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The Virtue of Shame in Moral Development  
An Aristotelian Perspective

By

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**Abstract:**

Aristotle touts the importance of performing virtuous actions in order to have a virtuous character. Yet, reason is necessary for an individual to actively change their own behavior. Aristotle believes that children are too young to have developed reason, so we may wonder how are they to become virtuous. The answer I offer is shame. Shame is a painful emotion that causes one to believe that, by acting poorly, we have lowered our worth in the eyes of those we respect and admire. I argue that shame effectively changes behavior in children because it is attached to a stigma of dishonor and the pain of rebuke to activities, which they might otherwise do. Shame encourages children to reform their behavior by leading them to forgo the pleasure of one activity so that they do not have to experience the pain of displeasing those who they hold in high regard, their peers, and themselves. Remarkably, shame appears to be the only emotion within Aristotle's framework that has the ability to develop virtue and morality in children without reason.

**Advisors:** Prof. Krisanna Scheiter & Prof. Robert Baker

In his ethical treatises Aristotle claims that virtue is acting in accordance with good reason (*NE* I.7, 1098a8-16). But he also says that in order to become virtuous, that is, in order to act in accordance with good reason, we must first act virtuously. Through repeated virtuous actions we develop habits that shape our character our dispositions. Despite Aristotle advocating the importance of acting in certain ways early on, he does not explain how we come to perform virtuous actions in the first place. A child does not have reason and so her actions cannot be in accordance with reason. Aristotle claims that the child is supposed to be habituated so that their actions align with the actions of the virtuous person. But if children cannot calculate the ethical implications of their actions, how are they to adjust their behavior so that they gradually begin to act more virtuously. In other words, how do we get children to act virtuously, when they do not

understand the reasons for acting virtuously? I will argue that shame is necessary for moral education.

According to Aristotle, we have both rational and non-rational desires. Our rational desire is *boulesis*, which is a desire for what is good. Since children do not have reason they do not have a desire for what is good. What they do have are the non-rational desires, namely, *epithumia*, which is a desire for bodily pleasures like food, drink, and sex, and *thumos*, the desire for honor and praise. Shame allows a child to forgo their strong appetitive urges for the sake of *thumetic* pleasures, namely that of acceptance in your community, especially those in the community the child admires and respects. When a child acts on the impulse of their appetite and anger, if their superiors apply shame properly to that action, it will cause the child to view that action as painful. It is painful to feel the disapproval of those one looks up to, and even more so to realize that your actions have caused those individuals to think less of you.

A child will understand that they have lowered themselves in the eyes of others, but still know they feel they are not that inferior. The known discrepancy between how they have presented themselves and how they feel they are ignites a drive to redeem themselves for their shameful actions. In the future, the child will forgo the pleasurable actions of the appetite and anger if they wish to avoid the pain of shame that arises from the anticipation of *thumetic* condemnation of those whose opinions matter to them.

Children are motivated to act on their desires for pleasure and retaliation because they imagine the pleasure they will experience when they act on those desires. If, however, the child anticipates the disapproval of those they admire, then they will no longer be able to focus on the pleasurable aspects of the action. By taking away the pleasure of anticipation, and replacing it with an emotional pain, then the child loses the motivation to commit the action.

I will show that shame is the key to habituating a child to act virtuously in the absence of reason. First, I will describe why virtue is the most worthwhile end-goal for Aristotle, and that all humans should strive for virtue for its own sakes. I will then discuss Aristotle's account of pleasure and pain before explaining how people develop a certain character through habituation. Finally, I will present Aristotle's account of shame, and the role shame plays in creating virtuous children without the use for reason.

Shame, when used properly, creates virtuous children by encouraging them to understand non-virtuous actions as those which alienate the individuals they care for most. The only way to redeem themselves for their actions is to avoid those actions in the future. In this way, progress is slow and steady, but the child will eventually come to be virtuous through steady habituation. This conclusion is extremely important for understanding Aristotle's account of virtue in his ethical treatises. But it is also important for understanding moral education in general. If Aristotle is right, then we have an interesting theory about how to steer children toward morality since they are unable to do it alone and are necessarily dependent on their community and family for such moral training.

## CHAPTER ONE: ON VIRTUE

For Aristotle, the good, *eudaimonia*, is “that which all things seek” (Rorty 18; *NE* I.1, 1094a3). The good is necessarily self-sufficient and complete, meaning that we seek it for its own sake. If the good were not self-sufficient and complete, we would choose *everything* for the sake of something else, “making the sequence go on to infinity, making our desires empty and vain” (*NE* I.2, 1094a19-21). The good is an end, not a means to an end. For example, we would seek employment to pay for one’s education, seek education to secure a more prestigious job, seek the more prestigious job in order to buy more clothes, seek to buy more clothes to look professional to secure an even more prestigious job in order to buy a large home, and on and on. Hypothetically, in this scenario, without the presence of the good would continue on because we would not seek something for its own sake, but merely for the sake of something else, for the sake of something else afterwards. Rather, Aristotle argues, we all act in pursuit of the good.

Let us examine what the good entails. As Aristotle says, “one must try to grasp [the good] at least in outline,” if we are to understand how one ought to pursue the good, in the way a skilled archer can successfully hit a target (*NE* I.2, 1094a23-27). Knowledge of this outline can inform us about how to live well.

The good “legislates about what one must do and what things to abstain from doing” (*NE* I.2, 1094b5). What one does is just as important as what one does not do. This is crucial, because without knowing the good, and the nature of the thing we seek for its own sake, we will not recognize it, and find ourselves trapped in the infinite sequence of merely seeking things, for the sake of other things. Once one goal is attained, another goal takes its place and nothing of great value is achieved. This infinite sequence is undesirable because it is an unending process of aiming for goals that are always replaced by another goal, though the goals bring no satisfaction.

Since “what is fine is found to an even greater degree in unchanging things,” such a circular sequence of unsatisfactory goals is not what the good entails (*EE* I.8, 1218a23). Things that are longer-lasting are better than things that are short-lived, for it is more secure, and we enjoy things more that are secure, for we may rely on their being present (*Rhetoric* I.7, 1364b30-34).

When we understand the good, we understand what we ought to seek. Hence, states Aristotle, “the good itself would be this: the goal of all that is achievable by human action” (*EE* I.8, 1218b13-14). Every human will agree that we seek happiness (*eudaimonia*) above all else, as it is the highest achievable good (*NE* I.4, 1095a15-16; *EE* I.7, 1217a40-41). We all seek happiness because it is a form of the good, the chief good, which all things seek (*EE* I.8, 1217b6-16; *NE* I.2, 1094a22). It is what is best, finest, and pleasantest (*NE* I.8, 1099a25). Everything we do represents a movement toward what we believe will make us happy. It is the case that each thing we do is a mere movement *towards* happiness rather than a fulfillment or failure of happiness, for, “neither does a single day, or a short time, make a man blessed and happy” (*NE* I.7, 1098a17-20).

