

SHAME AND VIRTUE IN ARISTOTLE

CHRISTOPHER C. RAYMOND

1. Introduction

FEW concepts can claim a greater significance in early Greek ethics than *aidōs*, or a sense of shame.¹ In Hesiod's myth of the races, the collapse of human society is marked by the flight of the goddesses *Aidōs* and *Nemesis* ('righteous indignation') from the earth to Olympus.² At the conclusion of the *Iliad* Achilles regains his humanity when he is moved by *aidōs* and pity to release Hector's body to Priam.³ And in the collection of didactic verses attributed to Theognis, we find: 'There is no better treasure you will lay down for your children than *aidōs*, which attends good men, Cynus.'⁴

It is against this background that Aristotle presents his systematic account of the virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Yet he introduces

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¹ The standard study of the concept is D. L. Cairns, *Aidōs: The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature* [*Aidōs*] (Oxford, 1993). Throughout this paper I shall tend to leave *aidōs* (and its cognates) untranslated, though 'a sense of shame' or simply 'shame' would suit most contexts. Other common translations are 'modesty', 'inhibition', 'reverence', and 'respect'. As the latter two indicate, *aidōs* and its cognates can refer to the positive regard one shows to others in virtue of their status vis-à-vis oneself (Cairns, *Aidōs*, 2–4). Thus, in the *Iliad* example cited just below, it may be respect for Priam's status as a suppliant rather than any feeling of shame that motivates Achilles to relent. The 'respect' sense is much less common by Aristotle's time, though it may still play a role in his analysis (especially in his discussions of *aidōs* in the young). ² *Op.* 197–200.

³ *Il.* 24. 503 ff.; cf. 24. 44–5.

⁴ 409–10 (my translation): οὐδένα θησαυρὸν παισὶν καταθήσῃ ἀμείνω | αἰδοῦς, ἣ τ' ἀγαθοῖς ἀνδράσι, Κύρῳ, ἔπεται.

aidōs into his discussion only to deny that it is a genuine virtue.⁵ Although he sees an important role for shame in moral education, Aristotle suggests that a truly virtuous person will have no need for *aidōs*.⁶ The focus of this paper will be *NE* 4. 9, where he offers two different arguments for why *aidōs* should not be considered a virtue. The chapter has puzzled readers: both arguments seem to conflict with things he says elsewhere in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and neither is fully persuasive in its own right. My primary aim is to show that Aristotle has stronger reasons for denying that *aidōs* is a virtue than it initially appears. To do this, I shall draw on the ancient commentary tradition as well as related passages in the *Eudemian Ethics* and other parts of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Towards the end of the paper, however, I appeal to Alexander of Aphrodisias' analysis in the *Ethical Problems* to argue that *aidōs* has a significant part to play in the virtuous person's life after all.

2. The first argument of *NE* 4. 9:
aidōs is more like a feeling than a state

In the opening lines of *NE* 4. 9 Aristotle argues that *aidōs* should not be considered a virtue because it belongs to a different genus from that of the virtues proper:

περὶ δὲ αἰδοῦς ὡς τινος ἀρετῆς οὐ προσήκει λέγειν· πάθει γὰρ μᾶλλον ἔοικεν ἢ ἔξει. ὀρίζεται γοῦν φόβος τις ἀδοξίας, καὶ ἀποτελεῖ τι τῶν περὶ τὰ δεινὰ φόβῳ παραπλήσιον· ἐρυθραίνονται γὰρ οἱ αἰσχυνόμενοι, οἱ δὲ τὸν θάνατον φοβούμενοι ὠχρῶσιν. σωματικὰ δὲ φαίνεται πως εἶναι ἀμφότερα, ὅπερ δοκεῖ πάθους μᾶλλον ἢ ἔξεως εἶναι. (1128^b10–15)⁷

Aidōs is not properly spoken about as a sort of virtue, since it is more like a

⁵ As Terence Irwin observes, Aristotle 'thereby rejects a long Greek tradition' (*Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics. Translated, with Introduction, Notes, and Glossary [NE]*, 2nd edn. (Indianapolis, 1999), 347). Aristotle's position on *aidōs* is anticipated by Plato, especially at *Chrm.* 160 D–161 B. See my '*Aidōs* in Plato's *Charmides*', *Ancient Philosophy* (forthcoming).

⁶ On the role of shame in moral education see *NE* 10. 9, 1179^b11–31, along with M. F. Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good' ['Learning'], in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley, 1980), 69–92; H. Curzer, *Aristotle and the Virtues [Virtues]* (Oxford, 2012), ch. 16. In the present paper I shall leave this issue to one side and focus on Aristotle's reasons for denying that *aidōs* is a virtue in its own right.

⁷ I. Bywater (ed.), *Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea* (Oxford, 1894), accepting Ross's reading of ἀποτελεῖ τι for ἀποτελείται at 1128^b12.

feeling than a state. It is defined, at any rate, as a sort of fear of disrepute, and it has an effect comparable to that of the fear of frightening things. For people blush when they feel ashamed, and when they fear death they turn pale. Both appear, then, to be somehow bodily, which seems to be precisely what is characteristic of a feeling rather than a state.⁸

The argument draws on the results of *NE* 2. 5, where Aristotle had identified the genus of virtue among the three ‘things that come about in the soul’ (1105^b20)—feelings (*pathē*), capacities (*dunameis*), and states (*hexeis*):⁹

λέγω δὲ πάθη μὲν ἐπιθυμίαν ὀργὴν φόβον θάρσος φθόνον χαρὰν φιλίαν μῖσος πόθον ζῆλον ἔλεον, ὅλως οἷς ἔπεται ἡδονὴ ἢ λύπη· δυνάμεις δὲ καθ’ ἃς παθητικοὶ τούτων λεγόμεθα, οἷον καθ’ ἃς δυνατοὶ ὀργισθῆναι ἢ λυπηθῆναι ἢ ἐλεῆσαι· ἔξεις δὲ καθ’ ἃς πρὸς τὰ πάθη ἔχομεν εὖ ἢ κακῶς, οἷον πρὸς τὸ ὀργισθῆναι, εἰ μὲν σφοδρῶς ἢ ἀνεμιένως, κακῶς ἔχομεν, εἰ δὲ μέσως, εὖ· ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ πρὸς τὰλλα. (1105^b21–8)

By feelings I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, enjoyment, love, hatred, longing, jealousy, pity, and generally whatever is accompanied by pleasure and pain. By capacities I mean that on account of which we are said to be susceptible to these feelings—for example, on account of which we are capable of feeling anger, or pain, or pity. By states I mean the things on account of which we are well or badly off in relation to feelings—for example, in relation to anger, if we feel it too intensely or too weakly, we are in a bad state; if we feel it moderately, we are in a good one; and similarly in relation to the others.

Aristotle uses the term *pathos*—from the verb *paschein* (‘suffer’, ‘experience’)—to refer broadly to anything which a subject may be affected by or undergo, where the change in the subject is generally understood to be temporary.¹⁰ In the above passage, where his focus is on the human soul, Aristotle narrows the sense of *pathē* (translated ‘feelings’) to occurrent episodes of emotion and appetitive desire, which invariably involve changes in the body, and

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, translations of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are based on C. D. C. Reeve, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics. Translated, with Introduction and Notes [NE]* (Indianapolis, 2014), substantially modified.

⁹ Aristotle is specifically focused on the desiderative part of the human soul (τὸ ὀρεκτικόν; cf. *NE* 1. 13, 1102^b30).

¹⁰ On *pathē* in general see C. C. W. Taylor, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics, Books II–IV. Translated with an Introduction and Commentary [NE 2–4]* (Oxford, 2006), 97; Cairns, *Aidōs*, 393. Aristotle distinguishes senses of ‘*pathos*’ at *Metaph.* Δ 21, 1022^b15–22. For the claim that *pathē* produce temporary changes see *Cat.* 8, 9^b28–34, 10^a6–10 (with specific reference to *pathē* of the soul).

are accompanied by pleasure and pain (*οἷς ἔπεται ἡδονὴ ἢ λύπη*, 1105^b23).¹¹ He goes on to argue that the virtues and vices cannot be feelings on the grounds that (a) feelings are not the proper objects of praise or blame ('for it is not the person who fears or gets angry who is praised nor the person who simply gets angry who is blamed but, rather, the one who gets angry in a certain way' (1105^b32–1106^a1)); (b) feelings, unlike the virtues and vices, occur 'in the absence of decision' (*ἀπροαιρέτως*, 1106^a3); and (c) while feelings account for our being moved or undergoing change (*κινεῖσθαι*, 1106^a5), the virtues and vices account for our being disposed in a certain way (*διακεῖσθαί πως*, 1106^a6). As for whether the virtues and vices might be capacities, Aristotle points out that merely being capable of having feelings deserves neither praise nor blame. It follows that the virtues and vices must be states—stable dispositions to feel and act either well or badly.¹²

Aristotle's strategy at the start of *NE* 4. 9, then, is to show that *aidōs* is not a virtue because it is the wrong kind of psychic condition. He first points out that it is defined as a kind of fear (*phobos*), itself a straightforward example of a *pathos*.¹³ Like fear, moreover, *aidōs* has a characteristic physiological expression: the phenomenon of blushing suggests that *aidōs* is episodic, involving a momentary change, whereas a state endures in the soul over a long period of

¹¹ On *pathē* of the soul involving bodily change see *DA* 1. 1, 403^a16–19. The claim that *pathē* of the soul are accompanied by pleasure and pain recurs at *EE* 2. 2, 1220^b12–14 (though qualified by the phrase *ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ*—'usually' or 'for the most part'), and in the definition of *pathē* at *Rhet.* 2. 1, 1378^a19–22. The precise connection of *pathē* with pleasure and pain has been the subject of debate. For a thorough discussion of the issues see J. Dow, *Passions and Persuasion in Aristotle's Rhetoric* [*Passions*] (Oxford, 2015), ch. 9. Dow defends the view that *pathē* in the *Rhetoric* 'simply are states of pain or pleasure (or both)', and that these pleasures and pains represent their objects in ways that warrant the *pathē* in question (146). Thus, Dow argues (against previous commentators) that *Rhet.* 2. 1–11 offers a distinctive (if not fully fledged) theory of the emotions. Further valuable treatments of Aristotle on the emotions include Cairns, *Aidōs*, 393–7; S. R. Leighton, 'Aristotle on the Emotions', in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Berkeley, 1996), 206–37; W. W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion*, 2nd edn. (London, 2002), and 'Aristotle and Theophrastus on the Emotions', in id., *Aristotle's Practical Side: On his Psychology, Ethics, Politics and Rhetoric* (Leiden, 2006), 69–103; A. W. Price, 'Emotions in Plato and Aristotle', in P. Goldie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion* (Oxford, 2010), 121–42 at 131–40.

¹² On Aristotle's notion of *hexis* see D. S. Hutchinson, *The Virtues of Aristotle* (Oxford, 1986), ch. 2.

¹³ See *NE* 2. 5, 1105^b22, 1106^a2–3; 2. 6, 1106^b18. For the definition of *aidōs* see Plato, *Euthph.* 12 A–C; cf. *NE* 3. 6, 1115^a10–14.

time and is difficult to alter or remove.¹⁴ Since *aidōs* is more like a feeling than a state, and virtue is a kind of state, *aidōs* should not be counted among the virtues.

As it stands this line of argument is unpersuasive, because it overlooks an important distinction—namely, between *aidōs* as an occurrent feeling or emotion, and *aidōs* as an emotional disposition.¹⁵ Compare the distinction in English between *feeling shame* at a particular moment and *having a sense of shame*.¹⁶ The two standard Greek words for shame, *aidōs* and *aischunē*, could be used in either an occurrent or a dispositional sense.¹⁷ In the former sense, *aidōs* is clearly a *pathos*; but it was also common for *aidōs* (and less often *aischunē*) to refer to something like a character trait—the quality of being *disposed* to feel shame when appropriate.¹⁸ But in the opening lines of *NE* 4. 9 Aristotle appears to focus exclusively on the occurrent sense of the term. The conclusion that *aidōs* is not a virtue because it is more like a feeling than a state therefore seems unjustified.

In fact, an earlier passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics* makes use of this very distinction between occurrent and dispositional senses of *aidōs*. In 2. 7 Aristotle provides an outline of the individual virtues of character, classifying each as a ‘mean’ (*μεσότης*) between two vicious extremes. Following his sketch of the virtues proper, he writes:

εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς παθήμασι καὶ περὶ τὰ πάθη μεσότητες· ἡ γὰρ αἰδώς ἀρετὴ μὲν οὐκ ἔστιν, ἐπαινείται δὲ καὶ ὁ αἰδήμων. καὶ γὰρ ἐν τούτοις ὁ μὲν λέγεται

¹⁴ On the stability of *hexeis* see *Cat.* 8, 8^b27–35; *NE* 2. 4, 1105^a33. On blushing see *Cat.* 8, 9^b11–14, 30–2.

¹⁵ See S. Broadie and C. Rowe, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics. Translation, Introduction, and Commentary [NE]* (Oxford, 2002), 334; cf. Cairns, *Aidōs*, 418–19.

¹⁶ Cairns, *Aidōs*, 397–8, draws a further distinction between the general disposition to feel an emotion (e.g. a sense of shame), and a more specific emotional disposition such as being ashamed of one’s ancestry (which does not imply that one always feels occurrent shame in regard to one’s ancestry). Only the former kind of disposition is relevant to the present discussion, since only it can be reasonably construed as a character trait.

¹⁷ On dispositional *aidōs* see Cairns, *Aidōs*, 5–14; on dispositional *aischunē* see *ibid.* 182 n. 11. I further discuss Aristotle’s use of *aidōs* and *aischunē* in *NE* 4. 9 in sect. 3 below.

¹⁸ It is the *pathos* (specifically *aischunē*, but see 1384^a34) that Aristotle makes the subject of his study of shame in *Rhet.* 2. 6. The term *aidōs* appears in the list of *pathē* at *EE* 2. 2 (1220^b12–14), but not in the list at *NE* 2. 5 (1105^b21–3). The fact that *aidōs* commonly denotes a character trait is presumably why Aristotle considers it worth asking whether *aidōs* is a virtue in the first place.

μέσος, ὃ δ' ὑπερβάλλον, ὡς ὁ καταπλήξ ὁ πάντα αἰδούμενος· ὃ δ' ἐλλείπων ἢ μηδὲν ὅλως ἀναίσχυντος, ὃ δὲ μέσος αἰδήμων. (1108^a30–5)

But there are also means in the affections and concerned with feelings. For *aidōs* is not a virtue, yet the *aidēmōn* [sc. the person with proper *aidōs*] is praised as well. And in these cases, in fact, one person is said to be in the mean position, whereas another is said to be excessive (as in the case of a bashful person, who feels *aidōs* at everything). Someone who is deficient [sc. in *aidōs*] or does not feel it at all is shameless. And a person in the mean position is said to be *aidēmōn*.

Here Aristotle identifies a mean related to feelings of shame while denying that *aidōs* itself is a virtue. The *aidēmōn* is someone who feels *aidōs* in the appropriate way, and is praised on that account. Aristotle does not give the relevant mean a name, but the natural choice would be simply *aidōs*.¹⁹ Consider the parallel passage in the *Eudemian Ethics*:

αἰδῶς δὲ μεσότης ἀναισχυντίας καὶ καταπλήξεως· ὃ μὲν γὰρ μηδεμίᾳ φροντί-
ζων δόξης ἀναισχυντος, ὃ δὲ πάσης ὁμοίως καταπλήξ, ὃ δὲ τῆς τῶν φαινομένων
ἐπιεικῶν αἰδήμων. (3. 7, 1233^b26–9)²⁰

Aidōs is a mean between shamelessness and bashfulness. The one who respects no one's opinion is shameless. The one who respects everyone's alike is bashful. The one who respects the opinion of those who appear decent is *aidēmōn*.²¹

¹⁹ Note that Aristotle goes on to refer to *nemesis* ('righteous indignation'), the other praiseworthy non-virtue, as a *mesotēs* at 1108^b1. Perhaps in the case of *aidōs* he wants to avoid the awkwardness of saying that to have *aidōs*, the mean, is to be disposed to *aideisthai* in the right way. He does not encounter this difficulty with *nemesis* because the emotion verb he uses in this context is not *nemesan* but *lupeisthai*. (In his analysis of the relevant *pathos* in *Rhet.* 2. 9 he uses the verb *nemesan* instead of the noun *nemesis*, except at 1386^b22.)

²⁰ R. R. Walzer and J. M. Mingay (eds.), *Aristotelis Ethica Eudemia* (Oxford, 1991).

²¹ Translations of the *Eudemian Ethics* are based on B. Inwood and R. Woolf, *Aristotle: Eudemian Ethics* (Cambridge, 2013), substantially modified. See also the table of means at 2. 3, 1221^a1, as well as the parallel passage in the *Magna moralia* (1. 29, 1193^a1–10 Susemihl): '*Aidōs* is a mean between shamelessness and bashfulness, and it has to do with deeds and words. For a shameless person is one who says and does anything on any occasion or before any people; but a bashful person is the opposite of this, who is afraid to say or do anything before anybody (for such a person—one who is bashful about everything—is incapable of action); but *aidōs* and the *aidēmōn* are a sort of mean between these. For he will not say and do anything under any circumstances, like a shameless person, nor, like a bashful person, be afraid on every occasion and under all circumstances, but will say and do what he ought, where he ought, and when he ought' (Revised Oxford Translation, modified: *αἰδῶς δ' ἐστὶ μεσότης ἀναισχυντίας καὶ καταπλήξεως, ἔστιν δὲ περὶ πράξεις καὶ λόγους. ὃ*

Whereas the *NE* passage defines the mean in relation to the things about which a person feels *aidōs* (cf. *ὁ πάντα αἰδούμενος*, 2. 7, 1108^a34), the *EE* passage defines it in relation to the audience before whom the emotion is felt.²² But in both instances the *aidēmōn* is someone who is praised for being disposed to feel *aidōs* in the right way. If we follow Aristotle's own threefold division of the 'things that come about in the soul' (*NE* 2. 5, 1105^b20–8), it appears that such a disposition would have to be a state—since neither feelings nor capacities are suitable objects of praise or blame (1105^b31–1106^a2, 1106^a7–9).²³ His argument at the start of *NE* 4. 9 is therefore all the more puzzling.

