prey to a second deficiency as, in Aristotle’s words, they lack a “conception” \[\varepsilon\nu\nu\iota\alpha\varsigma\nu\] of “the noble and truly pleasant” \[\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \delta\epsilon\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\omicron\upsilon\ \kappa\alpha\iota\iota\ \omicron\lambda\eta\theta\iota\omega\varsigma\ \eta\delta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma\] (1179b14-16). In contrast, young people with shame have a conception of the noble and truly pleasant.

We can get a clearer grasp of what precisely this conception involves by looking at the two main contrasts that Aristotle establishes in the passage: on the one hand, the distinction between the young person with a sense of shame and the many, who obey only fear of punishment; on the other hand, the distinction between the young person with shame and the virtuous agent.

These comparisons allow us to establish at least two limits to what the learner’s conception of the noble should consist in: on the one hand, the conception of the noble possessed by those who obey shame has to be different from the knowledge about noble actions on the part of those who only obey appetitive pleasures and pains; and on the other hand, it has to be different from the knowledge of the noble on the part of the virtuous person, who has practical wisdom. The conception of the noble possessed by the learner who obeys shame should therefore be something intermediate between those who merely obey appetitive pleasures and pains and fully virtuous people.

4.b.1. Cognition of the Noble in Agents with Shame vs. that in Agents without Shame

First, then, the distinctive conception of the noble possessed by the person with a sense of shame cannot \textit{simply} be an ability to detect noble and just actions, since those who fear punishments also possess (at least indirectly, insofar as they understand the commands of the laws and know how to apply them) the capacity to recognize noble and just actions, if
they have been educated under the right laws. Indeed, punishment-avoiders typically use that ability to detect noble and just actions precisely to identify the actions with which they will avoid punishment.

We saw an example of this in the discussion of civic courage in Chapter 3, where we could confirm that both the citizen with a sense of shame and the citizen who has a fear of punishment have some grasp of the noble thing to do. Both of them feel compelled to perform externally identical actions, even though they do it for different reasons.

The main difference seems to be, however, that the citizen with a sense of shame and the citizen who only obeys fear of punishment do not pay attention to the same features of the noble actions. Although both know in a way which action ought to be done in a given situation, they do not see that action in the same way. In other words, it might be the case that the person with shame and the law-fearing person recognize that certain situations require certain kinds of behavior, although they see the actions, the situations, and their requirements under different descriptions — e.g. as “noble” vs. as “lawful”. For example, it might be that a young person with shame considers driving over the speed limit to be something despicable and proper of brutes, and she might avoid doing it for that reason; in contrast, another person without a sense of shame and with mere fear of punishment might avoid doing it because there is a high risk of being caught and getting a ticket. In this example we can see how the person who obeys her sense of shame possesses a conception of the shamefulness of the action that the person with mere fear of punishment is missing; however, the person with mere fear of punishment, and without a sense of shame, is as able to identify the action to be avoided as the person with shame.

148 Here I do not exclude the possibility that the person with shame might be better at detecting the right thing to do than the person who merely fears punishment— and this especially in cases where the situation is new for the agent so that she has to figure out by herself what to do.
The idea is that the conception of the noble for those with a sense of shame amounts not merely to the ability to detect noble actions, but involves some sensitivity to the noble as such — i.e. a grasp of what makes them noble and valuable. In other words, people with shame are aware of the fact that noble actions are valuable for their nobility and they have some understanding of what that value consists in. In fact, although their ability to detect noble actions sometimes depends on the presence of external advice, the fact that they are able to understand and be encouraged by such advice depends on their having a grasp of the noble. This grasp or “notion” of the noble, as the text suggests, is related to having had a taste of the noble in their practices: not only have they performed noble actions, but they have directly experienced their nobility. In contrast, although those without a sense of shame might also have the ability to detect noble actions, they are not able to grasp their valuable character as such, since they have not experienced noble actions in the right way.

The important difference here is, I think, that the capacity of people with shame to detect noble actions is linked to the fact that their actions are motivated by their love for the noble and limited by this fact. What is salient for them in the corresponding practical situation is the nobility (or shamefulness) of the actions as an attractive (or repellent) feature that requires the agent to act in a certain way. In contrast, what is salient for those without a sense of shame is the fact that one might get punished if caught behaving in the wrong way; or conversely, one might receive a reward if one acts in the right way.

4.b.2. Cognition of the Noble in Agents with Shame vs. that in Agents with Virtue

The second limiting case that allows us to better understand the conception of the noble that Aristotle attributes in \([T5g]\) to the learners with shame is that of fully virtuous people. The fact that the person with a sense of shame does not yet have \(phronēsis\) makes it clear that
there must be a difference between what she is able to grasp and what the virtuous person perceives. But how big is the difference? What might it consist in? Here we can turn to our text for some hints.