For Aristotle, virtuousness is a disposition (*hexis*), as opposed to an affection or a capacity (*NE* II.5, 1105b23-1106a12). By “affections,” Aristotle means those emotions and moods that act on us, attended by pleasure and pain, including appetite, anger, fear, hatred, joy, and friendliness (*NE* II.5, 1105b20-23). By capacities, Aristotle means our capacity to fulfill the affections. For example, the ability to become angry is the capacity for anger. Dispositions are the character traits that, like happiness, must be built up over great swaths of time.

Happiness, for Aristotle, is living well and doing well (*NE* I.4, 1095a20). It is never desirable for anything but itself, making it self-sufficient, complete, and stable (*NE* I.7, 1097a33-1097b1). Much like happiness, we choose honor, pleasure, intelligence and justice for their own

sakes, and these can contribute to our happiness (*NE* I.7, 1097b1-5). And while happiness may be found in (a) pleasure, (b) virtue, and (c) wisdom, Aristotle claims that happiness is “the activity of a complete life in accordance with virtue.” (*EE* I.1, 1214a19-21; *EE* II.1, 1219a37-38). Our desire for happiness motivates us to better ourselves. If one can determine how to become virtuous, they will know how to be happy and achieve the highest good humanly possible.

### **i. Two Categories of Virtue**

Aristotle acknowledges two categories of virtue: (1) virtue of character and (2) virtue of intellect (*NE* II.1, 1103a15-16). Each type of virtue corresponds to a different sort of happy life: the life of intellectual fulfillment, and the life of character fulfillment. The two are by no means mutually exclusive. However, the life of the intellectually virtuous, as we shall discuss, has less to do with ethics, honor, and pleasure than the life of the one who has virtue of character. Furthermore, it is far more difficult to develop a child’s character virtue than intellectual virtue.

Intellectual virtue exists entirely within the scope of the reasoning part of the soul, and includes scientific knowledge, reason, intellectual accomplishment, and practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) (*NE* VI.3, 1139b32-1141a20; Rorty 205). Yet, one piece of intellectual virtue can be taught to those without reason (*NE* II.1, 1103a16-17; *NE* VI.1, 1138b26-34). Children do not have reason, but can become great geometers and mathematicians because these subjects require knowledge of abstract principles, rather than knowledge of particulars (*NE* VI.8, 1142a11-1142a21). Abstractions, universals, can be taught to anyone who can remember them, whereas particulars cannot be taught in the same way.

Learning about particulars takes time, while this is not true of universals. One cannot memorize universal truths or laws, written or merely understood, though one cannot incorporate all the particulars into a universal truth (*NE* V.10, 1137b13-24). For example, it is easy to learn the alphabet, including the specific sounds that each letter ought to make. Children can master their ABCs. But, it is far more challenging, and takes much more time for children to learn the particular circumstances when letters must be silent or pronounced differently. Even if they are taught that “B” makes a certain sound, they will need time and experience to become familiar with the particular words that contradict the universal rule, such as *climb*, *thumb*, *subtle*. Reason need not be developed for one to know universal laws, principles, and social norms. Universals are accessible to children through teaching and memorization. This is not so with particulars.

Actions, however, exists at the level of particulars (*NE* III.1, 1110b35-1111a1; Moss 183). The particulars of any circumstance include who is acting, the motivation for action, how the person is carrying out the action, when the action is taking place, and the nature of the action (cruel, kind, etc.) (*NE* III.1, 1111a3-6). It is nonsensical to believe that universals will apply fittingly to all circumstances. Particulars often do not conform to the rules of universals, making any assessments of circumstances based on universals somewhat unreliable.

Without intimate knowledge of, and experiences dealing with similar particulars, we cannot be confident in our assessments of, or reactions to any circumstance. Without knowledge of the particulars, we cannot know the ramifications of our reactions to circumstances either. Aristotle argues that every worthless adult is “ignorant of what one should do and what one should abstain from, and it is because of this sort of mistake that there come to be unjust people, and bad people in general” (*NE* III.1, 1110b27-31). Badness, injustice, and worthlessness in adulthood, therefore, stems from ignorance of particulars.

Abolishing ignorance of particulars, then, eradicates badness, injustice, and worthlessness in adulthood. Abolishing ignorance of universals makes children good geometers, mathematicians and memorizers. Children can only cultivate intellectual virtue at the level of universals, for mastering the particulars takes experience, experimentation, and time. Therefore, I will not focus on, intellectual virtue, or consider it a meaningful part of my discussion on the moral development of children.

Virtue of character describes the faculty which “provides and preserves good things” through actions and affections (*Rhetoric* I.9, 1366a31-34; *NE* III.1, 110930-31). The virtues of character are dispositions within us that allow us to act, react to others, and experience emotions in ways that align with the good. As this type of virtue is associated with the characteristics of justice, courage, temperance, prudence, and kindness, it is also the one that has more to do with ethics (*Rhetoric* I.9, 1366b1-24). Intellectual virtues are certainly important for happiness and morality overall in a reasoning adult. However, Aristotle believed that with children, their education in reason must *follow* education in bodily discipline and habituation (*Politics* VIII.3, 1338b2-5). Since Aristotle argues that habituation is the way to develop character virtue, I take this statement to mean that training in character virtue must precede training in intellectual virtue. Therefore, it is all the more crucial to highlight the significance of character virtue in the moral development of children.

Children are more than capable of cultivating character virtue, which is focused on action, on particulars. Character virtue, unlike the majority of intellectual virtues, requires a sense of particulars. Moreover, character virtue is simply more applicable to children since children do not have reason. While intellectual virtue belongs to the rational part of the soul, character virtue belongs to the non-rational part of the soul (Moss 165).

Though the virtues of character belong to the non-rational part of the soul, the non-rational part of the soul follows the rational part (*EE* II.1, 1220a10-11). Aristotle wrote “[Socrates] was wrong in that he thought that all the virtues were forms of wisdom, but he was right to claim that they require wisdom” (*EE* V.13, 1144b20-21). Aristotle explains that virtue is a state “accompanied by correct reasoning,” and by reasoning, he means practical wisdom (*EE* V.13, 1144b23-28). Practical wisdom is inextricably linked with actions, and practical wisdom is about knowledge of particulars and perception (*EE* V.13, 1145a1-6). Expanding on his description of happiness to necessitate practical wisdom, Aristotle states, “each person has just as much happiness as he has virtue, practical wisdom, and the action that expresses them” (*Politics* VII.I, 1323b22-24).