There is, however, a related and more promising line of argument open to Aristotle, which can be pieced together from other passages in his ethical works. Even if *aidōs* (in the dispositional sense) belongs to the same genus as the virtues, it may fail to satisfy the other criteria specified in his definition of virtue. A virtue is a state of the soul on account of which a person is praised, but it does not follow that every praiseworthy state is a virtue. In *NE* 2. 6 Aristotle gives his full definition of virtue of character as follows: 'a state that issues

μὲν γὰρ ἀναίσχυντός ἐστιν ὁ ἐν παντὶ καὶ πρὸς πάντας λέγων καὶ πράττων ἃ ἔτυχεν, ὁ δὲ καταπεπληγμένος ὁ ἐναντίος τούτῳ, ὁ πάντα καὶ πάντας εὐλαβοῦμενος καὶ πράξει καὶ εἰπεῖν (ἄπρακτος γὰρ ὁ τοιοῦτος, ὁ πάντα καταπληττόμενος): ἡ δὲ αἰδῶς καὶ ὁ αἰδήμων μεσότης τις τούτων. οὔτε γὰρ ἅπαντα καὶ πάντως, ὡς ὁ ἀναίσχυντος, καὶ ἔρει καὶ πράξει, οὔτε ὡς ὁ καταπλήξ, ἐν παντὶ καὶ πάντως εὐλαβηθήσεται, ἀλλὰ πράξει καὶ ἔρει ἐν οἷς δεῖ καὶ ἃ δεῖ καὶ ὅτε δεῖ).

²² *Rhet.* 2. 6 discusses both the kinds of things (*ποιῶ*) one is ashamed of and the types of people in relation to whom (*πρὸς τίνας*) one is ashamed. The passage from the *Magna moralia* quoted in the previous footnote also deals with both.

²³ Cairns, *Aidōs*, 411, observes that *aidōs* is only ever explicitly referred to as a *pathos* and never as a *hexis*. He also points out (399) that dispositional *aidōs*, strictly speaking, cannot be a *hexis* because every state is either a (perfect) virtue or a vice (*Phys.* 7. 3, 246^a11–17). But this assumes that *aidōs* is not a virtue, which has yet to be shown. If indeed *aidōs* is not a virtue, we are left with two possibilities: either there are some *hexeis* that are not virtues or vices, or there are some praiseworthy dispositions that are not *hexeis*. Pursuing the latter possibility, Cairns gives lengthy consideration (401–11) to whether dispositional *aidōs* might be a *dunamis*, based on the characterization of *dunamis* at *EE* 2. 2, 1220^b6–20 (where Aristotle treats being *aischuntēlos* as a *dunamis*). His conclusion is that 'the alternative conceptions [in the *EE* and the *NE*] of what it is to be a *dunamis* seem unable to capture the essence of *aidōs* as a developed trait of character' (410). In the end, he decides that Aristotle should have recognized dispositional *aidōs* as a *hexis* (428–9). This may be compatible with Aristotle's view that every *hexis* is a virtue or a vice if we take dispositional *aidōs* to be an *aretē* in a loose sense, similar to *enkrateia* (see *EE* 2. 7, 1223^b11–12; cf. *NE* 7. 8, 1151^a27–8, ^b28, with Cairns, *Aidōs*, 400 n. 174). For *aidōs* as an *aretē* in this loose sense see *NE* 3. 8, 1116^a27–8, and my discussion in sect. 4 below.

in decisions [*ἐξέτις προαιρετική*], consisting in a mean that is relative to us and that is determined by a rational account, in the way in which a practically wise person [*ὁ φρόνιμος*] would determine it' (1106^b36–1107^a2).²⁴ A virtue is not any kind of state, but a 'prohairetic' (*prohairetikē*) state, or one that 'issues in decisions'.²⁵ To form a *prohairesis*, or decision, in Aristotle's sense, is to choose a course of action as the result of deliberation about how to achieve some desired end.²⁶ The virtues of character, as Hendrik Lorenz writes, are states that 'render their bearers capable of, and suited to, making excellent decisions'.²⁷ Aristotle's definition further specifies that the virtuous mean is determined in the way a *phronimos*, or practically wise person, would determine it. This adumbrates his view, stated elsewhere, that full virtue of character requires the intellectual virtue of *phronēsis*, or practical wisdom (and vice versa).²⁸ It follows that even if *aidōs* can be understood as a state and as a mean, two further conditions must be met for it to count as a virtue. First, it must be a 'prohairetic' state, or one that issues in decisions; second, it must dispose a person to make practically wise decisions. For the moment I shall leave the second condition to one side, and take up the question of whether *aidōs*, understood as a state of character, would be a state that issues in decisions.²⁹

Let us begin by returning to the passage where Aristotle first suggests that *aidōs* is a praiseworthy mean but not a virtue. In *NE* 2. 7, as we have seen, he distinguishes *aidōs* as well as *nemesis* ('righteous indignation') from the virtues proper on the grounds that they are

²⁴ My translation.

²⁵ See also *EE* 2. 10, 1227^b8. For this translation of *hexis prohairetikē* see H. Lorenz, 'Virtue of Character in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*' ['Character'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 37 (2009), 177–212 at 196–7. Lorenz's causal reading is supported by *EE* 3. 1, 1230^a27–9, where Aristotle says that by calling virtue 'prohairetic', he means that it 'makes [*ποιεῖ*] everyone choose for the sake of something, and this "something for the sake of which" is what is fine' (my emphasis).

²⁶ See *NE* 3. 3, 1113^a2–7; *EE* 2. 11, 1227^b34–1228^a4. My interpretation of *prohairesis* follows Lorenz, 'Character', 184–92. The correctness of a decision, crucially, is not just a matter of how well one reasons instrumentally, but also a matter of desiring the right end for the right reasons.

²⁷ Lorenz, 'Character', 197. According to Jessica Moss, 'virtue is a *hexis prohairetikē* in that it provides the *goal* for the deliberation that yields a decision, not the whole process' ('Was Aristotle a Humean? A Partisan Guide to the Debate', in R. Polansky (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge, 2014), 221–41 at 228 n. 13). See *EE* 3. 1, 1230^a27–9; cf. *NE* 6. 12 (*EE* 5. 12), 1144^a20–2; *NE* 6. 13 (*EE* 5. 13), 1145^a4–6.

²⁸ See *NE* 6. 13 (*EE* 5. 13), 1144^b30–1145^a2.

²⁹ I return to the relation between *aidōs* and practical wisdom in sect. 4 below.

‘in the affections and concerned with feelings’ (ἐν τοῖς παθήμασι καὶ περὶ τὰ πάθη, 1108^a31). It is not at all obvious what contrasts Aristotle has in mind, either between *pathēma* and *pathos* or between *en* and *peri*.³⁰ The noun *pathēma* occurs only here in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and in other works it is often interchangeable with *pathos*.³¹

³⁰ 1108^a30–1 (εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς παθήμασι καὶ περὶ τὰ πάθη) has been rendered several different ways. Irwin translates: ‘There are also means in feelings and about feelings’ (*NE*, ad loc.). Reeve translates: ‘There are also medial conditions in feelings and concerned with feelings’; he comments: ‘The mean is in *pathēmata* but concerned with *pathē*. The distinction, if one is intended, seems to be between inner feelings that do not necessarily result in deliberately chosen actions, and those that do result in such actions’ (*NE*, ad loc. and 239–40). But he provides no evidence supporting this distinction. Taylor translates: ‘There are also means in episodes and kinds of feeling’; he comments: ‘Aristotle distinguishes between *pathēmata* (translated “episodes (of feeling)”) and *pathē* (rendered here “kinds of feeling”), saying that the means in question are “in” (*en*) the former and “concerned with” (*peri*) the latter. Since the two terms are often used interchangeably, it is not easy to see what distinction is being drawn’ (*NE* 2–4, ad loc. and 119). Rowe translates: ‘There are also intermediates in the affective feelings and in relation to things that happen to people’; and Broadie comments: ‘Here Ar. introduces two examples of a new sort of triad, consisting of excessive, deficient, and intermediate responses to things that befall people. One example consists in responses to things involving oneself, the other in responses to the fortunes of others. It is strange that he classes these triads as affective feelings (i.e. affections), as they seem to be dispositions’ (*NE*, ad loc. and 309). Rowe appears to treat the *pathēmata* in this passage as equivalent to the *pathē* discussed in 2. 5 (and contrasted with *dunamis* and *hexeis*). He takes the *pathē* at 1108^a31, with which *aidōs* and *nemesis* are concerned (or ‘in relation to’ which they stand), to be ‘things that befall’ oneself. This seems very unlikely, though, since Aristotle conceives of *aidōs* principally as a response to things one does (or might do); see *NE* 4. 9, 1128^b20–33. In *Rhet.* 2. 6 he treats things people suffer as a subclass of the causes of shame (1384^a15–20). Finally, Gauthier and Jolif render the key phrase (in my translation): ‘in the emotions, by which I mean in the domain of the emotions’ (‘dans les passions, je veux dire dans le domaine des passions’); they comment: ‘The form *παθήμασι* occurs often in Aristotle; as for the expression *περὶ τὰ πάθη*, it designates the *matter* in which the means are realized, and it has exactly the same meaning as *ἐν τοῖς παθήμασι*’ (‘La forme *παθήμασι* est fréquente chez Aristote; quant à l’expression *περὶ τὰ πάθη*, elle désigne la *matière* dans laquelle se réalisent les justes milieux, et elle a exactement la même signification que *ἐν τοῖς παθήμασι*’: *Aristote: L’Éthique à Nicomaque. Introduction, traduction et commentaire [L’Éthique]*, 2 vols. in 3 pts. (Louvain and Paris, 1958–9), ii/1. 159).

³¹ The classic study is H. Bonitz, *Aristotelische Studien*, v. *Über πάθος und πάθημα im Aristotelischen Sprachgebrauche [Studien V]* (Vienna, 1867). Bonitz, responding to Jacob Bernays’ analysis of *pathēmatōn* in the definition of tragedy at *Poet.* 6, 1449^b24–8 (‘Grundzüge der verlorenen Abhandlung des Aristoteles über Wirkung der Tragödie’, *Abhandlungen der historisch-philosophischen Gesellschaft in Breslau*, 1 (1857), 135–202), concludes that there is no systematic distinction between the two terms, and that in many cases they appear interchangeable (50). There are cases, however, where the difference seems to be more than stylistic. For example, at *DA* 1. 1, 403^a20, *pathēmatōn* follows an appearance of *pathē* in the previous sentence, and seems to refer to external provocations as opposed to the feelings (*pathē*) pro-

It may just be a stylistic variation, but that still would not explain the difference between the prepositional phrases. One possibility is that Aristotle intends to draw a contrast between emotional dispositions or tendencies (here called *pathēmata*) and the kinds of things listed in 2. 5 (1105^b21–3), occurrent emotions and appetitive desires (*pathē*).³² In the lines that immediately follow, then, being *aidēmōn* or being bashful would be examples of *pathēmata*, which are ‘concerned with’ (*peri*) the feeling of *aidōs* (a *pathos*). Aristotle’s claim, on this reading, is that there are means (and excesses and deficiencies) ‘in’ (or perhaps ‘among’) emotional dispositions as well.

But if the non-virtuous means are ‘concerned with feelings’ (*περὶ τὰ πάθη*), why should that distinguish them in any way from the means that Aristotle regards as virtues? After all, virtue of character was defined in *NE* 2. 6 as being ‘concerned with feelings and actions’ (*περὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις*, 1106^b16–17; cf. ^b24–5):

οἶον καὶ φοβηθῆναι καὶ θαρρῆσαι καὶ ἐπιθυμῆσαι καὶ ὀργισθῆναι καὶ ἐλεῆσαι καὶ ὄλωσ ἢ σθῆναι καὶ λυπηθῆναι ἔστι καὶ μᾶλλον καὶ ἥττον, καὶ ἀμφοτέρα οὐκ εἶδ’ τὸ δ’ ὅτε δεῖ καὶ ἐφ’ οἷς καὶ πρὸς οὓς καὶ οὐδ’ ἔνεκα καὶ ὡς δεῖ, μέσον τε καὶ ἄριστον, ὅπερ ἔστι τῆς ἀρετῆς. (1106^b18–23)

duced by them (I thank Victor Caston for this example). In the *Eudemian Ethics*, by contrast, Aristotle consistently uses *pathēmatōn* as the genitive plural of *pathos* (in place of *pathōn*); see 2. 2, 1220^b8–12; 3. 7, 1234^a26–7. (No other forms of *pathēma* occur in that work.) The dative plural *pathēmasi* occurs elsewhere only at *Meteor.* 4. 5, 382^a32, and 4. 10, 388^a10, and at *Pol.* 1. 5, 1254^b24. The rarity of the form might suggest that it is not a mere stylistic choice in the *NE* 2. 7 passage, but rather is supposed to mark a substantive contrast (note that the dative plural *pathesi* occurs twelve times in the *Nicomachean Ethics*).

³² In fact, this is close to how Bernays distinguishes the terms in the essay to which Bonitz is responding in *Studien V* (see previous note): ‘Now a comparison of those passages in Aristotle where a relaxed use [of *pathos* or *pathēma*] is impossible yields the following contrast: a *pathos* is the condition of a *paschōn* and designates the unexpected outbreak and overflow of an emotion; a *pathēma*, on the other hand, is the condition of a *pathētikos* and designates the emotion as inherent in the affected person, ready to break out at any time. Briefly, a *pathos* is a feeling, a *pathēma* a disposition to feel. Aristotle’s lost explanation of catharsis will have indicated this in something like the following words: “I mean by *pathēma* the condition of the *pathētikoi*”’ (‘Aristotle on the Effect of Tragedy’, trans. J. Barnes, in A. Laird (ed.), *Ancient Literary Criticism* (Oxford, 2006), 158–75 at 171). Bernays appeals to *Pol.* 8. 7, 1342^a11–15, where Aristotle says that catharsis is needed for those who are prone to pity or fear, or those who are generally *pathētikoi*. Here the adjective *pathētikos* seems to refer to a person who is excessively prone to certain feelings, and Bernays claims that the same dispositional sense is in play in the *Poetics* (see also Aristotle’s use of *pathētikē poiōtēs* in *Cat.* 8, 9^b35–10^a1). While Bonitz argues convincingly against his general thesis about *pathos* and *pathēma*, Bernays’ distinction may still apply in particular cases.

For example, it is possible to feel fear and confidence, appetite, anger, pity, and pleasure and pain generally, both too much and too little and in both ways not well. But to feel such things when we should, about the things we should, in relation to the people we should, for the sake of what we should, and as we should is a mean and best and precisely what is characteristic of virtue.³³

Aidōs, understood as a mean, would be the disposition to feel occurrent shame (*aidōs* or *aischunē*) at the right times, about the right things, and so on. *Nemesis* would be the disposition to feel indignant at another's success in the appropriate way (e.g. when the success is undeserved). So why should they not count as virtues?

One possibility is that Aristotle takes *aidōs* and *nemesis* to be concerned *only* with feelings and not with actions, whereas the genuine virtues are concerned with both. Initially this reading may seem implausible, since clearly shame and indignation can motivate a person to act.³⁴ But it is supported by the earliest surviving commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. On *NE* 2. 7, 1108^a30–5, Aspasius writes:

μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα λέγει μεσότητος εἶναι τινὰς ἐν ψυλοῖς τοῖς πάθεσιν, ἐπαινετὰς μὲν, ἀρετὰς δ' οὐ λέγων εἶναι. ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρετὴ περὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις, οἷον ἀνδρεία περὶ φόβου καὶ θάρρη, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ ἀγωνίζεσθαι καὶ πράττειν τὰ τοῦ ἀνδρείου ἔργα. αἱ δὲ λεγόμεναι νῦν μεσότητες ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς πάθεσι μόνον εἰσὶν, οὐκ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν, οἷον αἰδώς καὶ ὁ αἰδήμων μέσος, καταπλήξ δὲ ὁ ἅπαντα αἰδούμενος ὑπερβάλλον τις τῷ πάθει, ὁ δὲ ἐλλείπων τῷ αἰδεῖσθαι ἀναίσχυντος. (In *EN* 55. 7–13 Heylbut)

Next he says that there are certain means in the bare feelings, and while he says that they are praiseworthy he denies that they are virtues. For virtue is concerned with feelings and actions—for example, courage is concerned with fears and confidence, but also resides in competing over and performing the deeds of a courageous person. What are here called means are only in the feelings themselves, not in the actions. For example, *aidōs* and the *aidēmōn* are the mean, but someone who feels *aidōs* at everything and is

³³ In 2. 7 courage is characterized as being 'concerned with' fear and confidence (1107^a34), temperance with pleasures and pains (1107^b4–6), and mildness with anger (1108^a4–6).