First, Aristotle says that the learner with shame is now ready to be “encouraged” \(\text{προτρέψασθαι}\) by arguments towards nobility and goodness; that is, the learner with shame is now ready to approach questions about the aim of life.\(^{149}\) She is receptive to \textit{protreptic arguments}.\(^{150}\)

It might seem puzzling that Aristotle says here that those learners who are already lovers of the noble, and who have a grasp of the noble and a capacity to enjoy nobility in their actions, are now ready to be “encouraged”, i.e. ready to listen to arguments about \textit{aims}. It would seem natural to take it that the role of habituation is precisely to orient the learners towards the right aim, and that what learners with a sense of shame need is advice about which actions are in fact noble and which are not. Indeed, we have seen in the previous section (4.b.1) that people with a sense of shame (as opposed to those who have mere fear of punishment) are lovers of the noble and have a sensitivity to nobility as such. That means that people with shame \textit{already} value the virtuous life and the noble, and thus it suggests that they are in no need of encouragement in this respect. The order seems, then, the reverse of

\(^{149}\) Here I have to introduce Vasiliou’s (2008) distinction between aiming principles and determining principles:

An aiming principle tells the agent what overall \textit{aim} she ought to have in acting, for example, to do the virtuous action; …. By contrast, a determining principle (e.g., a proposed moral rule such as “Never kill anyone”) would be one that actually \textit{determines} which action or action-type is forbidden or required; once you adopt “Never kill anyone” as a principle, then, at least as far as that principle is concerned, if an action involves killing someone, it is forbidden. The role of a determining principle may be played by a principle (a moral rule), but it may also be fulfilled by other means, reasonable or unreasonable, such as intuition, tarot cards, following a virtuous person, and so on. I shall refer to questions about which token actions or action-types are virtuous as \textit{determining questions}, because they involve determining what the virtuous action actually is, whereas I shall call questions about what supreme aim one should have in acting \textit{aiming questions}. (1-2)

\(^{150}\) Definition of “protreptic argument”: “an argument the acceptance of which might lead someone to turn \[\text{trepein}\] towards \[\text{pro}\] the pursuit of virtue but the acceptance of which cannot by itself make her virtuous.” (Whiting 2002a: 95)
what we might initially expect. We would expect Aristotle to have said here that, once the learners have been brought up in good habits, they are ready to receive “direction” about what kinds of actions are right to perform in what occasions.

Why does Aristotle say, then, that young people with a sense of shame are ready to be encouraged? The answer to this question is related to the intermediate condition of those with shame and the fact that shame is a pathos and not a stable disposition of character. As we have seen in Chapter 3, although people with a sense of shame have an orientation towards the noble, they sometimes fail to recognize and be attracted to the nobility of certain actions unless they have the external aid of the practices of praise and blame. In these cases, learners can be encouraged to do the right thing by being brought to see through arguments the praiseworthiness of a certain action, or to avoid a bad action by being brought to see its shamefulness.

Aristotle offers indirect support for this point when he says further in the passage that legislators should “encourage [citizens] by the motive of the noble” \(\text{προτρέπεσθαι τού καλοῦ χάριν}\) \(\text{(NE 10.9, 1180a7)}\). The idea is that by calling certain actions and certain characters noble, and by offering praise of them, legislators are promoting noble behaviour and are also reinforcing the citizen’s orientation towards the noble.

151 A defense of the priority of “encouragement” over “direction” is found, for example, in Broadie (1991). See Broadie’s (1991: 87), where she proposes a distinction between needing direction and needing encouragement, and she seems to suggest that the latter kind of need is more fundamental than (and prior to) the former. Although Broadie is not commenting on our passage, the distinction is pertinent here:

… the difference between needing direction and needing encouragement. The agent who only needs direction is already of himself actively willing to do what he should. Encouragement by contrast, is not just getting someone to do what he would not have done for himself; it is also evocation of the elementary willingness to do the thing he is supposed to.

The fact that Aristotle says that the learners with shame are ready to be encouraged by arguments seems to suggest that their motivation to do virtuous actions still needs to be reinforced. [See on this issue D. Scott’s (2000) paper on the psychology of the audience of Aristotle’s NE and its relation to that in Plato’s Republic. Scott’s view is that although it is true that Aristotle refuses to address the skeptic, he still “recognizes the need for external, anti-skeptical arguments for the purposes of reinforcement, to prevent the possibility that his audience might drift away from the values of their upbringing.” (238)]
4.c. Hedonic Aspect of Shame

The third characteristic of shame that makes those who obey it receptive to ethical arguments is the ability to enjoy the proper (true) pleasure of the noble; this is a pleasure to which people without a sense of shame are blind. The person who obeys shame, then, has already experienced some pleasures and pains that are significantly different from those to which children and people without shame have access, and she has realized that these new sorts of pleasures are in some sense better.\footnote{As we have seen in Chapter 4, some authors, like e.g. Burnyeat (1980), make of this receptivity to the new pleasures of the noble the basis for the acquisition of the right sort of motivation to perform noble actions. I argued there, however, that the order is the other way around: we get to find noble actions pleasant because we love them — i.e. the pleasure is a consequence of the love.} For example, someone with a sense of shame will be able to find greater — or perhaps just better — pleasure in giving half of her lunch to someone who needs it than in eating it all by herself, or experience greater pain in watching something unjust occur without intervening than in being hurt (and, in some extreme cases, even killed) if she intervenes.