It may seem contradictory to state that children, who lack reason, can develop their virtues of character, which also are dependent on practical wisdom, belonging to the rational part of the soul. In *Politics*, Aristotle explains:

Despite the fact that since a child is incompletely developed, it is clear that his virtue too does not belong to him in relation to himself but in relation to his end and to his leader. (*Politics* I.13, 1260a31-33)

A child need not have reason to develop virtues of character, that onus lies with the parents, guardians, mentors, and other elders the child forms strong relationships with. I will elaborate on this point in my discussion of the Apparent Good. A child can develop their character virtues with the assistance of their elders, relations, and community members. However, save for one facet, a child cannot develop their intellectual virtue. For our purposes, when speaking of virtue, I will focus only on virtue of character from this point forward.

## ii. Function Argument

Aristotle's Function Argument sets the precedent that the *function* of a thing determines how it ought to act, if the thing is to act in accordance with virtue (*NE* I.7, 1097b22-33). If a thing cannot implement its function well, then that thing is not entirely virtuous. To clarify, when referring to virtue (*arête*), Aristotle means excellence of any sort. Virtue, in the Aristotelian context, is not a term that refers exclusively to humans or sentient beings. For example, the function of a knife is to cut. If the knife is dull, bent, or flimsy, it will not cut well and fail to perform its function well. Thus, a knife that does not cut well is not virtuous; it does not have *arête*.

Each thing has a specific function, which distinguishes one thing from another (*EE* II.1, 1219a1-10). The function of each thing is its end goal (*EE* II.1, 1219a1-10). This is why we are aware of the difference between a knife, a table, a plate, and a tree. Each thing "strives for its *own* good – the eye for sight, the body for health, other things for other goods in the same way" (*EE* I.8, 1218a32). Every thing has a function, and the potential to be virtuous in its own right by performing its function well. Nothing other than humankind is capable of reason, making reason peculiar to, and the function of humans (*Politics* VII.14, 1332b3-5; *NE* I.7, 1097b31-1098a5).

Aristotle states that the function of a human is activity of the soul in accordance with reason (*NE* I.7, 1098a1-7). The virtue and the good of a thing are measured by how well it performs its function, its purpose of existence. To sum up; "virtue, then, is a disposition of this kind, which is brought about by the best movements of the soul and which produces the best functions and affections of the soul" (*EE* II.1, 1220a29-31). Essentially, virtue and function are intertwined, such that the function of a human is to fulfill their capacity for virtue, via exhibiting the right affections of the soul. With the knowledge that performing one's function well begets

virtue and happiness, one must learn to perform one's function well. One must learn to live in accordance with reason and practical wisdom. Questions remain. How do we become virtuous? How do we know how to act? How do we come to possess correct reason?

### iii. Doctrine of the Mean

Intuitively, an individual that knows the human function would have no trouble understanding *how* to live according to good reason. Yet, Aristotle observes the practical difficulty in *actually* living in accordance with reason. If we were perfectly wise and had practical wisdom, how would we act?

Each moment presents a new combination of mental, physical, social factors. No moment is the same as a previous one, making it quite challenging to know how to act virtuously. How are we to know how to act then? Aristotle offers comfort; "it will be possible for [virtue] to belong, through some kind of learning or practice, to anyone not handicapped in relation to excellence" (*NE* I.9, 1099b19-21). All we can do is try to do what we think would be the most reasonable given our knowledge of the circumstances and our options:

For we consider that the truly good and sensible the person bears what fortune brings him with the good grace, and acts on each occasion in the finest way possible given the resources at the time, just as we think that a good general uses the army he has to the best strategic advantage, and a shoemaker makes a shoe as finely as it can be made out of the hides he has been given. (*NE* I.10, 1101a1-5)

Virtue represents an ideal that we strive for. We may never live according to *perfect* reason, but we can act in ways that we think would be best. Aristotle suggests we try to act in ways that we would choose "if [we] could acquire understanding and practical wisdom" (*Rhetoric* I.7,

1363b13-15). We strive to do our best given what we know of our ability, our circumstances, and the options available to us. In our efforts to act more virtuous, we move towards greater virtue.

A prerequisite of virtue is being able “to be affected when one should, at the things one should, in relation to the people one should for the reasons one should, and in the way one should” (*NE* II.6, 1106b20-23). The virtuous person fulfills these criteria without much thought. However, for someone actively trying to become virtuous, being affected when they should, in the way they should and so forth, is difficult. It is often hard to know what the virtuous action is for the non-virtuous person.

In order to attempt to act virtuously, we must ask ourselves how we think we would act if we could acquire a greater understanding of the world, and ourselves if we had more practical wisdom (*Rhetoric* I.7, 1363b13-15). When we reflect on which actions a more virtuous version of ourselves would choose, we are likely to want to do that action, since we think it is more virtuous, and will bring us greater overall happiness. Aristotle states:

[B]oth the acquisition of good things and the removal of bad things must be good; the latter entails freedom from the evil things simultaneously, while the former entails possession of the good things subsequently. (*Rhetoric* I.6, 1362a34-36)

By adjusting our actions in small ways, we slowly move in the right direction, towards virtue. Phase out one non-virtuous action. Phase in one virtuous action. Gradually, in this manner of continuously making minor changes, we would become more virtuous.

Virtue of character involves acting in ways that show one is rational, and is acting in a manner that is the most reasonable in a given situation, which is quite difficult to do. Aristotle presents us with the Doctrine of the Mean to give us a practical guide to navigate the array of options in any given case so as to act with virtue.

Aristotle uses the metaphor of attempting to hit a target to demonstrate the difficulty of reasoning well; “single and straight is the road of the good: the bad go every which way” (*NE* II.6, 1106b35). As virtue itself is a “kind of intermediacy,” the best we can do is aim for the intermediate affections and actions in the circumstances we find ourselves in so we may travel that road of the good (*NE* II.6, 1106b27).

Imagine a stranger approached, and slapped another without warning. The irascible person, overtaken by anger, might fight back, in an uncontrollable rage. The timid person would shrink away and flee, believing they must have done something to deserve the slap. The virtuous person would perhaps be ready to defend himself or herself, but not allow their anger to be too great or too little. The virtuous person hits the target, in each circumstance, by finding the appropriate mean for emotion and action for that specific circumstance.

The center of the target is the unattainable ideal. No matter how virtuous our actions, there will always be something we could have tweaked and made more virtuous. In each situation, we can interpret any minute detail incorrectly, or fail to think to act in a more virtuous way. It is about not only determining how much of one trait is appropriate in a given case, but how much of every possible trait is appropriate to a particular case, and what to do in a given moment in a given place at a given time. Finding the mean involves finding the appropriate amount of the array of emotions that may come to you at any time. The virtuous mean is a slippery target, for it shifts depending on the circumstance, and one cannot always be sure what the virtuous response truly is until hindsight makes clear what the right response was. But, the virtues to do with character are dispositions that lie somewhere in the middle of deficiency and excess.