³⁴ See Taylor, *NE* 2–4, 119: 'Since every virtue and vice is concerned with feelings (as well as with actions), Aristotle's thought must presumably be that shame and the other feelings mentioned in the following lines do not prompt to action; hence in these cases the mean is concerned with feelings exclusively. If that is his thought, it is not true; as well as exhibiting shame by such reactions as blushing, one may be motivated by shame e.g. to run away and hide. Similarly, indignation and its contrasted vices may motivate action.' For an example of acting from *aidōs* within the *Nicomachean Ethics* see 3. 8, 1116^a27–32 (discussed in sect. 4 below).

excessive in the feeling is bashful, whereas one who is deficient in feeling *aidōs* is shameless.³⁵

In place of Aristotle's 'in the affections and concerned with feelings' (*ἐν τοῖς παθήμασι καὶ περὶ τὰ πάθη*), Aspasius writes simply 'in the bare feelings' (*ἐν ψιλοῖς τοῖς πάθεσιν*, 55. 7). By the end of the passage it is evident that by 'bare' feelings Aspasius means feelings by themselves, or *apart from actions*. The genuine virtues, he suggests, are concerned with feelings *and* actions: courage consists not only in feeling appropriate fear and confidence, but also in performing certain characteristic deeds.³⁶ The non-virtuous means, *aidōs* and *nemesis*, consist in having the right feelings *alone*. To be praised as *aidēmōn*, it is enough to be neither excessive nor deficient 'in the feeling' (*τῷ πάθει*, 55. 12) of *aidōs*. There are no characteristic deeds for a person to perform in order to be credited with the mean.

If we follow Aspasius' reading, we do not have to saddle Aristotle with the view that *aidōs* and *nemesis*, in contrast to the genuine virtues, do not motivate people to act. Rather, in saying that these means are concerned with feelings as opposed to actions, Aristotle is making a subtle point about the basis on which such character traits are ascribed. In support of this interpretation, we may turn to the parallel discussion of non-virtuous means in *Eudemian Ethics* 3. 7. Having completed his analysis of the particular virtues of character—courage, temperance, mildness, generosity, greatness of soul, and magnificence—Aristotle writes:

σχεδὸν δὲ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστα τῶν περὶ τὸ ἦθος ἐπαινετῶν καὶ ψεκτῶν τὰ μὲν ὑπερβολαὶ τὰ δ' ἐλλείψεις τὰ δὲ μεσότητές εἰσι παθητικά. οἷον ὁ φθονερός καὶ ἐπιχαιρέκακος. καθ' ἃς γὰρ ἕξεις λέγονται, ὁ μὲν φθόνος τὸ λυπεῖσθαι ἐπὶ τοῖς κατ' ἀξίαν εὖ πράττουσιν ἐστίν, τὸ δὲ τοῦ ἐπιχαιρέκακου πάθος ἐστὶν αὐτὸ ἀνόνημον, ἀλλ' ὁ ἔχων δῆλός ἐστι τῷ χαίρειν ταῖς παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν κακοπραγίαις. μέσος δὲ τούτων ὁ νεμεσητικός, καὶ ὁ ἐκάλουν οἱ ἀρχαῖοι τὴν νέμεσιν, τὸ λυπεῖσθαι μὲν ἐπὶ ταῖς παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν κακοπραγίαις καὶ εὐπραγίαις, χαίρειν δ' ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀξίαις . . . (1233^b16–25)

Pretty much every other praiseworthy and blameworthy thing having to do

³⁵ Translation based on D. Konstan, *Aspasius: Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics 1–4, 7–8* [*Aspasius*] (London, 2006), substantially modified. Unfortunately Aspasius' commentary breaks off just before the longer treatment of *aidōs* at *NE* 4. 9 and picks up again at book 7.

³⁶ Konstan's punctuation is misleading on this point: 'For virtue concerns emotions and actions—for example courage concerns fears and confidence—but also resides in competing over and performing the deeds of a courageous person' (*Aspasius*, ad loc.).

with character—whether excesses, deficiencies, or means—is affective [*παθητικά*]. Take, for example, the envious person and the spiteful person. In terms of the states [*ἔξεις*] after which these are named, envy is being pained at those who deservingly succeed; the feeling belonging to one who rejoices in others' misfortune does not have a name,³⁷ but the person who possesses this reveals himself by rejoicing at undeserved failure. The mean of these is the one prone to feel righteous indignation; what the ancients called *nemesis* is being pained at failures or successes that are undeserved, and rejoicing at those that are deserved . . .

Here Aristotle distinguishes the non-virtuous means (as well as non-vicious excesses and deficiencies) from the genuine virtues (as well as vices) by saying that they are 'affective' (*παθητικά*, 1233^b18).³⁸ The means placed in this category include not only *aidōs* and *nemesis*, but also three character traits that Aristotle regards as genuine virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: friendliness (*φιλία*), truthfulness (*ἀλήθεια*), and wit (*εὐτραπέλεια*).³⁹ Aristotle gives the examples of the envious, spiteful, and righteously indignant types in order to clarify what makes a state of character 'affective'.⁴⁰ His thought seems to be that we attribute such qualities as envy, spitefulness, and *nemesis* to people based on their tendency to be affected in certain ways—to be pained by or rejoice at the fortunes of others—rather than on the things they do (cf. *NE* 2. 7, 1108^a35–^b6). A spiteful person may of course *act* out of

³⁷ At *NE* 2. 7, 1108^b1, Aristotle uses *epichairekakia* for the character trait opposed to envy and *nemesis*.

³⁸ The same term was translated 'susceptible to feelings' in *NE* 2. 5, 1105^b23–5 (see above), where Aristotle says that the *dunameis* of the soul make people *pathētikoi*. There the point is that *dunameis* make people *capable* of having certain feelings, rather than disposing them to have feelings of some sort or other. Here I have chosen the more neutral 'affective', though I take Aristotle to be contrasting the *pathētikai* means with the 'prohairetic' means that are genuine virtues. So an alternative (though tendentious) translation would be 'issuing in feelings', to parallel the translation of *hexis prohairetikē* as 'state that issues in decisions'. On the interpretation of *-ikos* adjectives (esp. in *NE* 6 (*EE* 5)) see Lorenz, 'Character', 196–7.

³⁹ *EE* 3. 7 also includes dignity (*σεμνότης*), which is absent from the analysis of means in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. For discussion of the so-called 'questionable' means see W. W. Fortenbaugh, 'Aristotle and the Questionable Mean-Dispositions' ['Questionable'], in id., *Aristotle's Practical Side*, 131–57. For the unorthodox view that the *Nicomachean Ethics* does not treat the questionable means as full virtues either see T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Aristotle's Theory of Moral Insight [Moral Insight]* (Oxford, 1983), 86–93.

⁴⁰ Note that Aristotle explicitly refers to the excess and deficiency related to *nemesis* as 'states' (*ἔξεις*, 1233^b19), and later describes wit as a 'most decent state' (*ἐπιεικεστάτη ἔξις*, 1234^a13). So he should have no trouble also speaking of *aidōs* as a *hexis*.

spite—for example, by throwing a lavish party when his virtuous neighbour’s house burns down and not inviting him. But it is his feeling of joy itself rather than anything he does that reveals his character (cf. *ὁ ἔχων δῆλός ἐστι τῷ χαίρειν*, 1233^b21–2). Likewise, a bashful person shows his character by feeling *aidōs*—by being pained at the thought of disrepute—in an excessive way. An *aidēmōn* person feels *aidōs* always and only when appropriate, whereas a shameless person shows his character by failing to feel it at all. In each case, Aristotle suggests, the mean or extreme is expressed by the relevant *pathos* (or revealed by its absence).⁴¹

Perhaps Aristotle would say that this does *not* apply to the states he regards as virtues proper. Though a courageous person is disposed to feel fear or confidence on the right occasions and in the right amount, his courage is expressed not through fear or confidence, but rather—as Aspasius suggests—through acting well in threatening situations. Though a temperate person is well disposed with respect to bodily pleasures, he displays his virtue not through feelings of pleasure or pain, but through acting well in the face of temptation.⁴² Thus the genuine virtues are also ‘concerned with feelings’ (*περὶ τὰ πάθη*), but in Aristotle’s view they are essentially dispositions to act.⁴³ And while the other praiseworthy means may result in action, they are essentially dispositions to have feelings of certain kinds. Again, Aristotle’s point is that *aidōs* and *nemesis* (and the other ‘affective’ means) can be ascribed to people based on their emotional tendencies alone.⁴⁴

⁴¹ It is a further question whether the other non-virtuous means and their excesses can be adequately characterized this way (see Fortenbaugh, ‘Questionable’, 134; Taylor, *NE 2–4*, 237). If not, this may give us reason to think that the *NE* account, which treats friendliness, truthfulness, and wit as genuine virtues, is a revision of the *EE* analysis. Since *aidōs* and *nemesis* are the only means that Aristotle treats as ‘affective’ in both works, I leave consideration of the other ‘questionable’ means to one side. Unfortunately we lack Aristotle’s fuller treatment of *nemesis*, which may have originally followed the discussion of *aidōs* in *NE* 4. 9.

⁴² The case of mildness (*πραότης*), the mean concerned with anger, is more difficult. In parallel with the above examples, we could say that although a mild person is well disposed with respect to anger, he shows his virtue not simply by feeling anger in the right way, but by acting appropriately in response to slights that are inconsequential or unintended. This case already indicates that the distinction between ‘affective’ means and virtues proper may be hard to justify (see the end of this section).

⁴³ Note that *pathē* are not mentioned in Aristotle’s definition of virtue at *NE* 2. 6, 1106^b36–1107^a2.

⁴⁴ In a similar vein, Fortenbaugh (‘Questionable’, 151) defends Aristotle’s classification of *aidōs* on the grounds that the emotion of shame is insufficiently practical

We are now in a position to answer our earlier question: whether *aidōs*, understood as a state of character, would be a ‘prohairesis’ state, or one that ‘issues in decisions’—in accordance with Aristotle’s definition of virtue in *NE* 2. 6. The above analysis suggests that it would not be, if *aidōs* is essentially a disposition to have feelings and only incidentally to act. That is because *prohairesis* is the ‘starting-point’ (*ἀρχή*), or the efficient cause, of action.⁴⁵ So if *aidōs* were a state that issues in decisions, it would also be one that disposes people to act in certain ways. As we have seen, however, Aristotle seems to deny precisely that. Presumably he would say that when a person *does* act from one of the non-virtuous means, the efficient cause of the action is not a *prohairesis* but the relevant *pathos* (e.g. occurrent *aidōs* or *aischunē*). In that case, *aidōs* would not be a state that issues in decisions even incidentally.

That this is in fact his view is confirmed by a separate passage in *EE* 3. 7, where Aristotle explains why the means he has just described are not genuine virtues:

πάσαι δ’ αὐται αἱ μεσότητες ἐπαινεταὶ μὲν, οὐκ εἰσὶ δ’ ἀρεταί, οὐδ’ αἱ ἐναντία κακία· ἄνευ προαιρέσεως γάρ. ταῦτα δὲ πάντ’ ἐστὶν ἐν ταῖς τῶν παθημάτων διαίρεσιν· ἕκαστον γὰρ αὐτῶν πάθος τί ἐστιν. (1234^a23–7)

Though all these means are praiseworthy, they are not virtues, nor are their opposites vices, since they do not involve decision. They all fall under the classifications of the affections, since each of them is a certain feeling.⁴⁶

and goal-directed: ‘Shame . . . differs from practical emotions such as anger and fear in that it does not necessarily involve action. There is no class of actions with which shame is always connected; there is no goal for which ashamed men regularly act. Indeed, when a man is ashamed of some past deed, there may be no way to undo what has become an accomplished fact. The ashamed man may find himself unable to do anything. He simply suffers some kind of disturbance (*tarachē*, [*Rhet.* 2. 6, 1383^b13]) and perhaps turns red ([*NE* 4. 9, 1128^b13]). Shame, therefore, is not a practical emotion and [*aidōs*] is not related to an emotion which regularly involves goal-directed action. [*Aidēmones*] do not choose to turn red on the right occasion. They do not choose at all. Rather they are overcome or suffer or are disturbed as the situation demands.’ I consider the plausibility of this understanding of *aidōs* towards the end of this section.

⁴⁵ *NE* 6. 2 (*EE* 5. 2), 1139^a31: *πράξεως μὲν οὖν ἀρχὴ προαίρεσις*. See Engberg-Pedersen, *Moral Insight*, 165–6. Does it follow that an action which is caused by a *pathos* is not really a *praxis*? No, because elsewhere Aristotle uses *prattein* and its cognates for akratic action, which is contrary to decision. So here he must be using *praxis* in a narrower sense.

⁴⁶ The passage continues (1234^a27–30): ‘But because they are natural they contribute to the natural virtues. As will be discussed in what follows, each virtue in a way exists both naturally and, in conjunction with practical wisdom, otherwise’ (*διὰ*

Aristotle again muddies the waters by saying that each of the non-virtuous means is a certain *pathos* or feeling. It would have been clearer to repeat the claim that they are ‘affective’ means (παθητικάί, 1233^b18), or dispositions to have feelings of a certain sort. In any case, the key point is that the other praiseworthy means are not virtues because ‘they do not involve decision’ (ἀνευ προαιρέσεως). Given that feelings occur ‘in the absence of decision’ (ἀπροαιρέτως, *NE* 2. 5, 1106^a3), according to Aristotle, it is reasonable for him to infer that any disposition to have feelings must share this characteristic. Each of the means discussed in *EE* 3. 7, then, is praiseworthy but not ‘prohairetic’ (προαιρετική). Since every virtue is ‘prohairetic’, as Aristotle has stated, these praiseworthy means cannot be virtues.⁴⁷

Let us now return to the opening lines of *NE* 4. 9, where Aristotle argues that *aidōs* is not a virtue because it is more like a feeling (πάθος) than a state (ἔξις). His conclusion appeared to depend on treating *aidōs* exclusively as an occurrent emotion, whereas *aidōs* could also refer to an emotional disposition. In the latter sense, however, *aidōs* is most naturally understood as a state, and so the argument is unpersuasive. We have now seen that there is a more cogent line of argument open to Aristotle. Our reading of *NE* 2. 7 (based on Aspasius), along with the analysis of non-virtuous means in *EE* 3. 7, suggests that the class of praiseworthy states can be divided into two further kinds: those that are ‘affective’ and those that are ‘prohairetic’. Instead of saying that *aidōs* is not a virtue because it is

δὲ τὸ φυσικὰ εἶναι εἰς τὰς φυσικὰς συμβάλλεται ἀρετὰς· ἔστι γάρ, ὡς περ λεχθήσεται ἐν τοῖς ὕστερον, ἐκάστη πως ἀρετὴ καὶ φύσει καὶ ἄλλως μετὰ φρονήσεως). Aristotle goes on to say that *aidōs* contributes to temperance, ‘which is why people define temperance within this genus’ (διὸ καὶ ὀρίζονται ἐν τῷ γένει τούτῳ τὴν σωφροσύνην, 1234^a32–3; cf. Plato, *Chrm.* 160 E 3–5). Aristotle discusses the ‘natural virtues’ more fully in *EE* 5. 13 (*NE* 6. 13). There he suggests that the natural virtues (which would include *aidōs*) are actually *innate*: ‘for from the moment we are born, we are just and in a way temperate and brave’ (1144^b5–6). Aristotle says that the natural virtues become true virtues through the acquisition of *nous* (1144^b12–14), since true virtue cannot occur without practical wisdom (ἀνευ φρονήσεως, 1144^b17). Aristotle’s theory of natural virtues introduces difficulties that cannot be addressed adequately in this paper. On the problem of viewing *aidōs* as innate see Cairns, *Aidōs*, 404–10. Cairns also argues that the claim that *aidōs* contributes to *sōphrosunē* conceives of it too narrowly, because *aidōs* ‘is quite generally concerned with the *aischron* and *kalon* across the range of words and deeds’ (429; cf. *MM* 1. 29, 1193^a1–10). I discuss the relation between *aidōs* and *phronēsis* in sect. 4 below.

⁴⁷ See *EE* 3. 1, 1230^a27: πᾶσα ἀρετὴ προαιρετική; cf. 1228^a24. See also 2. 5, 1222^a31; 2. 10, 1227^b8; 3. 6, 1233^a37.

more like a feeling than a state, Aristotle could have argued that it is the wrong *kind* of state.⁴⁸ It is a disposition to have certain feelings, whereas a virtue, according to the definition in *NE* 2. 6, is a state that issues in decisions. As we saw, this reading coheres with Aristotle's claim in *NE* 2. 7 that *aidōs*, understood as a mean, is 'concerned with feelings' (*περὶ τὰ πάθη*, 1108^a31) as opposed to actions. The point, once again, is not that *aidōs* never motivates a person to act, but that unlike the virtues proper, it is essentially a disposition to have feelings of a certain sort, and only incidentally to act.

It is a further question, however, whether this reconstructed version of Aristotle's opening argument—even if it accurately represents his views—is philosophically plausible. In particular, one might doubt that *aidōs* is adequately characterized as a disposition to be affected by feelings, rather than to decide and act for an end. This seems to imply that all actions that arise from shame are impulsive, since they do not involve *prohairesis*.⁴⁹ Recall that at the start of *NE* 4. 9 Aristotle takes *aidōs*, understood as the fear of disrepute, to manifest itself primarily through *blushing* (1128^b12–13).⁵⁰ But if we conceive of *aidōs* as the disposition to avoid disrepute more broadly, we can also see it being expressed in decisions. Imagine that a person takes 'I should avoid disrepute' as the major premiss in a practical syllogism, recognizes a situation as one that will bring disrepute, deliberates about how best to avoid it, draws a conclusion, and acts accordingly. In such a case, it seems that one would be acting from *aidōs* but on the basis of a decision. So why suppose that *aidōs* is *essentially* a disposition to have feelings, and only incidentally to decide and act? It appears that Aristotle's view that *aidōs* is an 'affective' rather than a 'prohairesis' mean depends on an overly narrow conception of the sense of shame.

⁴⁸ My analysis might help explain why Aristotle initially says that *aidōs* is 'more like' a feeling than a state. Perhaps he saw that his earlier tripartite division of the 'things that come about in the soul' into feelings, capacities, and states (2. 5, 1105^b21–8) was unable to account for *aidōs* and *nemesis*, understood as emotional dispositions. But instead of making a further division within the class of states (as I suggest he should have done), he conceives of *aidōs* as straddling the border between feelings and states, though leaning towards the former. (I am grateful to Victor Caston for this suggestion.)