One thing that we should notice is that, as I have argued in Chapter 4, the difference between these examples of pleasures and pains is not simply a difference in quantity but in kind. The kind of pleasure and distress to which the person with shame has access, i.e. the pleasure that arises from noble activities and the distress that arises from base ones, are of a different kind than those that arise from obtaining or not the objects of our appetites.

The new sort of pleasure, i.e. pleasure in the noble, which was characterized in Chapter 4 as an integral part of the activity and not as the aim that the agent pursues in action, is a pleasure that learners are able to have only when they have gone through a certain transformation in their attitudes towards the noble. The idea is that people with
shame develop an attachment to the noble that makes them pursue noble things because of their nobility and not because they are pleasant.

4.d. Three Aspects of Shame. The Learner with a Sense of Shame vs. the Shameless

Let me summarize now the three areas in which shame transforms its possessor according to our passage [T5g]. Aristotle indicates that shame provides young people with a receptivity for ethical arguments because (a) learners with a sense of shame indeed differ from those who only obey fear of punishment and expectation of reward in that they are attracted towards the nobility of their actions and are averse to the shameful — i.e. the motivation factor; (b) learners with a sense of shame have a notion of nobility and shamefulness and are able to see the laws and social rules in that context — i.e. the cognitive factor; and (c) they have an ability to be respectively pleased or pained by the noble and the shameful —i.e. the hedonic factor.

That the text offers these reasons as explanations for why those who have shame are receptive to ethical arguments is, I think, not controversial. But the advantage of shame is not only that it makes learners receptive to arguments; it also has a practical dimension. Learners with shame are able (under proper guidance) to identify in their actions the relevant features that make those actions virtuous and noble, they prefer those actions precisely on account of their nobility, and they are pleased by the nobility of their practices, which is a sign that their natures have been transformed and their character is now, in Aristotle’s words, “akin to virtue” [οἰκεῖον τὴν ἀρετήν] (1180b30). What this ultimately means is that shame equips learners with the conditions that allow them to perform virtuous actions well, i.e. in a way such that those actions are conducive to the acquisition of virtue.

153 This analysis is indeed the same one that we find in Burnyeat (1980).
CONCLUSION. SHAME AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

In this dissertation I have argued for a new interpretation of the notion of shame and its role in moral development in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. The results of the present study shed important light on two issues: on the one hand, they reveal that shame plays an all-important positive role in moral upbringing as the proto-virtuous emotion that guides and encourages learners to perform virtuous actions in the right way; and on the other hand, they provide an account of moral development in Aristotle as a continuous process that is only possible insofar as learners possess such emotion that makes them receptive to external guidance and encouragement towards the noble.

I started with a potential problem in Aristotle’s account of moral development concerning the continuity between the actions of the learners of virtue and the dispositions that those actions are expected to yield. I argued that unless we think of the actions of the learners as somehow exercising the cognitive and motivational tendencies that, when perfected, constitute virtue, our explanation would fail to have the relevant sort of continuity.

My view is that contemporary readings of the Aristotelian account of moral upbringing create a gap between the learners’ actions and the dispositions those actions are meant to produce by characterizing the actions of learners as motivationally neutral and assuming that there is no need for attributing to the learner an initial orientation towards the noble. My goal in this thesis has been to find an alternative explanation for moral development able to preserve Aristotle’s fundamental conception of moral development as learning-by-doing, while also maintaining his principle that there should be continuity between the actions of learners and the dispositions that are expected to result from them.
I proposed that the alternative explanation should follow the model of learning-by-doing that Aristotle presents for the sciences and crafts in *Metaphysics* 9.8. The central idea of this model is that learners are not blank slates, but they are able to engage in the activities that are characteristic of a disposition only when they have already “something of” it. In the case of virtue acquisition, what this means is that the learners can engage in the relevant kinds of practices only when they fulfill certain cognitive and motivational conditions.

My analysis has shown that shame enables learners to fulfill partially the relevant motivational and cognitive requirements in that it provides learners with the relevant grasp of the noble and love of the noble. Unlike the alternative models centered in pleasures and pains, experience, or *thumos*, the shame-based approach to moral development proposed here provides an account of how learners fulfill the requirements that allow them to perform virtuous actions in a way that is conducive to virtue.

I have argued that shame should not be understood merely as fear of external disapproval, or as a tendency to find pleasure in the noble and distress in the shameful, but instead as the integration of the rational and orectic tendencies that provide learners with the ability to identify noble actions and objects as noble and place considerations about nobility and shamefulness at the center of their reasons for action. Thus, shame equips learners with the seeds of motivation-towards-the-noble and engagement in practical thinking that, when fully developed, constitute virtue of character. Therefore, we have good reasons to conclude that shame offers us the best candidate to fill the moral upbringing gap.
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