When we ask ourselves how *ought* we act to be virtuous, we must use what we know to help us determine the mean between the two extremes possible in any circumstance. How much anger do *I* think might be appropriate? How much confidence, pity, joy? Searching for this mean will at least help us reflect on what it means to be virtuous and help us along the path towards virtue. Surely the effort to find the intermediate is more important more than being correct about the virtuous mean.

Virtue cannot be realized passively, but must be realized actively. A sleeping person cannot demonstrate their virtue if they remain asleep. A hypothetical person locked in a box may know what virtue is, and know which actions are virtuous. Some believe they can be virtuous if they *know* about virtue, and can speak about what activity and characteristics it entails. This is not the case:

Most people...by taking refuge in talk, think that they are philosophizing and that they will become excellent this way, so behaving rather like sick people, when they listen carefully to their doctors but then fail to do anything of what is prescribed to them. (*NE* II.4, 1105b12-16)

One does not recover from illness by being aware of what is needed to restore health. The person must act on that awareness for any betterment to take place. The same is true of virtue. Unless a person demonstrates their virtue through action, they have merely the *potential* for virtue rather than actual virtue.

#### **iv. Starting Points**

Aristotle argues, as a prerequisite for action, knowledge, or further belief, “one must begin from what is knowable...what is knowable *in relation to us*, and what is knowable *without*

*qualification*” (*NE* I.4, 1095b2-4; Burnyeat 71-72). There exists what we believe to be true, and what *is* true. Becoming virtuous is contingent on our ability to be correct in our assessment of any given circumstance, and our ability to adapt to those circumstances given what we think we know (*NE* I.6, 1096a31-32; *NE* V.11, 1137b33). What we think we know is not necessarily true, but this serves as our starting point for action. Our starting points are the basis for all our actions and thoughts. We acquire them via induction, perception, or habituation (*NE* I.7, 1098b3-5).

All the experiences, knowledge, perceptions, and thoughts serve as the basis for present and future action. Since these starting points are acquired by induction (intellect), perception (sensory input), and habituation (experience over time), children are limited in their starting points. Children have not had much experience in their short lives, and can only develop one aspect of their intellectual virtue. Their starting points are dependent on the way they have been habituated thus far, perceptions, and knowledge of universals, as discussed previously.

The virtuous person must “discriminate correctly in every set of circumstances...being like a carpenter’s rule or measure for them” (*NE* III.4, 1113a30-34). As one can imagine, discriminating correctly in every set of circumstances is quite difficult, given the infinite possibilities that one must consider in acting in each given circumstance. This becomes even more difficult when our starting points do not provide us with a collection of knowledge, perception, and perceptions that show us what virtue is and how to find the virtuous mean. Aristotle himself speaks about how it is impossible to tell a person how to find the virtuous without being wrong in most circumstances. This is why, given the variety of possible starting points, we can begin to aim at the apparent good, what our starting points show us is good, rather than aim at the actual good.

Being virtuous is rare, for it is quite difficult and requires us to have the proper bodily resources, external resources, and good fortune. Reasoning alone cannot teach us the starting points:

Neither in that case, then, does reasoning teach us the starting points, nor does it in the present one; instead, it is excellence, innate or resulting from habit-training, that gives us correct judgment about the starting point. (*NE* VII.9, 1151a17-20)

Our ability to have the correct starting points, to discover the virtuous mean, is contingent on the resources we are born with and find ourselves enjoying throughout life. Aristotle believes it would be prohibitively difficult and unlikely for someone without such resources to become virtuous.

#### **v. Necessary Resources, Virtuous Community, and Good Fortune**

In order to live a virtuous life, we must possess bodily resources, external resources, and good fortune (*NE* VII.13, 1153bb16-25). By bodily and external resources, Aristotle refers to good birth, political power, financial stability, education, beauty, and good health and a virtuous community (*NE* I.9, 1099a31-32). Good fortune is necessary, because great turns of bad fortune will “crush and maim one’s blessedness” by bringing on many pains and obstruct efforts to be virtuous (*NE* I.10, 1100b28-30; *NE* I.10, 1100a8-12). The impoverished, chronically sick, hungry, and uneducated people will be so focused on securing basic necessities for themselves and their families that virtue is not even a goal they can spare time for. Only someone who has the proper resources and good fortune can afford to devote their time and energy to determining what virtue is, and becoming virtuous themselves. Even for one with all the resources and good fortune, virtue is difficult to achieve.

Aristotle stresses that without external resources, such as good birth, financial stability, satisfactory social and familial relationships, and adequate education, the chances that one will be excellent is slim. Virtue is a disposition, which is difficult to fulfill even for those with external resources. There is no “education in riches,” power, or good birth, yet those with such resources have the luxury of not spending their energy or time obtaining them. This allows the rich, powerful, high-born person the ability to pursue virtue. The same luxury is not available to the poor, sick, and ignorant masses who do not lead virtuous lives.

Furthermore, if not brought up in a virtuous community, we will probably not become virtuous, since we virtuous people steer the young from making mistakes (*NE VIII.1*, 1155a13). If the young are steered from the incorrect “mistakes,” they will also be steered from virtue. Those raising children, and those who form relationships with them influence the children greatly. Previously, I explained that children are capable of achieving virtue so long as their leaders possess virtue. If their leaders, parents, other relations do not have sufficient virtue, they cannot lead children to virtue either. How can someone pass on what they do not themselves know or practice? Children must be exposed to virtue in their upbringing by those who have power over them.

#### **vi. The Apparent Good**

Virtue is theoretically available to anyone who can live in accordance with good reason, reliably find the intermediate actions and affections, and determine what the true indicators of the good are. We have said that we naturally aim for what is good by doing what we think will bring the greatest happiness to us. But, what *appears* good and what *is* good are often in contradiction. Different people see different things as good (*NE III.4*, 1113a23).

“A thing is good if it as men wish,” but problematically, people do not always know whether something appears to them good falsely, or if it is good in reality (*Rhetoric* I.6, 1362b24-25). Since “what aims at reality is better than what aims at appearance,” what appears good in reality and not merely in appearance is the best good (*Rhetoric* I.7, 1365a35-1365b1). This is the good, which is understood through either proper habituation or accurate reasoning.

There is no consensus on what will bring about virtue among different sorts of people, so it is difficult to come to a consensus as to how to become virtuous and happy (*Politics* VIII.2, 1337a43-1337b2). We are not even in control of the things that appear good to us (*NE* III.5, 1114a31-33). These things are determined by our dispositions. What we think is good for ourselves will differ from what another person says they think the good to be (*EE* VI.11, 1152b22-23). And since “pleasant activity touches on the end itself,” many mistake pleasure to be the highest good and what will bring them happiness (*NE* III.9, 1117b16-17). I will go into greater depth about pleasure in the next chapter.