⁴⁹ I thank Victor Caston, Duane Long, and Stephen White for separately pressing this objection. For an example of non-impulsive action based on *aidōs* see my discussion of Hector's decision to face Achilles in sect. 4 below.

⁵⁰ Indeed, the verb *ἀποτελεῖ* (1128^b12) may suggest that Aristotle here conceives of blushing as the proper *telos*, or goal, of *aidōs*. Compare the analysis in Fortenbaugh, 'Questionable', 151, quoted in n. 44 above.

So perhaps, instead, what makes *aidōs* an ‘affective’ mean is that a person *can* act from *aidōs* in the absence of decision. But that also would not differentiate *aidōs* from the virtues proper, since Aristotle plainly denies that every action that expresses virtue must follow from a *prohairesis*. A person may do the courageous thing ‘all of a sudden’ (ἐξαιφνης), from a courageous disposition, without deliberating about how to achieve the desired end.⁵¹ In that case, Aristotle’s distinction between *aidōs* and the ‘prohairesis’ means, or the genuine virtues, looks untenable.⁵²

How might Aristotle respond to these difficulties? One option would be to distinguish between ‘affective’ and ‘prohairesis’ varieties of dispositional *aidōs*. The first would be an emotional tendency—expressed through blushing, averting one’s eyes, covering one’s face, and related behaviours—that a person shows *before* developing the capacity to engage in *prohairesis*. Thus we might say that young children are ‘bashful’ or ‘bold’, without implying that they exhibit habituated states of character. A child who tends towards neither of these extremes would be properly *aidēmōn*.⁵³ The second (‘prohairesis’) kind of *aidōs* would be a disposition to have feelings *and* to decide and act, just like the virtues proper, and it would be present only in adults.⁵⁴ Of course, if Aristotle were to embrace this distinction, his opening argument in *NE* 4. 9 would

⁵¹ See *NE* 3. 2, 1111^b9–10; 3. 8, 1117^a20–2; *EE* 2. 10, 1226^b3–4.

⁵² See also Cairns, *Aidōs*, 429 n. 256: ‘if the proper disposition towards anger (*praotēs*) can be with [*prohairesis*], so presumably could the proper disposition towards *aidōs*, even if occurrent *aidōs*, like occurrent anger, is itself without [*prohairesis*].’

⁵³ This analysis fits with the claim in *EE* 3. 7 that *aidōs* is a ‘natural virtue’, specifically the one that contributes to temperance (1234^a27–33; see n. 46 above). J. A. Stewart connects the *EE* passage to *NE* 2. 7, 1108^a30–5, and comments: ‘*aidōs* and *νέμεσις*, being *πάθη*, are not *μεσότητες* in the strict sense; but are here called *μεσότητες*, as it were by anticipation, because they represent tendencies which can be easily cultivated into *ἀρεταί*’ (*Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle* (Oxford, 1892), 213). Stewart denies that *aidōs* can be a ‘mean’ strictly speaking because Aristotle calls it a *pathos* and not a *hexis*. He adds: ‘Perhaps we may say that *aidōs* is a *παθητικὴ μεσότης*, or a *φυσικὴ ἀρετή*, when (*in the young*) it takes the fixed form of a *παθητικὴ ποιότης*, as distinguished from a mere *πάθος*’ (214). On this last suggestion see my next note.

⁵⁴ A parallel distinction seems to apply in the case of mildness (*πραότης*). Aristotle regards mildness, the mean ‘concerned with anger’, as a genuine virtue—the mean between irascibility (*ὀργιλότης*) and a nameless deficiency of anger (*NE*, 4. 5, 1125^b26–9). At *Cat.* 8, 9^b35–10^a1, however, he suggests that a quick-tempered person is called ‘irascible’ (*ὀργίλος*) on the basis of an ‘affective quality’ (*παθητικὴ ποιότης*). The latter would be a kind of *orgilotēs* that does not constitute a full vice, so Aristotle should also recognize a kind of mildness that is not yet a virtue. It would

be beside the point. For it would show only that ‘affective’ *aidōs* is not a virtue, not that it is altogether mistaken to speak of *aidōs* as an *aretē*. But such a concession on Aristotle’s part would not be fatal to his overall claim in the chapter, since he immediately goes on to offer a second argument for why *aidōs* is not a virtue—one that is logically independent of the first. Aristotle’s new argument, significantly, applies to *aidōs* whether it is conceived narrowly as an affective tendency in children, *or* as a developed disposition in adults to feel, decide, and act. As we are about to see, the second argument has proven no less puzzling than the first, so again it will take some reconstructive work to get Aristotle’s position in view.

3. The second argument of *NE* 4. 9:
shame is not characteristic of a decent person

Aristotle’s initial strategy in *NE* 4. 9 was to show that *aidōs* is not a virtue because it is the wrong kind of psychic condition. We have seen that his argument, as presented, is unconvincing, but that it points to a related and more cogent line of reasoning. That argument, in turn, depends for its plausibility on Aristotle’s classification of *aidōs* as an ‘affective’ rather than a ‘prohairesic’ mean, which also seems dubious at best. In the rest of *NE* 4. 9, however, Aristotle takes a different tack, and argues that *aidōs* is not a genuine virtue because it is praiseworthy only in a qualified sense. A truly virtuous person, he suggests, would have no need for *aidōs*.

Here is the second argument in full:

οὐ πάση δ’ ἡλικίᾳ τὸ πάθος ἀρμόζει, ἀλλὰ τῇ νέᾳ. οἰόμεθα γὰρ δεῖν τοὺς τηλικούτους αἰδήμονας εἶναι διὰ τὸ πάθει ζώντας πολλὰ ἀμαρτάνειν, ὑπὸ τῆς αἰδοῦς δὲ κωλύεσθαι· καὶ ἐπαινοῦμεν τῶν μὲν νέων τοὺς αἰδήμονας, πρεσβύτερον δ’ οὐδεὶς ἂν ἐπαινεῖειν ὅτι αἰσχυντηλός· οὐδὲν γὰρ οἰόμεθα δεῖν αὐτὸν πράττειν ἐφ’ οἷς ἐστὶν αἰσχύνη. οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐπιεικοῦς ἐστὶν ἡ αἰσχύνη, εἴπερ γίνεται ἐπὶ τοῖς φαύλοις (οὐ γὰρ πρακτέον τὰ τοιαῦτα· εἰ δ’ ἐστὶ τὰ μὲν κατ’ ἀλήθειαν αἰσχρὰ τὰ δὲ κατὰ δόξαν, οὐδὲν διαφέρει· οὐδέτερα γὰρ πρακτέα, ὥστ’ οὐκ αἰσχυντέον)· φαύλου δὲ καὶ τὸ εἶναι τοιοῦτον οἷον πράττειν τι τῶν αἰσchrῶν. τὸ δ’ οὕτως ἔχειν ὥστ’ εἰ πράξει τι τῶν τοιούτων αἰσχύνεσθαι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτ’ οἶεσθαι ἐπιεικῆ εἶναι, ἄτοπον· ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐκουσίοις γὰρ ἡ αἰδώς, ἐκῶν δ’ ὁ ἐπιεικῆς οὐδέποτε πράξει τὰ φαύλα. εἴη δ’ ἂν ἡ αἰδώς ἐξ ὑποθέσεως ἐπιεικῆς· εἰ γὰρ πράξει, αἰσχύνουτ’ ἂν· οὐκ ἔστι

be ‘affective’ rather than ‘prohairesic’, just like the two kinds of *aidōs* I have distinguished above.

δὲ τοῦτο περὶ τὰς ἀρετὰς. εἰ δ' ἢ ἀναισχυντία φαῦλον καὶ τὸ μὴ αἰδεῖσθαι τὰ αἰσχρὰ πράττειν, οὐδὲν μᾶλλον τὸν τὰ τοιαῦτα πράττοντα αἰσχύνεσθαι ἐπιεικές. οὐκ ἔστι δ' οὐδ' ἢ ἐγκράτεια ἀρετή, ἀλλὰ τις μικτή . . . (1128^b15–34)

The feeling suits not every age, but only youth. For we think that young people should be *aidēmōn* because they live by their feelings and so make many errors, but are held back by *aidōs*. And though we praise those among the young who are *aidēmōn*, no one would praise an older person for being prone to shame [αἰσχυντηλός], since we think that he shouldn't do anything that calls for shame [ἐφ' οἷς ἐστὶν αἰσχύνη]. Indeed, shame is not characteristic of a decent person, if in fact it is occasioned by base actions. (For such things should not be done; and if some are shameful in reality and others according to opinion [τὰ μὲν κατ' ἀλήθειαν αἰσχρὰ τὰ δὲ κατὰ δόξαν], it makes no difference, since neither should be done, and so one should not feel ashamed.)⁵⁵ Rather, it is characteristic of a base person even to be such as to do anything shameful. But to be disposed so as to feel ashamed were one to do any such thing [τὸ δ' οὕτως ἔχειν ὥστ' εἰ πράξει τι τῶν τοιούτων αἰ-

⁵⁵ Irwin's translation adds a gloss that ascribes the phrase κατὰ δόξαν to the decent person himself: 'If some actions are really disgraceful and others are base [only] in [his] belief, that does not matter, since neither should be done, and so he should not feel disgrace' (NE, ad loc.). Presumably Irwin wants to avoid the implication that the virtuous person is a slave to convention (cf. Stewart, *Notes*, 317), since the κατ' ἀλήθειαν/κατὰ δόξαν distinction is standardly read as a contrast between what is *truly* shameful and what the public merely *thinks* to be shameful (cf. *Rhet.* 2. 4, 1381^b18–21, 30–1; 2. 6, 1384^b22–6). But Irwin's reading is even more problematic, since it implies that the virtuous person may act according to false beliefs about the *aischron*, which his *phronēsis* ought to preclude. On the standard reading, by contrast, the virtuous person will act with knowledge of what merely seems shameful to others. He will avoid doing such things not because he wrongly thinks they are really shameful, but because he knows that others regard them as such. The standard reading is supported by the Anonymous commentary on NE 2–5, dated to the late 2nd cent. CE (for the dating see E. Eliasson, 'The Account of the Voluntariness of Virtue in the Anonymous Peripatetic Commentary on *Nicomachean Ethics* 2–5', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 44 (2013), 195–231 at 195–200): 'By shameful "in reality" he means things like indiscipline, while by "according to opinion" he means things like eating in the agora; for the latter are [shameful] in the preconception of the many and because of custom and are *thought* to be shameful' (202. 11–13 Heylbut, my translation and emphasis: κατ' ἀλήθειαν αἰσχρὰ ὡς ἡ ἀκολασία, κατὰ δόξαν δὲ ὡς τὸ ἐν ἀγορᾷ ἐσθίειν· ἐστὶ γὰρ ταῦτα τῇ τῶν πολλῶν προλήψει καὶ διὰ τὰ ἔθη καὶ αἰσχρὰ δοκεῖ εἶναι). The point seems to be that an activity such as eating in the agora—unlike activities that express the vice of *akolasia*—is shameful only by convention. It will be accepted in some societies and condemned in others, and a virtuous person will respect the norms of whatever society he finds himself in. This need not make him a slave to public opinion, because if custom required him to do something *truly* shameful, he simply would not do it. As long as there is no moral cost, however, Aristotle's virtuous person will avoid acting in ways that invite censure, whether or not he shares the public's view. Contrast the attitude of Diogenes the Cynic, who shows disdain for mere convention: 'Once he was reproached for eating in the agora, and said: "Well, it was in the agora that I got hungry"' (D.L. 6. 58, my translation; cf. 6. 69).

σχύνεσθαι], and to think oneself decent on that account, is absurd; for *aidōs* is occasioned by voluntary actions, and a decent person will never voluntarily do base things. *Aidōs* might be a decent thing conditionally speaking, in that if one *were* to do such a thing, one *would* feel ashamed; but that does not apply to the virtues. And even if shamelessness is something base, as is failing to feel *aidōs* at doing shameful things, it no more follows that it is decent for the one who does such things to feel ashamed. Self-control is not a virtue either, but a sort of mixed state . . .⁵⁶

As in the opening argument, Aristotle appeals to his general account of virtue from book 2, in particular the claim that the virtues are the proper objects of praise (2. 5, 1106^a1–2). Whereas in *NE* 2. 7 he had said that the *aidēmōn* person is praised, he now adds the qualification that only the *young* are praised for their *aidōs*. But if no one would praise an adult for being disposed to feel ashamed—even when the feeling is appropriate—then *aidōs* cannot be a virtue. An adult is expected not to do anything shameful in the first place, so he should never have any reason to experience shame. Nor is the absence of *aidōs*, in a well-behaved adult, any sort of deficiency, since it is not the case that he fails to feel something that he ought to feel.⁵⁷ Of course, if an adult *were* to act disgracefully, it would be better for him to feel ashamed than not; but that does not make *aidōs* any more an excellence of character in its own right.

Here, too, commentators have charged Aristotle with overlooking an important distinction—in this case between retrospective shame and shame as a prospective, inhibitory emotion.⁵⁸ He appears to say that *aidōs* does not merit praise in adults because the feeling of shame depends on a person's *having done* something shameful. Again, the thought seems to be that a 'decent' (*epieikēs*) person has no need of dispositional *aidōs* since there will never be an occasion for him to feel occurrent shame. The problem with this argument is that it ignores the fact that shame can *inhibit* action: it can prevent a person from doing what he might otherwise do. The experience of this prospective shame, by definition, does not depend on already having done something shameful. So if we conceive of *aidōs* as a disposition to feel *this* emotion in the appropriate way, it no longer follows that it is a decent thing only 'conditionally speaking' (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως, 1128^b29–30), and therefore not a virtue.

Some readers have tried to pin the argument's weakness on a

⁵⁶ My translation.

⁵⁷ I am grateful to Victor Caston for this point.

⁵⁸ See e.g. Irwin, *NE*, 227; Taylor, *NE* 2–4, 235–6.

conflation of the terms *aidōs* and *aischunē*.⁵⁹ The claim is that at most Aristotle manages to show that *aischunē*, the retrospective emotion, is uncharacteristic of a decent person, but this proves nothing about *aidōs*, the inhibitory disposition. As a purely linguistic matter this analysis cannot be right, since in the fourth century BCE *aischunē* (and its cognates) could also refer to prospective shame.⁶⁰ In the *Rhetoric*, for instance, Aristotle defines *aischunē* as ‘a certain pain or disturbance in regard to bad things, whether present, past, or future, that have the appearance of bringing one into disrepute’.⁶¹ So we should not think that in the second argument of *NE* 4. 9 he is simply confusing his terms.⁶²

Nonetheless, it may be fair to charge Aristotle with conflating two

⁵⁹ See Gauthier and Jolif, *L'Éthique*, ii/1. 322–3; W. K. C. Guthrie, *Aristotle: An Encounter* (Cambridge, 1981), 368; Irwin, *NE*, 227: ‘Aristotle’s argument . . . seems to depend on the identification of *aidōs* with *aischunē*.’ See also Taylor, *NE* 2–4, 235: ‘The lack of a distinction between the backward-looking reactive attitude and the forward-looking sense of restraint is reflected in Aristotle’s treatment of the term *aidōs* as interchangeable with *aischunē*.’ Taylor traces the objection back to the Anonymous commentator on *NE* 2–5: ‘Anon. 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 a fear of disgrace at the thought of disgraceful deeds,” adding that Aristotle fails to attribute the latter attitude to the virtuous agent because he shifts from discussing *aidōs* to discussing *aischunē* (204. 7–11).’ But Taylor’s quotation of the Anonymous commentator misconstrues the text (δοκεῖ δὲ ταύτη διαφέρειν αἰδῶς αἰσχύνης, ὅτι ἡ αἰσχὺνῆ ἐπὶ πεπραγμένοις γίνεται κακοῖς, ἡ δὲ αἰδῶς φόβος ἐστὶν ἀδοξίας ἐπ’ αἰσχυρῶν ὑπόνοια (204. 7–9)). As the immediately preceding lines make clear (204. 3–7), the word *hupoanoia*, which Taylor translates ‘thought’, refers not to the agent’s anticipation of his own shameful deeds, but to the *suspicion* of others that one is acting shamefully. Anon.’s point is that a virtuous person will still need to be on guard against the implication of *aischra* even if he is in fact blameless—and that *aidōs* is precisely this sense of caution, whereas *aischunē* is a response to things one has actually done. (In sect. 5 I discuss a similar argument found in Alexander of Aphrodisias’ *Ethical Problems*.) In any case, Anon.’s sharp distinction between *aidōs* and *aischunē* is anachronistic with respect to Aristotle.

⁶⁰ On *aidōs* and *aischunē* see D. Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature [Emotions]* (Toronto, 2006), 94–7. Konstan traces the distinction between prospective *aidōs* and retrospective *aischunē* to the 4th-cent. Christian bishop Nemesius of Emesa (ibid. 97).

⁶¹ 2. 6, 1383^b12–14 (my translation and emphasis): λύπη τις ἢ παραχρῆ περὶ τὰ εἰς ἀδοξίαν φαινόμενα φέρειν τῶν κακῶν, ἢ παρόντων ἢ γεγονότων ἢ μελλόντων. Cf. 1384^a15.

⁶² See Cairns, *Aidōs*, 415: ‘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. . . . 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.’ Cairns goes on to say that *NE* 4. 9 uses *aischunē* ‘in an exclusively retrospective sense’ (415), but I think that is far from clear (e.g. at 1128^b21–2 and ^b27).

distinct *concepts* of shame. The problem, once again, is that he appears to argue that shame (whether *aidōs* or *aischunē*) is not characteristic of a decent person by focusing on only one kind of shame, namely the retrospective kind that depends on having done something shameful. In his commentary on *NE* 2–4 C. C. W. Taylor puts the objection as follows:

[T]he claim that shame is not appropriate in older people, or in good people generally, since they should not (and in the case of the latter do not) do anything of which they should be ashamed, 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. . . . 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.⁶³

Taylor agrees that by his own lights Aristotle ought to deny that a virtuous person could be disposed to feel retrospective shame.⁶⁴ But the notion of *aidōs* that is a suitable candidate for being a virtue is the disposition to avoid acting disgracefully because one *would* be ashamed to act that way. According to Taylor, this sense of inhibition is integral to the psychology of virtue, because the virtuous person often knows to do the fine or noble (*καλόν*) thing by perceiving what it would be shameful (*αἰσχρόν*) to do and acting otherwise. One might suppose, then, that the virtuous person never has any occasion to feel retrospective shame in part because her prospective sense of shame is always effective. In that case, it may be that the only justification Aristotle has for excluding *aidōs* from his list of

⁶³ Taylor, *NE* 2–4, 235. See also K. Inglis, 'Philosophical Virtue: In Defense of the Grand End' ['Grand End'], in Polansky (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 263–87 at 279 n. 29; cf. Irwin, *NE*, 227: '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 1115^a16, where I am properly ashamed when I even think of the possibility of 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).' Irwin does not explain why the latter type of shame may be a motive for the virtuous person but not one of his virtues. In sect. 4 I explain Aristotle's reasons for thinking it is neither.

⁶⁴ I raise some doubts about this in sect. 5 below.

virtues is that it plays a role in all of them.⁶⁵ Far from being uncharacteristic of a virtuous person, *aidōs* might instead turn out to be fundamental and unifying—not *one* of the virtues, but a way of conceptualizing virtue itself.

Some support for Taylor's view can be drawn from *NE* 3. 6, where Aristotle says that the virtue of courage has only to do with certain kinds of fear:

φοβούμεθα μὲν οὖν πάντα τὰ κακά, οἷον ἀδοξίαν πενίαν νόσον ἀφιλίαν θάνατον, ἀλλ' οὐ περὶ πάντα δοκεῖ ὁ ἀνδρείος εἶναι· ἕνια γὰρ καὶ δεῖ φοβείσθαι καὶ καλόν, τὸ δὲ μὴ αἰσχρόν, οἷον ἀδοξίαν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ φοβούμενος ἐπιεικῆς καὶ αἰδήμων, ὁ δὲ μὴ φοβούμενος ἀναίσχυτος. (1115^a10–14)

Now we certainly do fear all bad things (for example, disrepute, poverty, disease, friendlessness, and death) but they do not all seem to be the concern of a courageous person. For there are some we should in fact fear, where fearing is fine and not fearing shameful—for example, disrepute. For a person who fears this is decent and *aidēmōn*, whereas one who does not fear it is shameless.

Here Aristotle describes the *aidēmōn*, the person who is disposed to feel *aidōs* in the appropriate way, as 'decent' (*ἐπιεικής*)—the same adjective used in *NE* 4. 9 for someone who never has any reason to feel ashamed. Notice that he does not qualify this remark by adding that *aidōs* is admirable only in the young, or in adults merely in a conditional sense. This suggests that Aristotle *would* allow for a type of shame that is simply praiseworthy, in which case the second argument of *NE* 4. 9 appears to miss the mark. While it might show that being disposed to feel ashamed is not necessarily indicative of virtue, it does not seem to establish the stronger claim that shame is a mark of a 'base' (*φάυλος*) character.

In the next section I shall argue that Taylor's objection is misplaced, and that Aristotle has reasons to think that *neither* type of shame—prospective or retrospective—is characteristic of the virtuous person. According to Taylor, the sense of shame that anticipates and inhibits shameful actions is 'integral to the virtuous person's standing motivation to do things because it would be fine to do them or disgraceful not to'.⁶⁶ On this account, there is no real distinction to be made between acting for the sake of the fine (or in order to avoid the shameful) and acting from prospective *aidōs*. But

⁶⁵ See Broadie and Rowe, *NE*, 44: 'every specific excellence . . . involves its own kind of sensitivity and concern for what is fine and disgraceful in its sphere'.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *NE* 2–4, 236.

we shall see that Aristotle draws precisely such a distinction, and that *aidōs* lacks the role in the virtuous person's actions that Taylor attributes to it. That is because *aidōs*, as Aristotle conceives it, is not the fear of *acting shamefully* but the fear of 'disrepute' (*adoxia*, *NE* 4. 9, 1128^b12; cf. 3. 8, 1115^a13). On Aristotle's view, a virtuous person and a person who acts from *aidōs*—even when they perform the same actions—do what they do for the sake of different ends.

4. Shame, virtue, and practical wisdom

Before I attempt to reconstruct Aristotle's second argument, two points should be made in support of Taylor's objection. First, Taylor is surely right that sensitivity to what is shameful will be integral to the disposition to act finely. It is too demanding a conception of virtue to require that a virtuous person simply recognize the appropriate thing to do without imagining alternatives. Someone might envision a course of action and reject it on the grounds that it would be shameful, and this need not imply any *temptation* to do the wrong thing. Second, it is also true that we sometimes express our convictions about how to act in the language of shame: 'I would be ashamed not to vote in the election'; 'It would be shameful not to do all we can to help'. I take it that examples like these are what Taylor has in mind when he claims that a sense of shame is central to the virtuous person's motivation. Such expressions are common in ancient Greek literature, and again, they need not imply any temptation on the part of the speaker to choose the shameful course of action.⁶⁷

But even if one allows that a virtuous person must be attentive to what is shameful, and that she would be ashamed to act in such a way, it is quite another thing to say that *shame* is what motivates her actions. To say that you would be ashamed not to vote in the election is not (necessarily) to say that you are voting out of a sense of shame. Indeed, the emotion of shame might not figure in the explanation of your action at all. Citing shame as a motive for acting seems to imply more than that you were simply convinced that

⁶⁷ See Critobulus' remark at Xen. *Mem.* 2. 6. 39. 7–9: 'I would be ashamed, Socrates . . . to contradict that; for I would say things that were neither fine nor true' (*ἀλλ' αἰσχνοίμην ἂν . . . ὃ Σώκρατες, ἀντιλέγων τούτοις: οὔτε γὰρ καλὰ οὔτε ἀληθῆ λέγοιμ' ἂν*). Cf. Plato, *Prot.* 333 c 1–3.

voting was the right thing to do. For Aristotle, it suggests that you voted at least in part because you were afraid of how you would look in others' eyes.⁶⁸

Thus I think that we should take Aristotle's claim that 'shame is not characteristic of a decent person' to be pointing to a real psychological distinction. A virtuous person avoids doing the shameful thing because it is shameful (or because of its shameful-making features), *not* because she is afraid of disrepute. In the rest of this section I reconstruct Aristotle's position in two different ways. First, I show that prospective, inhibitory *aidōs* can cause a person who lacks a well-developed character to do the fine thing. Second, I show that *aidōs* can cause a person with a generally well-formed character to act unwisely. This division corresponds to the two sides of Aristotle's theory of virtue: virtue of character and *phronēsis* or practical wisdom. Although they are mutually entailing, by treating them separately we can get a clearer picture of how *aidōs* and the psychology of virtue come apart.

(a) *Aidōs without virtue of character*

The core objection to the second argument of *NE* 4. 9, as we saw, is that it focuses only on retrospective shame for things one has already done, and so neglects the sense of *aidōs* as an inhibitory disposition. But in fact, Aristotle begins the passage with a reference to inhibitory *aidōs*. The young, he says, are praised for being *aidēmōn* 'because they live by their feelings and so make many errors, but are held back by *aidōs*' (διὰ τὸ πάθει ζώντας πολλά ἀμαρτάνειν, ὑπὸ τῆς αἰδοῦς δὲ κωλύεσθαι, *NE* 1128^b17–18). Aristotle is clearly talking about *prospective* shame: *aidōs* is praised in the young because it

⁶⁸ The now commonplace idea that one can experience shame before *oneself*, without regard to others, was available to Aristotle via Democritus. See B 264 DK: 'One should not feel *aidōs* before other people to any greater extent than one does before oneself, nor should one do wrong if no one is going to know any more than if everyone is. One should feel *aidōs* before oneself above all, and let this be established as a *nomos* in one's soul, so as to do nothing inappropriate' (trans. Cairns, *Aidōs*, 365: μηδέν τι μάλλον τοὺς ἀθρώπους αἰδεῖσθαι ἑωυτοῦ μηδέ τι μάλλον ἐξεργάζεσθαι κακόν, εἰ μέλλει μηδεὶς εἰδῆσεν ἢ οἱ πάντες ἀθρώποι· ἀλλ' ἑωυτὸν μάλιστα αἰδεῖσθαι καὶ τοῦτον νόμον τῇ ψυχῇ καθεστάναι, ὥστε μηδὲν ποιεῖν ἀνεπιτήδειον). Cf. B 84 and 244; for analysis see Cairns, *Aidōs*, 365–70. Aristotle would presumably treat this as a special case, in which the object of *aidōs* happens to be oneself—not as revealing something central to *aidōs* itself. Aristotle's view of *aidōs* as an essentially social emotion is controversial; for the contemporary debate see n. 103 below.

prevents them from acting on their wayward desires.⁶⁹ Elsewhere he says that the young are inclined to obey their bodily appetites, pursuing whatever strikes them as pleasant and avoiding pains.⁷⁰ *Aidōs* (in the occurrent sense) is also a feeling, according to Aristotle, but one that generally inhibits the pursuit of base pleasures.⁷¹ If young people are *aidēmōn*, or disposed to feel *aidōs* in the appropriate way, their fear of disrepute (especially in the eyes of parents and other authority figures) will tend to overrule their inclinations and keep them on the right path.⁷² Aristotle goes on to say that no one would praise an older person for being ‘prone to shame’ (*aischuntēlos*), ‘since we think that he shouldn’t do anything that calls for shame [ἐφ’ οἷς ἐστὶν αἰσχύνη]’ (1128^b20–1).⁷³ While it is true that here he shifts from *aidōs* to *aischunē*, and in the rest of the passage seems to focus on shame felt at things one has already done, the context implies that adults should not be disposed to feel prospective shame either.⁷⁴ *Aidōs* is praised in the young only because they are naturally inclined to do shameful things, and their fear of disrepute holds them back. A mature adult, however, should not have such base inclinations in the first place, and so should not need *aidōs* to keep him on track.

The key point, on this reading, is that Aristotle thinks that *aidōs*, understood as the fear of disrepute, can be an effective motive for someone who, in some sense, *wants* to act shamefully. But virtue of character disposes a person to desire to do the fine thing because it is fine. Thus, when Aristotle says that ‘shame [αἰσχύνη] is not characteristic of a decent person’ (1128^b21–2), we should take his claim to cover *both* prospective and retrospective shame.⁷⁵ Indeed, the passage as a whole suggests that he regards both kinds of shame as aspects of a single disposition.⁷⁶ In each case, according to Aristotle,

⁶⁹ According to Cairns, the phrase τὸ μὴ αἰδεῖσθαι τὰ αἰσχροῦ towards the end of the passage (1128^b31–2) is also ‘clearly prospective’ (*Aidōs*, 416 n. 224).

⁷⁰ See e.g. *NE* 3. 12, 1119^b3–7. See also the characterization of the young at *Rhet.* 2. 12, 1389^a3–9.

⁷¹ See *NE* 10. 9, 1179^b11–16.

⁷² See *Pol.* 7. 12, 1331^a37–^b1.

⁷³ I take the phrase ἐφ’ οἷς ἐστὶν αἰσχύνη to be ambiguous between prospective and retrospective shame. At Plato, *Chrm.* 160 E 3–5, being *aischuntēlos* is treated as synonymous with having *aidōs*.

⁷⁴ See Cairns, *Aidōs*, 416: ‘We must assume . . . that the mature adult, if he is “decent”, is no more prone to prospective *aidōs* than to retrospective.’

⁷⁵ See also D. J. Riesbeck, review of Reeve, *NE*, in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (2014) <<http://bmc.brynmawr.edu/2014/2014-08-45.html>>.

⁷⁶ See Cairns, *Aidōs*, 415–17; Konstan, *Emotions*, 98–9. *Rhet.* 2. 6 likewise treats

what causes someone to refrain from acting shamefully or, having already erred, to blush or hide oneself away is the fear of disrepute.

On the above interpretation, it is no surprise that Aristotle mentions self-control (*ἐγκράτεια*) at the close of the chapter, remarking that it is not a virtue either but ‘a sort of mixed state’ (1128^b33–4). In *NE* 7. 1 we are told that the self-controlled person is one who, ‘knowing that his appetites are base, does not follow them, because of his reason [*διὰ τὸν λόγον*]’ (1145^b13–14). The self-controlled person makes the correct decision and acts on it, but has to struggle against the part of him that wants to do what reason forbids. For Aristotle, to say that someone acts from self-control is to say that although he does the fine thing, he finds shameful things pleasant, and so his character is in some way defective.⁷⁷ His account of the self-controlled person therefore parallels his account of the young person’s *aidōs*: both types can be counted on to do the fine thing even though they lack virtue of character.⁷⁸ And yet, there is a crucial difference between the two dispositions. Whereas the self-controlled person acts on a rational judgement, the *aidēmōn* is motivated by concern for his reputation in others’ eyes, which means that he may not grasp the *reason why* his action is fine.⁷⁹ As we are about to see, Aristotle thinks that *aidōs* can even motivate a person to act *contrary* to rational judgement—even someone with a generally well-formed

aischunē as a unitary phenomenon (see again 1383^b12–14). This conception of shame is shared by Joseph Butler, though he views the prospective kind as more fundamental: ‘the original tendency of shame is to prevent the doing of shameful actions; and its leading men to conceal such actions when done is only in consequence of their being done, that is, of the passion’s not having answered its first end’ (‘Upon Human Nature’ (1726), in *Five Sermons*, ed. S. L. Darwall (Indianapolis, 1983), 25–33 at 32).

⁷⁷ See *NE* 7. 9, 1151^b34–1152^a3: ‘For both a self-controlled person and a temperate one are the sorts of people to do nothing contrary to their reason because of bodily pleasures. But a self-controlled one has base appetites, whereas a temperate one does not, and a temperate one is the sort not to feel pleasure contrary to his reason, whereas the self-controlled one is the sort to feel such pleasure but not be led by it’ (*ὁ τε γὰρ ἐγκρατῆς οἷος μηδὲν παρὰ τὸν λόγον διὰ τὰς σωματικὰς ἡδονὰς ποιεῖν καὶ ὁ σώφρων, ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν ἔχων ὁ δ’ οὐκ ἔχων φαύλας ἐπιθυμίας, καὶ ὁ μὲν τοιοῦτος οἷος μὴ ἡδεσθαι παρὰ τὸν λόγον, ὁ δ’ οἷος ἡδεσθαι ἀλλὰ μὴ ἄγεσθαι*).

⁷⁸ Note that it makes sense for Aristotle to introduce self-control at this point, as another example of a mixed state, only if prospective *aidōs* is still in view by the end of *NE* 4. 9.

⁷⁹ Compare Aristotle’s remark in *Rhet.* 2. 12 that the young tend to be *aischuntēloi*, ‘because they do not yet understand other fine things, but have been educated by convention alone’ (*οὐ γὰρ πω καλὰ ἕτερα ὑπολαμβάνουσιν, ἀλλὰ πεπαιδευταὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου μόνον*, 1389^a28–9).

character, who lacks the shameful desires of the base or the young. This brings us to the second main way in which *aidōs* and virtue come apart.

(b) *Aidōs without practical wisdom*

The second way is best illustrated by Aristotle's account of 'civic' (πολιτική) courage in *NE* 3. 8.⁸⁰ By this point in the discussion, Aristotle has argued that a courageous person is one who, while not being entirely unaffected by fear, stands firm in the face of dangers (above all the threat of dying in battle) in pursuit of noble goals. The courageous person, he says, 'will endure [frightening things] in the way he should, in the way reason prescribes, and for the sake of the fine [του καλοῦ ἕνεκα], since this is the end [τέλος] characteristic of virtue' (1115^b12–13).⁸¹ In 3. 8 he sharpens his analysis of courage by contrasting it with several qualities for which it is often mistaken. The kind that comes nearest to true courage is typical of citizens fighting on behalf of their *polis*:

δοκοῦσι γὰρ ὑπομένειν τοὺς κινδύνους οἱ πολῖται διὰ τὰ ἐκ τῶν νόμων ἐπιτίμια καὶ τὰ ὀνειδέη καὶ διὰ τὰς τιμάς· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀνδρείοτατοι δοκοῦσιν εἶναι παρ' οἷς οἱ δειλοὶ ἄνθρωποι καὶ οἱ ἀνδρείοι ἔντιμοι. τοιούτους δὲ καὶ Ὅμηρος ποιεῖ, οἷον τὸν Διομήδην καὶ τὸν Ἑκτορα·

Πουλυδάμας μοι πρῶτος ἐλεγχείην ἀναθήσει·

καὶ [Διομήδης]

Ἐκτωρ γὰρ ποτε φήσει ἐνὶ Τρώεσσ' ἀγορεύων
"Τυδείδης ὑπ' ἐμεῖο . . .".

ὡμοίωται δ' αὕτη μάλιστα τῇ πρότερον εἰρημένῃ, ὅτι δι' ἀρετὴν γίνεται δι' αἰδῶ γὰρ καὶ διὰ καλοῦ ὄρεξιν (τιμῆς γὰρ) καὶ φυγὴν ὀνειδούς, αἰσχροῦ ὄντος. (1116^a18–29)

For citizens seem to endure dangers because of the penalties prescribed by the laws, because of people's reproaches, and because of the honours involved. And that is why the most courageous people seem to be in places where cowards are dishonoured and courageous people honoured. Homer too depicts people of this sort—for example, Diomedes and Hector: 'Polydamas will be first to heap disgrace upon me', and 'For some day Hector

⁸⁰ See also *EE* 3. 1, 1230^a16–33; *MM* 1. 20, 1191^a5–13.