The good is misinterpreted all the time. To reiterate, Aristotle argued that we all aim to find happiness, which is comprised of pleasure, virtue, and wisdom. Bodily pleasure is the absolute easiest to achieve, and is often mistaken by the masses to be happiness, for it is the only of the three they may have access to. The masses likely do not have the ideal combination of resources, good fortune, and will to be virtuous and wise to have fulfilled these two criteria for happiness. Sleeping, eating, drinking are all quite pleasurable, yet will not grant anyone happiness if virtue is lacking.

We mistake pleasure for the good when we either reason or perceive something incorrectly (*EE* II.10, 1226a32-34). “Decision is accompanied by reasoning and thought,” and since decision precedes action, which leads to dispositions, which leads to virtue, the ability to

reason well is absolutely necessary for one to cultivate virtue (*NE* III.2, 1112a16-17). The question we have yet to answer is, how is one without reason to know the actual good and become virtuous? Without reason, children are left with their habits and perceptions to guide their action. Habit and perception alone are not enough for them to distinguish the actual good from the apparent good. I find that pleasure and pain, will illustrate the reasons for children's action, and show how they can become re-habituated to act virtuously and to act on the actual good without reason.

Aristotle is certain that virtue has to do with pleasures and pains (*NE* II.4, 1105a10-15). We will now turn our focus to Aristotle's account of pleasure and pain as they relate to the virtuous disposition.

## CHAPTER TWO: ON PLEASURE AND PAIN

There exists a dichotomy between the concept of the good and pleasure, as well as what we believe to be bad for ourselves and pain. Pleasure and pain are not connected to the “goodness” or “badness” of something. Rather, they are connected to ease with which an action or a state comes to us. It turns out that both pain and pleasure can either entice us to act virtuously, or entice us to act poorly. For Aristotle, the virtuous person is pleased and pained at certain things that coincide with their virtuous disposition. One cannot be considered virtuous if one acts virtuously, but does not enjoy the virtuous actions. In this chapter, I will explain how one’s experiences with pleasure and pain influence our actions and degree of virtue.

Pleasure is defined as “a movement by which the soul as a whole is consciously brought into its normal state of being” (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1369b33-34). Pain is the opposite, a movement that consciously distances the soul as a whole from its normal state of being (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1369b35-1370a3). By “normal,” Aristotle means that which comes naturally and easily to us by nature. For example, by nature, fire is hot, and stones do not move upwards, but are weighted down to the ground (*NE* II.1, 1103a19-26). What comes easily and feels more natural will always be more pleasurable. Think on times where you have had too little sleep, too little or too much to eat, become ill, stubbed a toe, or felt thirsty from dehydration. Let us assume that it feels natural to get adequate sleep, nourishment, and water, as well as enjoy bodily health and freedom from injury. Pleasure is not intrinsically good or bad. Different people experience pleasure in more or less virtuous ways depending on what comes naturally to them (Rorty 285).

Once the natural state is altered, we feel pain to some degree. We may call this discomfort or distress for milder forms of pain. And what is painful is what is forced, for it removes us from our natural states (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1370a7-10). We would not choose hunger,

thirst, illness, physical injury, or the deprivation of what we are used to having. When we experience these things, it is by force, and thereby, we experience pain. The poet Eueus of Paros wrote, “all that is done on compulsion is bitterness unto the soul” (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1370a11).

We know that pleasure *must* be a good thing, for animals naturally are drawn to it (*Rhetoric* I.5, 1362a6). If one pleasure is greater than another, then that is the better pleasure, if it lasts longer or is not accompanied with pain (*Rhetoric* I.7, 1364b25-26; *Rhetoric* I.7, 1364b30-35). However, pain and pleasure are not limited to the realm of the physical. Any act of concentration or great effort, unless we are used to them, is painful, while any relaxation, “freedom from evil,” amusement, and rest are pleasant (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1370a13-16, *Rhetoric* I.11, 1370b7). It is also pleasant or painful merely to imagine good or bad things happening. Imagination here is *phantasia*. This involves holding past, present, or future images and perceptions in our minds. *Phantasia* is crucial to anticipation, memory, intellect, and thought (Moss 3).

It makes sense, then, that “the pleasure and pain that supervenes on what people do should be treated as a sign of their dispositions” (*NE* II.3, 1104b4-56). Whatever we do on our own is pleasurable to us. If it is pleasurable for me to read books, I will be much more likely to read books than the person who dislikes reading and instead takes pleasure in snowboarding, for example. I would be considered a bookworm, and the other person, a snowboarder. Even if the snowboarder were forced to read books for his courses, this would not make him a lover of books, merely someone who must, at times, read books. Virtuous people must take pleasure in what is virtuous as well:

For excellence of character has to do with pleasures and pains: it is because of pleasure that we do bad things, and because of pain that we hold back from doing fine things. It is through pleasures and pains that that people become bad, i.e. by pursuing them and running away from them, either the ones they shouldn't, or

when they shouldn't, or in a way they shouldn't, or however many other distinctions are made in one's prescriptions. (*NE* II.3, 1104b8-24)

What we take pleasure in, we wish for more of. What pains us, we wish for less of. Since desire is merely a yearning for pleasure, our desires cause us to act such that we do what we think will give us greater pleasure (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1370a17-18). Now, there are different types of pleasure, as suggested earlier, that are associated with dispositions, our character (*NE* X.9, 1175a23-25; *NE* II.3, 1113a33).

Let us think of pleasure and pain as magnetic forces on a compass that point toward the virtuous ideal. It is easy for someone to get an incorrect reading if they desire the pleasures not associated with the virtuous person. The virtuous person "discriminates correctly in every set of circumstances" (*NE* II.3, 1113a30-31). They take pleasure in what is fine and noble, while being pained at what is base (*Burnyeat* 75; *NE* X.9, 1179b4-31). The non-virtuous person then, would look for pleasure in eating sweets to excess, being physically inactive, avoiding mental strain that comes with learning, letting the pleasure of the emotions overtake them.

In the previous chapter, I spoke about the problematic division between the apparent good and the actual good. Knowing what pleasures and pains are noble, and which one's are in fact base, make all the difference in the world. When one can discern a virtuous pleasure from a base pleasure, they can acclimate themselves to the notion that our pleasures define who we are as people, and make a change.

Like virtue, pleasures that are stable and self-sufficient are going to be the higher quality pleasures that will lead one toward virtuous actions. For example, one such pleasure is the joy of rational contemplation. Any activity, whether mental or physical, that exercises our human function is virtuous, and aims toward the good and the happy, complete life. Conversely,

fleeting, un-sustainable pleasures from eating, drinking, extreme emotion, and other intoxicating things are not virtuous. These pleasures weaken us, by limiting our participation in the rational part of our souls (*Politics* VIII.7, 1342b25). Is it difficult to remember a time when our cravings for these intense, and short-lived bodily pleasures were based on rational thinking rather than carnal urges? These carnal urges share in the pleasures that animals seek.