⁸¹ See also 1116^a10–12: 'As we said, then, courage is a mean concerned with things that inspire confidence and fear in the circumstances we have described, and courage makes choices and endures things because it is fine to do so or shameful not to [ὅτι καλὸν . . . ἢ ὅτι αἰσχρὸν τὸ μὴ].'

will say openly before the Trojans: “The son of Tydeus, [running] before me . . .”. This is most similar to the sort we previously discussed [sc. true courage], since it comes about because of virtue; for it comes about because of *aidōs* and because of a desire for what is fine (since it is for honour), and to avoid reproach, as something shameful.⁸²

Aristotle finds a paradigm for civic courage in the heroes of the *Iliad*. In the lines quoted, Diomedes and Hector express their desire to engage in combat in terms of the fear of what others might say about them should they retreat. Once again, the type of shame at issue is the prospective, inhibitory kind that does not depend on having done something shameful. It is striking that Aristotle attributes this motive to their ‘virtue’ (*aretē*), which he then seems to equate with their *aidōs* and desire for honour.⁸³ This may look like further evidence for Taylor’s view that Aristotle should regard prospective *aidōs* as a virtue after all. And yet, the very point of the passage is to explain why the Homeric heroes’ disposition is *not* the genuine virtue of courage.⁸⁴ Here Aristotle must be using *aretē* in a loose sense, in order to differentiate Hector and Diomedes from those who fight merely out of fear of being punished by their cities or commanders.⁸⁵ The latter sort, he goes on to say, ‘are worse to the extent that they do what they do not because of *aidōs* but because of fear [οὐ δι’ αἰδῶ ἀλλὰ διὰ φόβον], avoiding not the shameful [τὸ αἰσχρόν] but the painful’ (1116^a31–2). Their fear of violent retribution for fleeing the enemy outweighs their fear of whatever pains they might suffer on the battlefield—perhaps because the consequences of fighting are more distant and uncertain. In contrast to those who fight because of *aidōs* and a desire for honour, the latter are ‘compelled’ (*ἀναγκάζουσιν*, 1116^b2) to endure frightening things. ‘Yet one should be courageous not because of compulsion, but because it is fine’ (δεῖ δ’ οὐ δι’ ἀνάγκην ἀνδρεῖον εἶναι, ἀλλ’ ὅτι καλόν, 1116^b2–3).

For Aristotle, then, the fear of disgrace that spurs the Homeric

⁸² The *Iliad* quotations are from 22. 100 (Hector) and 8. 148–9 (Diomedes). All translations of the *Iliad* are from R. Lattimore (trans.), *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago, 2011), slightly modified. In the parallel passage in *EE* 3. 1 the Hector quotation is preceded by: ‘And *aidōs* took hold of Hector’ (*Ἐκτορα δ’ αἰδῶς ἔλκε*, 1230^a19). This does not appear in any other source for the *Iliad*.

⁸³ The parallel passage in the *Magna moralia* replaces *aidōs* with *aischunē* (1. 20, 1191^a6, ^a13).

⁸⁴ Reeve avoids the puzzle by rendering ὅτι δι’ ἀρετὴν γίνεται ‘because it *seems* to come about because of virtue’ (*NE*, ad loc., my emphasis), but I see no basis for that qualification in the Greek.

⁸⁵ Compare *EE* 2. 7, 1223^b11–12, where Aristotle refers to *enkrateia* as an *aretē*.

heroes into battle is a fundamentally different kind of motive from the fear of corporal punishment. From the context, we can suppose that Aristotle would be unlikely to call Hector and Diomedes ‘base’ (*φάυλοι*), even though he will go on to say in *NE* 4. 9 that shame is characteristic of a base rather than a ‘decent’ (*ἐπιεικής*) person. We have also seen that in *NE* 3. 6 he says that the fear of disgrace is ‘fine’ (*καλόν*) and the person who has *aidōs* ‘decent’ (1115^a10–14). His account of civic courage now suggests a way to resolve this tension. On a charitable reading of the second argument of *NE* 4. 9, as we saw, the reason why prospective shame is uncharacteristic of a decent person is that it prevents one from acting on motives that one should not be inclined to act on in the first place. It is only base people or children who need *aidōs*, because unlike the virtuous, they have no other motivation that will keep them from going astray. Does it follow that Hector and Diomedes are base or like children? Perhaps Aristotle would say that the *aidōs* of the Homeric heroes presents a special case, because the motive *their* shame inhibits is one that is universally shared: the fear of death. Death, according to Aristotle, is the most frightening of all things (3. 6, 1115^a26), and even the truly courageous person will fear it to some extent (3. 7, 1115^b11–13). So, unlike someone who wants to steal or commit adultery, but is held back by shame, the warrior who overcomes his fear of death because of *aidōs* is not necessarily counteracting a base desire. Thus, Aristotle can hold *both* that shame is generally characteristic of a base person *and* that the fear of disgrace is a fine thing (*καλόν*, 3. 6, 1115^a12), when shame overcomes the fear of dying in battle. In the context of war, *aidōs* is a more noble motive than the fear of corporal punishment, and it does not imply a desire to do something base.

At the same time, Aristotle believes that the motivations of Diomedes and Hector, however admirable, do not express genuine courage. What, then, separates the truly courageous from those who act because of *aidōs*?

The difference between the two types becomes clear when we compare their respective ends or goals. Both desire the fine and want to avoid the shameful, but the *telos* of each is distinct. As we have seen, Aristotle says that people with civic courage endure dangers ‘because of a desire for what is fine (since it is for honour), and to avoid reproach, as something shameful’ (*διὰ καλοῦ ὄρεξιν (τιμῆς γάρ) καὶ φηγῆν ὀνειδούς, αἰσχροῦ ὄντος*, 3. 8, 1116^a28–9). His point seems

to be that the Homeric heroes aim to win honour and avoid reproach because that is what they take the fine and the shameful to be.⁸⁶ But people with true courage have a different standard: they endure dangers simply ‘for the sake of the fine’ (τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα, 3. 7, 1115^b12–13), or ‘because it is fine to do so or shameful not to’ (ὅτι καλὸν . . . ἢ ὅτι αἰσχρὸν τὸ μὴ, 1116^a11–12).⁸⁷ In Aristotle’s view, honour is indeed generally speaking a fine thing, and worth pursuing for its own sake.⁸⁸ And yet, as with all external or bodily goods, Aristotle does not think that one should always pursue it. Likewise, although health is generally a good thing, it does not follow that we should always strive to be healthy. A virtuous person will choose to exercise or eat well only if it is beneficial to do so. This does not just mean that she will avoid over-exercising and thereby harming her health. She will also choose *not* to exercise when more important activities demand her attention. This ability to correctly prioritize among competing goods is central to Aristotle’s conception of *phronēsis* or practical wisdom.⁸⁹ The virtuous person understands the relationship between individual goods, such as health or honour, and the goal of human life as a whole—*eudaimonia*—and she does not mistake one for the other.⁹⁰ Just as pursuing health is not

⁸⁶ Alternatively, Aristotle’s point is that people with civic courage face dangers because of a desire for *something* fine, namely honour, as opposed to *the* fine (virtuous action for its own sake). The absence of the definite article in διὰ καλοῦ ὄρεξιν at 1116^a28 might suggest this contrast, though Aristotle has already used καλοῦ without the definite article to refer to *the* fine in the previous chapter (καλοῦ δὲ ἕνεκα ὁ ἀνδρείος ὑπομένει, 3. 7, 1115^b23). I thank an anonymous reader for *OSAP* for help on this point.

⁸⁷ See also T. H. Irwin, ‘Ethics in the *Rhetoric* and in the *Ethics*’, in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle’s Rhetoric* (Berkeley, 1996), 142–74 at 163: ‘The brave person is not moved primarily by considerations of honor and shame, but by the fact that brave action is itself fine, whether or not it wins him honor. While those who have the bravery of citizens are concerned for something that is fine, they do not choose brave action for its own sake and because it is fine.’

⁸⁸ See *NE* 1. 5, 1095^b22–3; 4. 3, 1123^b15–21; 7. 4 (*EE* 6. 4), 1148^a29–30.

⁸⁹ See *NE* 6. 5 (*EE* 5. 5), 1140^a25–8: ‘It seems, then, to be characteristic of a practically wise person to be able to deliberate well about what is good and advantageous for himself, not partially (for example, about what sorts of things further health or further strength), but about what sorts of things further living well as a whole’ (δοκεῖ δὲ φρονίμου εἶναι τὸ δύνασθαι καλῶς βουλευσασθαι περὶ τὰ αὐτῷ ἀγαθὰ καὶ συμφέροντα, οὐ κατὰ μέρος, οἷον ποῖα πρὸς ὑγίειαν, πρὸς ἰσχύν, ἀλλὰ ποῖα πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν ὅλως). Cf. 3. 11, 1119^a16–20, where Aristotle suggests that a temperate person will desire things that further health ‘moderately and in the way he should’, which implies that someone can pursue health in a way that is not *kalon*. For a helpful discussion of the subordination of health to other goods see S. A. White, *Sovereign Virtue: Aristotle on the Relation between Happiness and Prosperity* (Stanford, 1992), 173–81.

⁹⁰ See *NE* 1. 5, 1095^b26–30, where Aristotle denies that honour could be the ulti-

always beneficial, the course of action that is most likely to bring honour (or stave off reproach) may not be the fine thing to do overall. In such cases a virtuous person will disregard the consequences for her reputation and aim for what is truly *kalon*.

For Aristotle, then, the warrior who acts from *aidōs* differs from a person of genuine courage because the former acts for the sake of the wrong end. The issue here is not that shame inhibits his base desires, but that his generally noble desire to win honour and avoid reproach may blind him to what is truly fine. Both the person who has *aidōs* and the virtuous person want to do what they consider *kalon*, but the former conflates the truly fine with good repute. The result is that *aidōs* can cause a person to act contrary to *phronēsis* or practical wisdom. This point is brought out by the parallel discussion in the *Eudemian Ethics*:

οὔτε γὰρ ὅτι ἀδοξήσει, δεῖ μένειν φοβουμένους,⁹¹ οὔτε δι' ὀργήν, οὔτε διὰ τὸ μὴ νομίζειν ἀποθανεῖσθαι, ἢ διὰ τὸ δυνάμεις ἔχειν φυλακτικὰς· οὐδὲ γὰρ οἰήσεται οὕτω γε φοβερόν εἶναι οὐθέν. ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ πᾶσα (γ') ἀρετὴ προαιρετική (τοῦτο δὲ πῶς λέγομεν, εἴρηται πρότερον, ὅτι ἕνεκά τινος πάντα αἰρεῖσθαι ποιεῖ, καὶ τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ οὐ ἕνεκα, τὸ καλόν), δῆλον ὅτι καὶ ἡ ἀνδρεία ἀρετὴ τις οὐσα ἕνεκά τινος ποιήσει τὰ φοβερά ὑπομένειν, ὥστ' οὔτε δι' ἄγνοιαν (ὀρθῶς γὰρ μάλλον ποιεῖ κρίνειν) οὔτε δι' ἡδονήν, ἀλλ' ὅτι καλόν, ἐπεὶ, ἂν γὰρ μὴ καλὸν ἢ ἀλλὰ μανικόν, οὐχ ὑπομένει· αἰσχρὸν γάρ. (*EE* 3. 1, 1230^a23–33)

It is not because of prospective disrepute [*ἀδοξήσει*] that we ought to stand our ground when afraid, nor because of anger, or because we do not think we will be killed or because we have the means to protect ourselves—in these latter cases one will not think that there is anything frightening. Now every virtue issues in decision. We have said previously what we mean by this—virtue makes everyone choose for the sake of something, and this 'something for the sake of which' is what is fine. That being so, it is clear that courage too, being a virtue, will make us endure what is fearful for the sake of something, and that will be due neither to ignorance (since virtue makes our judgements more correct) nor to pleasure, but because doing so is fine [*ὅτι καλόν*]. If it is not fine but crazy, one does not endure danger, since that would be shameful.

mate human good: 'Further, people seem to pursue honour in order to be convinced that they are good—at any rate, they seek to be honoured by practically wise people, among people who know them, and for virtue. It is clear, then, that according to them, at least, virtue is better' (ἔτι δ' εὐόκασι τὴν τιμὴν διώκειν ἵνα πιστεύσωσιν ἑαυτοὺς ἀγαθοὺς εἶναι· ζητοῦσι γοῦν ὑπὸ τῶν φρονίμων τιμᾶσθαι, καὶ παρ' οἷς γνώσκονται, καὶ ἐπ' ἀρετῇ· δῆλον οὖν ὅτι κατὰ γὰρ τούτους ἡ ἀρετὴ κρείττων). Cf. *Rhet.* 1. 11, 1371^a8–17; *Pol.* 2. 9, 1271^b6–10.

⁹¹ Here I follow Inwood and Woolf in retaining the manuscripts' φοβουμένους.

Here Aristotle distinguishes clearly between the end of *aidōs* (avoiding disrepute) and the end of virtue proper (the fine). He also suggests that *aidōs*, as well as the other motivations that resemble genuine courage, can conflict with correct reason: if someone faces dangers out of shame when it is ‘crazy’ (μανικόν, 1230^a32) not to retreat, his endurance is not fine but *shameful*.⁹²

It is probably not an accident, then, that in both passages Aristotle quotes from the *Iliad* in *NE* 3. 8, 1116^a18–29, we find *aidōs* motivating a warrior to act unwisely. The second quotation comes from book 8, after Diomedes saves Nestor from Hector and hands him the reins of his chariot. The two men are bearing down on Hector when Zeus hurls a thunderbolt in their path; their horses shrink back in fear and Nestor warns Diomedes to give up the chase (133–44). Diomedes replies:

ναὶ δὴ ταῦτά γε πάντα, γέρον, κατὰ μοῖραν εἶπες·
ἀλλὰ τόδ’ αἰὼν ἄχος κραδίην καὶ θυμὸν ἰκάνει
Ἐκτωρ γάρ ποτε φήσει ἐνὶ Τρώεσσ’ ἀγορεύων
“Τυδείδης ὑπ’ ἐμεῖο φοβούμενος ἴκετο νῆας.”
ὣς ποτ’ ἀπειλήσει· τότε μοι χάνοι εὐρέια χθών.
(146–50 Munro and Allen)

Yes, old sir, all this you have said is fair and orderly.
But this thought comes as a bitter sorrow to my heart and my spirit;
for some day Hector will say openly before the Trojans:
‘The son of Tydeus, running before me, fled to his vessels.’
So he will vaunt; and then let the wide earth open beneath me.

Nestor assures him that the men and women of Troy will never believe Hector’s boasts, given that Diomedes has made them suffer so much already. Nestor’s words are persuasive, but as they flee towards the Greek ships, Hector shouts that the Danaans who once revered Diomedes will now ‘dishonour’ (ἀτιμήσουσι) him, since he is ‘no better than a woman’ (161–3). Diomedes must resist the urge to turn and face him: ‘Three times in his heart and spirit he pondered turning, | and three times from the hills of Ida Zeus of the counsels thundered’ (τρὶς μὲν μερμήριξε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμὸν, | τρὶς δ’ ἄρ’ ἀπ’ Ἰδαίων ὄρεων κτύπε μητίετα Ζεὺς, 169–70). In the end, Diomedes wisely decides to flee, not because of but *in spite of* his sense of shame. The scene beautifully illustrates the potential con-

⁹² See also 1229^a8–9: ‘But reason does not order [a courageous person] to endure what is greatly painful and destructive unless it is fine to do so’ (ὁ δὲ λόγος τὰ μεγάλα λυπηρὰ καὶ φθαρτικὰ οὐ κελεύει ὑπομένειν, ἂν μὴ καλὸν ᾖ).

flict between *aidōs* and practical wisdom. Nestor's advice to retreat in the face of Zeus' thunderbolts is not a sign of cowardice, because Nestor sees there is nothing to be gained—and everything to be lost—by fighting Hector when the god is on his side. Likewise, Diomedes' reluctance to flee is not a mark of true courage, as Aristotle would say, since it is based on the desire to save his reputation at the cost of a greater end. Had Diomedes given in to his *aidōs*, it would have meant certain death for himself and Nestor, and disaster for the Greeks.

The Diomedes episode provides a poignant contrast to the first passage cited, from book 22, in which Hector makes his fateful decision to confront Achilles. Hector is standing alone beneath the walls of Troy, while from above his parents plead with him to retreat inside the citadel and gather reinforcements. They appeal to his sense of pity and filial duty, evoking images of the city's destruction and the degradation they will be made to suffer if Troy's greatest warrior is slain. Having heard their pleas, Hector takes counsel with himself:

“ὦ μοι ἐγών, εἰ μὲν κε πύλας καὶ τεῖχεα δύω,
 Πουλυδάμας μοι πρῶτος ἐλεγχέειν ἀναθήσει,
 ὃς μ' ἐκέλευε Τρωσὶ ποτὶ πόλιν ἡγήσασθαι
 νύχθ' ὑπο τήνδ' ὀλοήν, ὅτε τ' ὤρετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
 ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην· ἢ τ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν.
 νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ὤλεσα λαὸν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἐμήσιν,
 αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρωάδας ἐλκεσιπέπλους,
 μή ποτέ τις εἴπησι κακώτερος ἄλλος ἐμείο·
 ‘Ἐκτωρ ἦφι βίηφι πιθήσας ὤλεσε λαόν.’
 ὣς ἐρέουσιν· ἐμοὶ δὲ τότ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον εἴη
 ἄντην ἢ Ἀχιλλῆα κατακτείναντα νέεσθαι,
 ἢ ἐκεν αὐτῷ ὀλέσθαι ἐϋκλειῶς πρὸ πόλης.”