Echoing Plato's division of the soul, Aristotle recognizes three categories of pleasures, the appetitive, the thumetic, and the rational or virtuous pleasures (Burnyeat 79). Appetitive desires include excessive bodily pleasures of food, drink, and sex, and avoidance of bodily pains like hunger, thirst, cold, and all things painful related to touch and taste" (*NE* VII.4, 1148a5-8). Thumetic desires involving the pursuit of honor and friendship are a sort of quasi-reasoning, which is available to children and animals (Pearson 153-154). Appetite can obey thumetic desires. But, if appetite is allowed to run rampant, we are nothing more than self-indulgent, mad animals. For desire, it is important to tamp down the appetitive desires, rein them in with either pleasures of the rational part of the soul or thumetic desires.

Aristotle believes that humans are above animals *due* to our reason. If we fail to exercise our reason, we are no more than lowly, animalistic brutes. And what we take pleasure and pain in indicates our kinship with the fine, or base. Therefore, cultivating a desire for longer lasting pleasures, which engage the reasoning part of the soul, is the way to become virtuous. The most virtuous pleasures are those that are moderate, as in, not overly indulgent. If we have intense cravings for such intoxicating pleasures and find it hard to deny ourselves of them, we are ourselves in an "excessive state of self-indulgence" (*NE* II.7, 1107b4-6). Longer-lasting pleasures include health, physical fitness, acquiring skills, and learning. Other, pleasures that are desirable in themselves include honor, winning, and wealth (*NE* VII.4, 1147b30-1147b32).

Conversely, developing virtue requires that we must endure certain pains. Self-betterment, by its nature, entails change in ourselves. If there were no change, there would be no betterment, merely a continuation of what already is. Self-betterment entails change, and that change is not natural to us, else we would have been better without effort. However, we all can attest to the truth that there is no self-betterment without effort on our parts. Aristotle observed that, even when we put in great effort for something great, it still pains us, for it is difficult, and not what we are used to. Pain through some kind of force or coercion is required to reap the benefits of the more gratifying, longer-lasting pleasures of virtue (*Rhetoric* I.7, 1364b30-34).

It is important to determine why we cannot be a certain disposition unless we are pleased and pained by the things that correspond with that disposition. Note that “someone who holds back from bodily pleasure and does so cheerfully is a moderate person, while someone who is upset at doing so is self-indulgent” (*NE* II.3, 1104b5-7). The best pleasures are those that are not immediate and may require some strain or effort in order to achieve it:

You may give up pleasures on the spot and the pain later, or gain on the spot and the loss later. That is what appeals to the weak-willed persons—and weakness of will may be shown with regard to all the objects of desire. It may on the contrary appeal to you—as it does appeal to the self-controlled and sensible people—that the pain and loss are immediate, while the pleasure and profit come later and last longer. (*Rhetoric* I.12, 1372b12-16)

Therefore, fleeting pains can lead to greater overall pleasures, whereas this is not so with pleasures (*Rhetoric* I.7, 1364b30-34). When one is used to being sedentary, or eating poorly, the first times that one tries exercising or eating healthier foods are somewhat painful to that person,

but only immediately so. In time, these choices will lead to better health and leave one with a lasting feeling of pleasure, like that of health rather than sickness or weakness.

It is imperative that one experiences pain and pleasure at the right things:

Happiness *is* an end that everyone thinks is accompanied not by pain but by pleasure. This pleasure is not the same for everyone, however, but each takes it to be what suits himself and his condition, and the best person takes it to be the best pleasure, the one that comes from the noblest things. (*Politics* VIII.3, 1338a5-9)

Clearly then, for Aristotle, if virtue is happiness, and everyone seeks happiness, then the one who experiences noble pleasures is the one who is happiest and most virtuous.

We become virtuous by acting virtuously. The sort of person we are is dependent upon the sorts of actions that give us pleasure, for we are inclined to act in ways that give us pleasure rather than the opposite. We cannot be said to be what we do not take pleasure in, because though we may be that sort of person one day, we are forcing what we are not today. For example, if Jim wishes to live a fit lifestyle, yet loathes going to the gym, whether he goes to the gym or not does not matter. Only if Jim enjoys going to the gym and eating healthily can he be said to be a healthy eater and a fit person. If Jim does not enjoy going to the gym and eating healthily, he is not likely to continue with this routine if he does not enjoy it. If Jim enjoyed going to the gym and eating healthily, and was convinced it was good, it is unlikely he would stray from that habit. Therefore, he cannot be said to be healthy if he does not enjoy being healthy.

Since we can only be the type of person that enjoys the activity that corresponds to our dispositions, we must enjoy virtuous activity to be virtuous, and remain virtuous. With children, however, they are born with the capacity for appetitive and thymetic pleasures (Pearson 153-

154). Appetitive pleasures lead us to live a life like an animal that cannot use reason to determine the higher pleasures (Pearson 154). Instead, the young are driven by intense desires to win honor and satisfy their bodily hungers and emotions to excess (*Rhetoric* II.12, 1389a2-13). As the appetite is supposed to be guided by reason, and children have no reason to re-calibrate their non-virtuous pleasures, how are children supposed to become virtuous? Children must develop pleasures and pains that correspond with the virtuous pleasures and pains, yet lack the faculty to develop these pleasures and pains on their own.

It is far harder to “withstand what is painful than to hold back from what is pleasant,” so children certainly cannot be counted on to avoid the non-virtuous, immediate pleasures for the sake of immediate pains that lead to greater pleasures (*NE* III.9, 1117a35-1117b1). For this reason, habituation is necessary to train children to reflexively be pleased and pained in virtuous ways. I will go on to show that shame is the necessary tool for habituation of children. Thumetic desires are slightly more rational than appetitive. Thumetic desires do not require reason, but they cause us to aim for what is noble and just *because* we seek the noble and just so that we may be honored (Burnyeat 79). Being honored is very pleasurable for the young (*Rhetoric* II.12, 1389a2-13-14). Shame can help a child use thumos to over-ride their appetitive desires.

### CHAPTER THREE: HABIT AND EDUCATION

Every action is brought about by one of seven causes: chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reasoning, anger, or appetite (*Rhetoric* I.10, 1369a5-7). Chance involves fortunate circumstances, mere luck. Nature implies the state that is easiest for a person to be in. Compulsion is an urge to do something. Habit will be discussed at length in the following chapter, and to summarize briefly, it is a repetitive customary action or impulse. Reasoning is the ability to logically think about the consequences of actions and parse through which course of action is best. Anger is rather self-explanatory, and can prevent us from acting virtuously. Appetite, is the pull from our physical desires for nourishment, hydration, sex, and intoxicants. The youth are especially likely to be influenced by anger and appetite, for without reason, they do not have a fully developed faculty for choosing action, or understanding that actions are in line with the good.