(99–110)

‘Ah me! If I go now inside the wall and the gateway,
 Polydamas will be first to heap disgrace upon me,
 since he tried to make me lead the Trojans inside the city
 on that accursed night when brilliant Achilles rose up,
 and I would not obey him, but that would have been far better.
 Now, since by my own recklessness I have ruined my people,
 I feel *aidōs* before the Trojans and the Trojan women with trailing
 robes, that someone who is less of a man than I will say of me:
 “Hector believed in his own strength and ruined his people.”
 Thus they will speak; and as for me, it would be much better

at that time to go against Achilles, and slay him, and come back, or else be killed by him in glory in front of the city.’

Hector knows that he stands a better chance of defeating Achilles with the help of his fellow Trojans, who have amassed inside the walls. But he is too ashamed to face them, as a result of his previous decision (in book 18) to reject his brother’s sound advice and expose the army to slaughter. Now he would rather die than hear his name dragged through the dust, and so he uses his earlier folly as a reason to commit an even greater one. His death at the hands of Achilles seals his city’s and his parents’ fate.⁹³

In both examples cited by Aristotle in *NE* 3. 8, *aidōs* threatens to bring a hero to ruin, and in the case of Hector it actually does.⁹⁴ The lack of wisdom displayed in the Homeric warriors’ brand of courage is not simply a matter of miscalculation, of failing to take an adequate measure of the dangers of standing firm. Rather, to the extent that they are motivated by *aidōs*, by the fear of disrepute, they make a mistake about what the goal of standing firm ought to be. A truly courageous person, once again, acts ‘for the sake of the fine’, and if the finest and therefore wisest course of action is to retreat, then the prospect of honour and the threat of disgrace will no longer carry any weight.⁹⁵ In contrast to the Homeric heroes, then,

⁹³ On Hector’s *aidōs* see J. M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector* (Durham, NC, 1994), 115–19.

⁹⁴ Compare Aristotle’s comment about the ‘natural virtues’ (which include *aidōs*; cf. *EE* 3. 7, 1234^a32) at *NE* 6. 13 (*EE* 5. 13), 1144^b9–12: ‘but without understanding they are evidently harmful. At any rate, this much we can surely see: that just as a heavy body moving around without sight suffers a heavy fall because it has no sight, so it happens in this case too’ (ἀλλ’ ἄνευ νοῦ βλαβεραὶ φαίνονται οὔσαι. πλὴν τοσοῦτον ἔοικεν ὁρᾶσθαι, ὅτι ὡσπερ σώματι ἰσχυρῷ ἄνευ ὀφείως κινουμένῳ συμβαίνει σφάλλασθαι ἰσχυρῶς διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ὄψιν, οὕτω καὶ ἐνταῦθα). The natural virtues are harmful because they are ‘without practical wisdom’ (ἄνευ φρονήσεως, 1144^b17).

⁹⁵ John McDowell has argued that the virtuous person’s desire to do the fine thing silences any competing considerations (‘The Role of *Eudaimonia* in Aristotle’s Ethics’, in id., *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), 3–22 at 17–18). So it is not as though the reasons for acting wisely *outweigh* the reasons for acting otherwise (e.g. the prospect of honour or the threat of disgrace). Rather, ‘in the circumstances [the latter considerations] are not reasons at all’ (17). One might contend, however, that because the virtuous person is attentive to value in all its forms, she sees that the prospect of a good such as honour is still a reason to do the unwise thing. This is not to say that she is at all *tempted* to act unwisely, or that she will regret her decision after the fact. The competing considerations could simply ‘have a voice’: they could enter into her deliberations even if at no stage do they have any pull. In this vein, Jeff Seidman draws a distinction between ‘motivational’ and ‘rational’ silencing, and argues that eudaimonistic considerations (such as the prospect of pleasure or honour)

aidōs plays no significant role in explaining the courageous person's actions.⁹⁶

At this point, one might object that Aristotle's analysis of civic courage depends on an implausible view of the psychology of honour and shame, since it seems to interpret the Homeric warriors' *aidōs* as a mere concern for how one appears in others' eyes.⁹⁷ But as Bernard Williams and Douglas Cairns have argued, the 'shame culture' portrayed in ancient Greek literature is based on an *internalized* system of values and shared expectations.⁹⁸ Diomedes and Hector may feel shame at failing to live up to the standards of their communities, but these are also ideals they have for themselves.⁹⁹ Thus Williams writes of the *Iliad* 22 passage: 'Hector was indeed afraid that someone inferior to him would be able to criticise him, but that was because he thought the criticism would be true, and the fact that such a person could make it would only make things worse.'¹⁰⁰ So perhaps what Hector is really afraid of is not disrepute, or the negative opinion of others, but acting in a way that would *warrant* the loss of his reputation for *aretē*. In that case, the distinction between *aidōs* and the virtuous person's desire to choose the fine and avoid the shameful looks harder to sustain.

Let me offer two brief replies to this objection. First, it is clear from the analysis of *aischunē* in *Rhetoric* 2. 6 that Aristotle does *not* conceive of shame as being crudely heteronomous. There he says that a person feels shame 'at the sorts of bad things that seem shameful either to him or to those whom he respects'.¹⁰¹ These especially

that conflict with virtuous agency will be motivationally but not rationally silenced by virtue ('Two Sides of "Silencing"', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 55 (2006), 68–77 at 69). (I am grateful to Jonathan Dancy for calling this issue to my attention.)

⁹⁶ Compare *MM* 1. 20, 1191^a12–14, where the author suggests that if a person with merely civic courage is stripped of *aischunē*—'because of which he was courageous' (δὲ ἦν ἦν ἀνδρείος)—he will be courageous no more.

⁹⁷ See Cairns, *Aidōs*, 420: 'In these passages on bravery there is a strong suggestion that *aidōs* is concerned with external honour and reputation alone.'

⁹⁸ See B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity* [*Shame*] (Berkeley, 1993), ch. 4; Cairns, *Aidōs*, *passim*.

⁹⁹ On shame as the perceived failure to live up to one's own ideals see N. Sherman, 'Moral Injury, Damage, and Repair', in V. Caston and S.-M. Weineck (eds.), *Our Ancient Wars: Rethinking War through the Classics* (Ann Arbor, 2016), 121–54 at 126–31. Sherman analyses modern soldiers' experience of shame in connection with Sophocles' *Ajax*.

¹⁰⁰ Williams, *Shame*, 82.

¹⁰¹ 1383^b16–18: ἀνάγκη αἰσχύνεσθαι ἐπὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις τῶν κακῶν ὅσα αἰσχρὰ δοκεῖ εἶναι ἢ αὐτῷ ἢ ὧν φροντίζει. For this use of φροντίζειν see also 1384^a23–5, 31–3; *EE* 3. 7, 1233^b26–9; Plato, *Crito* 48 A 5–7.

include actions that ‘stem from vice’ (1383^b18) and that reveal ‘bad things about one’s character’ (1384^a7)—that is, the very things that one would find discreditable in others. Later in the chapter, Aristotle explains that a person does not feel shame before just any audience, but before those whom he ‘holds in regard’ (ὧν λόγον ἔχει, 1384^a25). The latter include the ‘practically wise’, whom we respect because we suppose they speak the truth (ὡς ἀληθεύόντων τῶν φρονίμων, 1384^a32)—presumably in their opinions about what is fine and shameful. Here we may recall the *EE* characterization of the *aidēmōn* as one who respects the opinions of ‘those who appear decent’ (τῶν φαινομένων ἐπιεικῶν, 3. 7, 1233^b29). Built into Aristotle’s understanding of proper *aidōs*, then, is a concern for whether the opinions of others are justified.¹⁰² All the same, it is important to stress that Aristotle conceives of shame as an essentially *social* emotion. While the disposition to feel shame reflects one’s own ideals and expectations, *aidōs* is more than just a fear of failing to live up to our personal standards: it is the fear of falling in the eyes of a community whose opinion matters to us.¹⁰³

Second, Aristotle’s view seems to me to capture the psychological complexity of *aidōs* as it is actually portrayed in Homer. Consider, for example, how Nestor responds to Diomedes’ fear that Hector will mock him before the Trojans:

“εἴ περ γάρ σ’ Ἔκτωρ γε κακὸν καὶ ἀνάλκιδα φήσει,
ἀλλ’ οὐ πείσονται Τρῶες καὶ Δαρδανίῳνες
καὶ Τρώων ἄλοχοι μεγαθύμων ἀσπιστάων,
τάων ἐν κονίησι βάλεις θαλεροὺς παρακοίτας.”
(8. 153–6)

‘If Hector calls you a coward and a man of no strength, then
the Trojans and Dardanians will never believe him,

¹⁰² See also Inglis, ‘Grand End’, 279–83. In my view, Inglis gives inadequate weight to the fear of disrepute in Aristotle’s analysis of civic courage and *aidōs* more generally.

¹⁰³ See also A. Fussi, ‘Aristotle on Shame’, *Ancient Philosophy*, 35 (2015), 113–35. In recent decades the question whether shame has an essentially *social* dimension has been the subject of much debate. Important contributions include J. Deigh, ‘Shame and Self-Esteem: A Critique’, *Ethics*, 93 (1983), 225–45; G. Taylor, *Pride, Shame, and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment* (Oxford, 1985); J. D. Velleman, ‘The Genesis of Shame’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 30.1 (2001), 27–52. For an extended critique of the ‘social’ view see J. A. Deonna, R. Rodogno, and F. Teroni, *In Defense of Shame: The Faces of an Emotion* (Oxford, 2012). For a defence of the Aristotelian view from an evolutionary perspective see H. Maibom, ‘The Descent of Shame’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 80 (2010), 566–94.

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nor will the wives of the high-hearted Trojan warriors,
they whose husbands you hurled in the dust in the pride
of their manhood.’

The passage does not suggest that Diomedes is merely afraid of what the Trojans will think of him; the deeper concern, as Williams argues, is that Hector’s slights would be deserved—that fleeing from Hector would expose him as a ‘coward’ (κακός). Nestor therefore reminds Diomedes that he is not a coward, since his previous actions have proven his *aretē*. This shows that Diomedes’ sense of shame is responsive to standards of justification, since Nestor gives him no reason to think that Hector will *not* slight his character. But also notice what Nestor does not say: he does not try to tell Diomedes that his reputation among the Trojans is of no significance, and that all that matters is whether he is really virtuous, regardless of what they might think. Rather, it is crucial to Nestor’s persuasive strategy that Diomedes believe the Trojans will disregard Hector’s boasts—that there be an *audience* who acknowledges that he is no coward.

Williams also thinks that *aidōs* ultimately responds to ‘real social expectations’, however much those expectations may mirror the ideals one has for oneself.¹⁰⁴ Thus the shame of the Homeric heroes, on his reading, is neither hostage to the opinions of others nor purely autonomous.¹⁰⁵ Unlike Aristotle, however, Williams doubts that human beings have a better guide than *aidōs* for meeting the demands of moral life. That is because he rejects the aspiration to a kind of practical wisdom that transcends the mechanisms of honour and shame—a kind of wisdom, as we have seen, that is central to Aristotle’s conception of virtue. For Aristotle, the proper aim of virtuous action is the truly *kalon*, not what appears *kalon* to a community whose judgements I respect. Williams suggests that the early Greek poets offer a more realistic picture of our ethical situation than what we find in the philosophers. But if the passages cited in *NE* 3. 8 reveal the destructive side of *aidōs*, then one could argue that the *Iliad* depends for its tragic effect on the possibility of

¹⁰⁴ Williams, *Shame*, 84.

¹⁰⁵ Note that even if shame *were* purely autonomous, it still would not play an important role in the motivations of Aristotle’s virtuous person. The virtuous person avoids shameful actions because they are shameful (or because of the features that make them shameful), not because of how she would appear in her own eyes.

something like Aristotle's notion of *phronēsis*. In that case, Aristotle may have learnt more from Homer than Williams' account allows.

The core objection to Aristotle's second argument for why *aidōs* is not a virtue was that it focuses only on retrospective shame, neglecting the potential role of inhibitory shame in the virtuous person's motivations. In this section I have shown two ways in which even prospective shame, understood as the fear of disrepute, would be uncharacteristic of a virtuous person on Aristotle's account. First, as the second part of *NE* 4. 9 suggests, *aidōs* can inhibit someone with base desires from acting shamefully. A fully virtuous person, by contrast, wants to do the fine thing because it is fine, and so the fear of disrepute plays no significant role in the explanation of his actions. *Aidōs* and self-control (*ἐγκράτεια*) are similar to the extent that both can cause a person to do the right thing while lacking virtue of character. Second, as we saw from the discussion of civic courage in *NE* 3. 8, *aidōs* can bring a person with a generally well-formed character to ruin, since it can cause him to act for the sake of the wrong end—that is, to avoid disrepute instead of the truly *aischron*. A virtuous person will recognize when the action that is liable to bring disrepute is in fact the noble thing to do, and will choose accordingly. That is a key feature of the virtuous person's *phronēsis*. So again, it seems that shame plays no significant role in explaining what a virtuous person does—even if his actions and actions done from *aidōs* will often look the same from the outside.¹⁰⁶

The chief task of this paper has been to examine the flaws in Aristotle's treatment of *aidōs* in *NE* 4. 9 and show that there are better arguments available to him. In Section 2 I reconstructed his view that *aidōs* is not a virtue because it is an 'affective' mean, whereas virtue—according to the formal definition in *NE* 2. 6 (1106^b36–1107^a2)—is a *hexis prohairetikē*, or a state that issues in decisions. The success of that argument, however, depends on the dubious claim that *aidōs* is essentially a disposition to have certain feelings, rather than to decide and act for the sake of ends. We have now seen that Aristotle has independent reasons for excluding it from his list of virtues. For even if *aidōs* does issue in decisions (as it appears to, for instance, in the example of Hector from *Iliad* 22), its decisions aim at the wrong goal and so fail to express *phronēsis*. But virtue—again, according to *NE* 2. 6—causes a person to decide on

¹⁰⁶ On the difficulty of judging the quality of actions from the outside see Lorenz, 'Character', 191.

the mean as determined by the reasoning of a *phronimos*. Whichever way we conceive of *aidōs*, then, it runs afoul of Aristotle's definition of virtue.

It is one thing, however, to show that *aidōs* is not a virtue, and another thing to show that it has no part to play in a virtuous life at all. Aristotle's view seems to be that while *aidōs* has an important role in moral development, it is eclipsed in a fully virtuous person by the disposition to do the right thing for the right reasons.¹⁰⁷ In other words, a mature adult should no longer need the fear of disrepute as a motivation to act well. In the final main section below I argue that even someone who possesses virtue of character and *phronēsis* may still have need of *aidōs*. My starting-point will be the discussion of *NE* 4. 9 in Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Ethical Problems*. For reasons we have yet to consider, Alexander argues that Aristotle's own theory commits him to the view that a virtuous person will be disposed to feel shame, even if he neither does nor is inclined to do anything shameful.

5. The virtuous person's *aidōs*:

Alexander of Aphrodisias on *NE* 4. 9

Alexander begins *Problem* 21 ('On *aidōs*') by summarizing the opening argument of *NE* 4. 9 and noting that, while in book 2 Aristotle had said that *aidōs* is a praiseworthy feeling, he now claims it is desirable only in the young. To older people, in Alexander's paraphrase, the feeling is altogether 'alien' (*ἀλλότριον*):

τῷ εἶναι μὲν δὴ τὴν αἰδῶ φόβον ἀδοξίας, τὸν δὲ φόβον τῆς ἀδοξίας ἢ ἐπὶ γεγονόσιν αἰσχροῖς ἢ ἐπὶ μέλλουσιν γίνεσθαι ἢ ἐπὶ δοκούσιν, ὧν οὐκέτι οἱ προβεβηκότες κατὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν καὶ τὰς ἀρετὰς ἔχοντες πρακτικοί. ῥάδιον γὰρ αὐτοῖς φυλάττεσθαι καὶ ὅσα οὐκ ἔστι μὲν αἰσχρά, δοκεῖ δὲ γίνεσθαι καὶ αὐτὰ ἀδοξίας αἴτια. (141. 20–5 Bruns)¹⁰⁸

Because *aidōs* is fear of disrepute, and fear of disrepute arises in respect either of shameful things that have already happened or of ones that are going to happen or of reputed ones; and those that have advanced further in years and [now] possess the virtues no longer do [such things]. For it is

¹⁰⁷ On the role of *aidōs* in moral development see again Burnyeat, 'Learning'; Curzer, *Virtues*, ch. 16.

¹⁰⁸ I. Bruns, (ed.), *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter commentaria scripta minora: Quaestiones, De fato, De mixtione*, Supplementum Aristotelicum, 2.2 (Berlin, 1892), 117–63.

easy for them to avoid even those things that are not [in fact] shameful but are thought to be causes of disrepute [nonetheless].¹⁰⁹

Here Alexander is referring to Aristotle's remark that it makes no difference if some things are shameful 'in reality' (*κατ' ἀλήθειαν*) and others only 'according to opinion' (*κατὰ δόξαν*), since a decent person does neither type of thing.¹¹⁰ Alexander does not elaborate on the distinction, but his thought seems to be that it is easy for a person with experience to avoid violating norms that are merely conventional.¹¹¹ It is also worth noting that he takes Aristotle's argument to apply to both retrospective *and* prospective shame. Even prospective *aidōs* will be 'alien' to older people, we can infer, because they no longer suffer the temptations of youth.