The crux of my thesis involves explaining how children become good without rationality, for rationality is what allows one to realize the good, and act on it accordingly. The short answer is, children do not have rationality, but they can become habituated to do certain actions. In fact, habituation and pleasure-seeking are the driving force of all action as children, Aristotle would argue.

The good is what each person desires, regardless of whether or not they are aware of that fact. The good is therefore what the wise person would determine to be good through past experience and ability to reason. For, reason allows the person to predict the various consequences of any given action, and wisdom allows them to remember what actions lead to specific consequences. What the wise person aims at, therefore, is a fairly accurate indication of what Aristotle takes to be the good.

However, the appetite, as we have discussed oftentimes distracts us from acting well, especially in the young and immature, or if we have never challenged ourselves, or been forced to act contrarily to our appetites.

Aristotle states that while we all aim toward the good, we merely aim at the appearance of the good. The sort of person that we are will warp our sense of the good. Each person, having their own disposition, will seek out what appears good to them given their own experiences with the “good,” which also constitute the pivotal experiences that have made them what they are. Most of us are naturally inclined to think that we act well, but we believe that, no matter our intelligence or true level of virtue, our dispositions are correct, or at least on the right track, and we will rationalize. What we do that we believe is good, is oftentimes inseparable from the actions that we do. To clarify, we act in ways that we believe to be good, and are convinced they are good because we may not be aware of another way.

Each person aims at “what appears to us good, we are not in control of the appearance, but rather the sort of person each of us is, whatever that may be, determines how the end, too, appears to him” (*NE* III.5, 1114a30-1114b1). Even if someone acts badly, they will still have acted in a way that appeared to them good because they are ignorant as to why their action was bad, and how it was not truly aiming toward the good. They mistake the appearance of the good for the good because they know no better (*NE* III.5, 1114b1-1114b5). Though we all strive for the good, it may be hard to grasp, for some firmly believe that the good is something that it is not.

By nature, different things appeal differently to different individuals. Each person has their own interests and tendencies that are a product of their upbringing and external influences. This develops because we learn over time, knowingly or not, that certain things provide

pleasures and others pains. We decide which we prefer, and organically come to prefer certain things, see certain things as good or beneficial, and other things as bad or unfavorable. Ones preferences are woven into a framework of each person's conception of the good, accurate or not (*NE* II.9, 1109b2-5). Furthermore, we are always more drawn towards pleasures than anything else, "which is why we are more easily drawn in the direction of self-indulgence than of orderliness" (*NE* II.8, 1109a15-16):

Aristotle provides a simple explanation of how we come to have preferences here:

All actions that *are* due to a man himself and caused by himself are due either to habit or to rational or irrational craving. Rational craving is a craving for good, i.e. a *wish*—nobody wishes for anything unless he thinks it good. Irrational craving is two fold, viz. anger and appetite." (*Rhetoric* I.10, 1369a1-4)

In other words, we are drawn to things by rationality or irrationality. If we are drawn to things irrationally, then we are drawn to things because our appetites, our bodily hunger for food, alcohol, other stimulation, are moving us in that direction. Therefore, since children do not have rationality, they must be drawn to the good through other means, namely, what Aristotle calls habituation. Virtue of character rather than virtue of intellect is what is developed through habituation (*NE* II.1, 1103a16-18):

The virtues develop in us neither by nature nor contrary to nature, but because we are naturally able to receive them and are brought to completion by means of habituation. (*NE* II.1, 1103a24-27)

Habituation cannot change our nature. In the same way that a stone cannot be trained to move upwards, and a fire cannot be trained to be cold, our nature cannot be changed (*NE* II.1, 1103a19-22). Nor can we become virtue by nature, without habituation (*NE* II.1, 1103a19-22).

Habituation can only shift the way we act in a way that is not how we would naturally act, but not against the laws of our own nature. For a human cannot do something that is not possible for a human, though they can come to be a sort of human that most are not.

Through habituation, the forming of habits, we are bound to become one sort of person rather than another; a person with a set of tendencies and skills not possessed by other persons. Aristotle states that “we are ourselves responsible for having become the sort of person... for it is the sort of activity we display in each kind of thing that gives us the corresponding character” (*NE* III.5, 1114a5-8). People become a certain sort of person by doing things that that sort of person does. We voluntarily choose to act or not to act and therefore, the virtuousness or viciousness of our character depends on us, for we can only be of a character that gives us pleasure (*NE* III.5, 1114b19-22; *NE* III.5, 1113b14-15; *NE* I.8, 1099a5-16). One cannot be just if one does not enjoy just action (*NE* I.8, 1099a17-26). Therefore, we cannot be of a certain disposition if we do not enjoy that disposition or doing the corollary actions.

While at first, an action may be forced, the next several times will become easier, for it is more familiar. Then, once one has done more of this type of action, that becomes habit, which is the next most pleasurable thing to those that are pleasurable by nature (*EE* VI.10, 1152a29-34; *EE* VI.5, 1148b17-18; *EE* II.7, 1223a33-36).

Habit is a substitute for what comes naturally, for after performing an action over and over again, that action is what one becomes inclined to do, and it feels natural to do it (*NE* VII.10, 1152a29-34):

Produce a number of good actions, all of the same kind, and people will think that they must have been intended, and that they prove the good qualities of the man who did them. (*Rhetoric* I.9, 1367b25-27)

The sum of one's recent actions come to be the shape of one's character. In short, you are what you do routinely. When one repeatedly performs good actions, one becomes good. A person becomes a builder by building, and a person becomes just through doing just things (*NE* II.1, 1103a33-1103b1).

In the chapter on virtue, I spoke about the difficulty of reaching it. One may only become excellent through habituation. Aristotle speaks about aiming towards the goal of virtue as shooting for a target. The target is flawless virtue, and the closer one gets, the more excellent one becomes. If one deviates from virtue by way of an overactive temper, a streak of nastiness, a tendency to be a coward, etc., this will deviate oneself from the center of the target. However, slowly, one can train oneself through reason to see which actions would be more or less virtuous, and take the path of greater virtue rather than lesser. In Aristotle's own words, "since it is hard to hit upon the intermediate with extreme accuracy, one should take to the oars and sail that way...grasping what is least bad of what is available" (*NE* II.9, 1109a35-1109b2). When we choose the least bad course of action from the options we are aware of, we remove ourselves from what we understand to be vicious (as in the opposite of virtuous), and this drags us closer to the center (*NE* II.9, 1109b5-7).