Alexander then shifts from exposition to critique:

ἄξιον δὴ περὶ τούτου διαλαβεῖν καὶ μάλιστα, ἐπεὶ σύνομεν αὐτοῖς ἤδη ταύτην (τὴν) ἡλικίαν γεγονόσιν αἰδομένοις πολλὰ καὶ πολλάκις. εἰ μὲν οὖν ἦν λεγόμενον τὸ δεῖν καταφρονεῖν τῆς ἀδοξίας, οὐκ ἂν ἡμῖν ἔδει λόγων. ἐπεὶ δ' οὐ τοῦτ' ἐστὶν τὸ λεγόμενον, ἀλλὰ κείται μὲν ὅτι δεῖ φυλάττεσθαι τὴν ἀδοξίαν, εἴ γε ἡ δόξα καὶ τιμὴ μέγιστον τῶν ἐκτὸς ἀγαθῶν, λέγεται δὲ ὅτι μηκέτι ἐν ἀδοξίᾳ γίνονται οἱ μῆτε ποιούντες τι αἰσχρὸν μῆτε ποιήσαντες . . . (141. 25–31)

It is worth deciding about this matter, especially since we are aware that we ourselves, [although] we have already reached this age, feel *aidōs* at many things and frequently. Well, if what was said was that one should think little of disrepute, we would not need any discussion. But it is not this that is being said; it is accepted that one should avoid disrepute, if reputation and honour are the greatest of external goods, and it is being said that those who neither do nor have done anything shameful no longer become subject to disrepute . . .

It is this last claim in particular—that those who avoid acting shamefully are not exposed to disrepute—that Alexander calls into question:

οὐ γὰρ ἔοικεν ἡ ἀδοξία ἐπὶ τοῖς πραττομένοις μὴ καλῶς γίνεσθαι μόνοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ὑποπτενομένοις καὶ τοῖς διαβληθῆναι δυναμένοις, ἃ μάλιστα ἰσχύει παρὰ τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσιν. εἰ δὲ γίνεταί τις καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις ἀδοξία, οὐκ ἀποκέκλεισται

¹⁰⁹ Translations are from R. W. Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias: Ethical Problems [Problems]* (London, 1990), slightly modified. Sharples (54 n. 176) provides 'are no longer able to do [such things]' as an alternative rendering of *οὐκέτι . . . πρακτικοί* at lines 22–3.

¹¹⁰ *NE* 4. 9, 1128^b22–5. For discussion see n. 55 above.

¹¹¹ See again the Anonymous commentator's example of 'eating in the agora' (202. 11–13).

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ὁ μηδὲν αἰσχρὸν ποιήσας τοῦ ἐν ἀδοξίᾳ δύνασθαι γενέσθαι. ἤν ἀδοξίαν εἰ δεῖ φοβεῖσθαι, ἢ οὐδὲν ἔλαττον ἐκ διαβολῶν ἢ ἐκ πράξεων γίνεται, οὐκ ἀλλότριον τοῦτο (τὸ) πάθος οὐδενί¹¹² τῶν ἐπιεικῶν εἴη ἂν καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν προβεβηκότων, οὐδὲ κατ' αὐτόν, εἴ γε δεῖ μὲν φυλάττεσθαι καὶ φοβεῖσθαι τὴν ἀδοξίαν, τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶν αἰδώς. (141. 32–142. 8)

For it seems that disrepute is occasioned not only by ignoble actions, but also by those [actions] that are held in suspicion and are capable of being misrepresented, which have the greatest influence among the ignorant. But if disrepute is some[times] occasioned by such things too, then the person who has done nothing shameful is not excluded from being capable of falling into disrepute. If one ought to fear the disrepute that comes from slander no less than that which comes from actions, then this feeling [sc. *aidōs*] will not be alien to any of those who are decent and further advanced in age—not even according to [Aristotle], if indeed one ought to guard against and fear disrepute, and this [fear] is *aidōs*.

Alexander goes on to argue that *aidōs* is in fact *more* characteristic of a virtuous person than of anyone else. Someone who has lived his life in a noble way, free from shameful actions, will be especially sensitive to any imputation of disgrace:

διὸ καὶ συμβέβηκεν τούτοις αἰδεῖσθαι μάλιστα, οἷς σφόδρα ἐστὶ τὰ αἰσχρὰ μισητά. ἢ γὰρ αἰδώς οὐκ ἔοικεν ἀπλῶς εἶναι φόβος ἀδοξίας, ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρότερον ἀλλοτριότης πρὸς τὰ αἰσχρά, δι' ἣν οἱ οὕτως ἔχοντες φοβοῦνται τὴν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἀδοξίαν. (142. 10–14)

And so it comes about that those people for whom shameful things are very hateful feel *aidōs* most of all. For *aidōs* does not seem to be fear of disrepute without qualification, but much rather alienation from shameful things, on account of which those who are in this condition fear disrepute in respect of them.

Here Alexander suggests that *aidōs*, understood as the fear of disrepute, is derivative from a more basic aversion to acting shamefully.¹¹³ If this is meant as a claim about *aidōs* in general, then it is clearly not Aristotle's view, because it implies that a young person cannot be inhibited by *aidōs* prior to developing a distaste for the *aischron* in its own right. And as I argued above in Section 4, Aristotle sees an important difference between the

¹¹² Following Sharples' acceptance of Bruns' conjecture (*Problems*, 86 n. 21).

¹¹³ Alexander goes on to say that *aidōs*, conceived in this way, would no longer be a *pathos* without qualification, but rather a kind of *hexis* and *diathesis* ('disposition') on which the *pathos* follows. He does not claim outright that *aidōs* is a virtue, though he clearly thinks it central to the virtuous person's psychology.

virtuous person's desire to pursue the fine and avoid the shameful and the motivations of the *aidēmōn*. At the same time, however, Alexander's criticism reveals a major limitation in Aristotle's account of *aidōs*. In *NE* 4. 9, as we saw, Aristotle suggests that once a person learns to avoid doing anything shameful, he will no longer be subject to disrepute and so will not feel shame (prospective or retrospective). This assumes that acting virtuously is *sufficient* for avoiding disrepute. But as Alexander shows, that is simply not the case, since even a virtuous person is liable to have his actions misrepresented by others and to become an object of slander. Given that honour is the greatest of external goods, as Aristotle himself says, a virtuous person should be concerned to avoid the *mere appearance* of disgrace, in addition to not doing anything shameful. If that is right, it seems *aidōs* will play a role in the virtuous life after all.¹¹⁴

Let us turn to an example. Near the beginning of Plato's *Charmides*, Socrates arranges to engage the young Charmides in a conversation in order to find out whether his soul matches his beautiful face and body. He asks the older Critias to call him over: 'Surely if he were even younger, there'd be no shame in his having a discussion with us—at least not in your presence, since you're both his guardian and his cousin.'¹¹⁵ Socrates knows that his attempt to 'undress' Charmides' soul (154 E 5–6) through dialectical examination is liable to be viewed by others as a sexual overture. Given the norms of Athenian *paiderastia*, it would be shameful for Charmides to be seen alone with a potential suitor.¹¹⁶ There is less shame in it for the older Socrates, but we can imagine that he would not want to raise suspicions against himself either. By reminding Critias that the conversation would be taking place in his presence, Socrates shows he is sensitive to the prospect of disrepute. This is not to say that shame is what prevents him from actually trying to seduce the young Charmides. Instead, we might suppose, it is Socrates' *sōphrosunē* or temperance that explains why he does not pursue him sexually. But Socrates realizes that even if his motives are pure, he is not immune from the appearance of impropriety. The example

¹¹⁴ Compare the Anonymous commentator's claim that *aidōs* pertains to the 'suspicion' (*ὑπόνοια*) of shameful deeds (204. 7–11), discussed in n. 55 above.

¹¹⁵ 155 A 4–7 (Moore–Raymond trans., in progress): οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν ποῦ εἰ ἐτι ἐτύγχανε νεώτερος ὢν, αἰσχρὸν ἂν ἦν αὐτῷ διαλέγεσθαι ἡμῖν ἐναντίον γε σοῦ, ἐπιτρόπου τε ἅμα καὶ ἀνεψιοῦ ὄντος.

¹¹⁶ See K. Ormand, *Controlling Desires: Sexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Westport, Conn., 2009), 52–4.

therefore suggests that he is disposed to avoid disrepute *in addition to* being disposed to act temperately for its own sake. The former disposition, Alexander would say, is the virtuous person's *aidōs*.

Alexander's response points to a more general problem in Aristotle's account of the relationship between shame and virtue. According to that account, a virtuous person will not be disposed to feel shame for the simple reason that '*aidōs* is occasioned by voluntary actions [*ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐκουσίοις*], and a decent person will never voluntarily do base things' (*NE* 4. 9, 1128^b28–9). By tethering *aidōs* to voluntary action, however, Aristotle fails to acknowledge the role of *luck* in determining one's reputation. Whether a person has cause to fear disrepute is not wholly up to him. We have already seen this in the case of actions that are liable to be misrepresented. Even if Socrates would never do anything base voluntarily, he may become the object of slander nonetheless. Yet his sense of shame helps him avoid the mere appearance of impropriety, making it harder for others to distort what he does. If his actions *are* misrepresented, moreover, Aristotle might think that shame is the appropriate reaction. A virtuous person would at least not be indifferent to the matter, especially if he should fall into disrepute among those whom he respects.¹¹⁷

In addition to cases of misrepresentation, Aristotle's works suggest two further scenarios in which a virtuous person might have reason to feel shame through no fault of his own. First, there is the category of 'mixed' actions discussed in *NE* 3. 1:

ὅσα δὲ διὰ φόβον μειζόνων κακῶν πράττεται ἢ διὰ καλόν τι, οἷον εἰ τύραννος προστάττει αἰσχρόν τι πράξαι κύριος ὢν γονέων καὶ τέκνων, καὶ πράξαντος μὲν σφύζονται μὴ πράξαντος δ' ἀποθνήσκουσιν, ἀμφισβήτησιν ἔχει πότερον ἀκούσιά ἐστιν ἢ ἐκούσια. (1110^a4–8)

Actions done because of fear of greater evils or because of something fine—for example, if a tyrant with control over your parents and children orders you to do something shameful and if you do it, they will survive, but if you

¹¹⁷ In *NE* 4. 3 Aristotle suggests that the 'great-souled person' (*μεγαλόψυχος*) will be 'moderately pleased by great honours conferred by excellent people [*ὑπὸ τῶν σπουδαίων*]' (1124^a5–7), but contemptuous of honour and dishonour that comes from the many (110–12). The implication, I take it, is that the great-souled person will also be moderately *annoyed* if he is *not* honoured by those he deems excellent. Aristotle also says that the great-souled person 'is ashamed [*αἰσχύνεται*] to be a beneficiary' (109–10), since it is characteristic of an inferior person to receive benefits. Assuming the great-souled person cannot always control whether someone benefits him, this suggests that *aidōs* will be part of his character.

do not do it, they will be put to death—give rise to disputes about whether the actions are involuntary or voluntary.

Aristotle argues that such actions are strictly speaking voluntary, because they are choiceworthy given the circumstances and the starting-point is internal to the agent. But considered in the abstract, they are involuntary, since nobody would choose to do such things unless they were under extreme duress. Later on he adds: ‘People are sometimes even praised for actions of this sort, when they endure something shameful or painful for great and fine things.’¹¹⁸ Despite what he says in *NE* 4. 9, then, Aristotle does think that a virtuous person may voluntarily choose to do (or endure) something base, if that is the only way to achieve a noble end. But even though such a person might be praised, nowhere does Aristotle suggest that there is no shame attached to performing mixed actions. Indeed, part of what is praiseworthy may be the fact that the person chose to act *in spite of* his feelings of shame at what he would be putting himself through. Of course, a virtuous person would feel shame only in the appropriate degree; but the absence of any shame (either before or after the deed) might show that he fails to properly appreciate the value of honour and reputation.¹¹⁹ So again, it seems that *aidōs* may have a role to play even in a life of virtue.¹²⁰

Aristotle’s discussion of shame in *Rhetoric* 2. 6 suggests a third and final reason why even a virtuous person would need to have *aidōs*. Towards the end of the chapter, Aristotle describes the types

¹¹⁸ 1110^a19–22: ἐπὶ ταῖς πράξεσι δὲ ταῖς τοιαύταις ἐνίοτε καὶ ἐπαυνοῦνται, ὅταν αἰσχρόν τι ἢ λυπηρόν ὑπομένωσιν ἀντὶ μεγάλων καὶ καλῶν.

¹¹⁹ Compare Aristotle’s view that a courageous person does the fine thing in spite of his (appropriately measured) feelings of fear. A total absence of fear in the face of mortal danger would show that he fails to properly appreciate the value of his own life.

¹²⁰ Related to the case of mixed actions is the possibility of being forced into a shameful situation entirely against one’s will. Thus, in *Rhet.* 2. 6 Aristotle includes being raped (τὸ ὑβρίζεσθαι, 1384^a18) among the causes of shame in people, ‘since enduring it or failing to defend oneself against it is due to unmanliness or cowardice’ (ἀπὸ ἀνανδρίας γὰρ ἢ δειλίας ἢ ὑπομονῆ καὶ τὸ μὴ ἀμύνεσθαι, 1384^a19–20). Aristotle might believe that a virtuous person, being neither unmanly nor cowardly, could never be a victim of rape, and so would have no need of *aidōs* in that respect. Alternatively, Aristotle is only reporting the views of the many (sc. ‘it is seen as a sign of unmanliness’) without stating his own position on the matter. In that case, he might hold that a virtuous person would be disposed to feel (appropriate) shame at being raped—a deeply troubling view, but one that seems consistent with his ethical theory.

of audience before whom people are likely to feel shame. Chief among them are those whom we admire and esteem, and so wish to be admired by in return—including our rivals (1384^a24–7; 1384^b29–30). ‘And in general’, Aristotle later adds, people feel shame before ‘those on whose behalf they themselves feel ashamed [*ὑπὲρ ὧν αἰσχύνονται αὐτοί*]’ (1385^a4). Here Aristotle introduces the idea that a person might feel shame not because of what he himself does (or has done to him), but because of someone else’s actions. And people are especially prone to feel shame in relation to those who have some special connection to them, for example whose teachers or advisers they have been (1385^a5–6). The thought must be that—fairly or not—if a student acts disgracefully, it reflects poorly on his teacher, so that both will have reason to fear disrepute. To Aristotle’s example we could add friends, family members, and even one’s fellow citizens. In each of these cases, a virtuous person may be exposed to disgrace by the actions of another without doing anything shameful himself. If shame is indeed the right response to such situations, then Aristotle should admit that a virtuous person would be disposed to feel shame.

Beginning with Alexander’s critique of *NE* 4. 9, we have considered at least three reasons why *aidōs* might be characteristic of a virtuous person after all. The possibility of slander and misrepresentation, the potential need to perform ‘mixed’ actions, and the fact that one’s reputation is tied to the actions of others—all show that even a virtuous person is not immune from falling into disrepute. In claiming that only voluntary actions give rise to *aidōs*, Aristotle neglects the fact that honour and reputation are *external* goods and therefore vulnerable to luck. In short, a virtuous character is not sufficient for avoiding *adoxia*—just as it is not sufficient for achieving *eudaimonia*, of which honour and good reputation form a part.¹²¹ That is not to say that a person should be *indifferent* to his reputation, just because it is not fully within his control.¹²² Even if honour is partly subject to chance and misfortune, there may be better or worse ways to deal with that fact. As Alexander suggests, a virtuous person will be sensitive to slander and misrepresentation, and will guard against them in so far as he is able. If he has to do

¹²¹ See *NE* 1. 8, 1099^b1–2, where Aristotle suggests that *eudaimonia* depends on having friends and political power, which in turn will depend on a person’s reputation and social standing.

¹²² In *NE* 4. 4, when discussing the virtue concerned with minor honours, Aristotle suggests that complete indifference to honour is a vice (1125^b8–11).

or endure something shameful for the sake of a noble end, he might feel shame as an acknowledgement of the dishonour—even though he knows the act was justified. The same is true if his student does something disgraceful, or if a shameful secret is uncovered in his family's past. Shame may indeed be the correct response, even if a person bears no responsibility for what was done. It is, of course, a further question whether shame *is* the correct response in these circumstances. But given that Aristotle considers honour and reputation to be genuine goods, he should also think that a virtuous person would be affected by the threat of losing them, or by their actual loss.¹²³ In that case, the fully virtuous person will be disposed to feel both prospective and retrospective shame in appropriate ways. The natural term for such a disposition is *aidōs*.

6. Conclusion

So is *aidōs* an Aristotelian virtue? It is hard to see why we should resist that conclusion, if a virtuous person will show a proper concern for his reputation, and will be disposed to feel shame when appropriate. We have seen that Aristotle has two main reasons for separating *aidōs* from the genuine virtues. First, he conceives of *aidōs* as strictly an emotional disposition, whereas the virtues are expressed not only in feelings but also in wise decisions and actions. But if avoiding disrepute can be the goal of action, it seems he should allow that *aidōs* can be a 'prohairesis' mean as well. Second, Aristotle thinks that *aidōs* implies an imperfect character, either because it depends on the desire to do something shameful, or because it aims at the wrong end, mistaking honour and reproach for the truly *kalon* and *aischron*. As such, it can lead a person with generally good motives to act unwisely. Aristotle wants to preserve a distinction between acting from the fear of disrepute and acting for the sake of the fine. For the most part the distinction seems warranted: a virtuous person does the just thing because it is just, not in order to protect his reputation.

And yet, even a completely virtuous person will not be indifferent to what people think of him, because he appreciates the value of honour and social standing as external goods. Since reliably doing the just, or the generous, or the courageous thing is not suf-

¹²³ See again *NE* 1. 5, 1095^b22–3; 4. 3, 1123^b15–21; 7. 4 (*EE* 6. 4), 1148^a29–30.

ficient for avoiding disrepute, a virtuous person will need *aidōs* in addition to the several virtues. He will guard against having his actions misrepresented by others, and he will respond with appropriate shame should his reputation be compromised, whether by his own ‘mixed’ actions or by the actions of people connected to him. Knowing when, how, and to what extent to care about the opinions of others will require practical wisdom. Given that Aristotle acknowledges specific virtues concerned with honours great and small, there is no obvious reason why a sense of shame, properly circumscribed, should be denied the same status. It seems that Aristotle should have recognized *aidōs* as a virtue after all.

Vassar College

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