By choosing more virtuous action over lesser, one can gradually shift closer and closer to the target, the aim of virtue. Though Aristotle would argue that the aim is perfect virtue, and cannot be obtained by any person, it is an ideal that we may strive for, and benefit in aiming toward the ideal. Despite how talented one might be at self-control, there is a powerful force resisting against reason and self-control:

Take those with and without self-control: we praise their reason, and the aspect of their soul that possesses reason; it gives the right encouragement, in the direction

of what is best, but there appears to be something else besides reason that is naturally in them, which fights against reason and resists it. (*NE* I.13, 1102b14-19)

However, the natural human drive towards pleasure and away from pain makes this seemingly simple path to virtue quite difficult. Aristotle cautions, “in everything we must guard most against the pleasant, and pleasure itself, because we are not impartial judges in its case.” (*NE* II.9, 1109b7-9). As discussed in the chapter on pleasure and pain, it is always easier for us to give in to pleasures than to withstand the pain and discomfort of denying oneself that pleasure. This remains true even if one knows that over time, the pleasure will be greater over time by refusing to take part in an immediate pleasure.

There is a problem. Habituation depends on us and is voluntary, but also involves a great deal of reason. In order to become virtuous, we must use reason to logically determine which courses of action are the most reasonable. Without reason, one would not have any faculty to combat the drives toward pleasure and away from pain. The young, Aristotle believes, do not have the ability to reason. Instead, they are guided by their emotions, especially anger and fear (*NE* I.3, 1095a4-5; *Rhetoric* II.2, 1379a2-13).

How is one to become virtuous when they do not possess reason? As Aristotle points out, it is impossible to *persuade* a child not to follow their emotions, like hunger, anger, excitement, frustration, etc. (*NE* III.5, 1113b29-31). The young have not had enough life experience yet to develop reason, or understand that their emotions and appetitive desires can be stifled for the sake of future good, despite the immediate pains it may cause them (*NE* I.3, 1095a1-3). As lawmakers shape the actions of their citizens through forcible correction, so too must children’s actions be forcibly corrected through habituation (*NE* II.1, 1103b1-6; *NE* II.3, 1104b10-18).

In order to ensure that a child can be properly habituated, their habits must be shaped and set from an early age. This is of the utmost importance if they are to truly be habituated and enjoy good actions as they would natural pleasures. I will remind the reader that virtuous character must be accompanied by enjoyment for virtuous action. Therefore, if the process of habituation begins too late, then one's earlier habits and natural inclinations will be remembered more as a source of pleasure than the current actions. For example, if a child has eaten candy for breakfast over a period of years, it will feel natural for that child to enjoy candy for breakfast. If one attempts to wean them off of this bad habit through habituation, it will be quite difficult, for they have already come to know their past behavior as very pleasurable and it will be painful for them to deny themselves of what already feels natural. Aristotle writes, "it does not make a small difference whether people are habituated to behave in one way or another way from childhood on, but a very great one; or rather, it makes all the difference in the world" (*NE* II.1 1103b22-26):

[F]or no more will the sick person be healthy merely for wishing; and it may be that he is ill voluntarily, by living a life in weak-willed disobedience to his doctors. Previously, then, he had the option not to be ill, but once he let himself go, he no longer has it, any more than it is possible for him to retrieve a stone after it has left his hand; but all the same, it depended on him that it was thrown, for the origin was him. (*NE* III.5, 1114a15-19)

Simply, once we have become habituated to be a certain sort of person, it becomes extremely difficult to remedy that if we were habituated poorly. Moreover, we are the ones who make ourselves virtuous or vicious based on our actions, regardless of whether we are a certain way through rational thought or habituation.

Additionally, we are not in control of our actions and character in the same way; “for we are in control of our actions from beginning to end, because we know the particulars involved, whereas we only control the beginning of our dispositions, and process of incrementation is not something we are aware of in its particulars, any more than we are when we are becoming ill” (*NE* III.5, 1114b30-1115a2). In other words, it is far easier to be aware of our actions than our dispositions, for the nature of an action is something that is easily observable, while the gradual change of one’s character is not, because it is not immediate.

We have discussed already that our character is the sum of repeated similar actions, but those actions must be “of a certain quality” (*NE* II.1, 1103b22-26). If one habitually plays guitar poorly, one will become a poor guitar player (*NE* II.1, 1103b10-11). Conversely, if one is habituated to perform actions well, then one will become a person who performs actions well rather than badly.

Habits are formed through our own repetitive actions, and our decisions not to act also:

For when acting depends on us, not acting does so too and when saying no does so, saying yes does too; so that if acting, when it is a fine thing to act, depends on us, not acting also depends on us when it is shameful not to act, and if not acting, when it is a fine thing not to act, depends on us, acting when it is a shameful thing to act also depends on us. (*NE* III.5, 1113b7-13)

The onus is on us to act in the way that we wish our disposition to be. So, if we wish to be just or moderate, we must act justly or moderately (*NE* II.4, 1105b9-10). Yet, this is difficult, and people are discouraged by the prospect and initial discomfort of forgoing what is already natural to them, or habit, for this is painful. Even if one wishes to be virtuous, and knows what the virtuous person does, if they fail to do this, they will not become virtuous. Aristotle makes the

comparison from this scenario to one in which sick people are told by doctors to do something, and they fail to do what is prescribed for them to regain health (*NE* II.4, 1105b11-1105b18).

Since our actions determine our disposition, someone who fails to do what is virtuous in favor of what comes easily or requires the least effort will become this sort of person to rely on what is simple on their part too (*NE* II.2, 1103b30-31; *NE* II.2, 1104a21-23). By nature, we are inclined to perform certain actions above others because they provide more pleasure than pain. With reason, it is possible to come to the conclusion that by withstanding some immediate pain, one will reap greater pleasures later. However, without reason, habituation only can cause someone to choose what is naturally more painful over what is naturally more pleasurable. Pleasures and pains make us who we are, for we act on them appropriately or not and this shapes our character over time (*NE* II.2, 1104b20-24).

Aristotle holds that the virtuous person will be able to ascertain, “like a carpenter’s rule” in any given circumstance what the virtuous action would be (*NE* III.4, 1113a33). However, it is challenging to discover the virtuous action, for we are automatically drawn towards what would be most pleasurable to us, which can keep us from action that is initially difficult or strenuous, but more pleasurable overall; “Most people are deceived in the deception seems to come about because a pleasure; for it appears a good thing when it’s not. So they choose what it’s pleasant something good, and they avoid pain is something bad” (*NE* III.4, 1113a33-1113b2).

Now habituation is useful in that, if done properly, it can assist one in developing a character which tends to resist immediate pleasures when the immediate pains felt are overshadowed by greater pleasure later (*NE* III.12, 1119a25-28). “The pleasure or pain that supervenes on what people do should be treated as a sign of their dispositions; for someone who

holds back from bodily pleasure and does so cheerfully is a moderate person, while someone who is upset at doing so is self-indulgent” (*NE* II.3, 1104b4-7)

Again, to many, the virtuous actions will not be clear, and they will be misled. However, if one strives toward virtue, they will at least be better off than having not tried at all; “It is not the function of medicine simple to make a man quite healthy, but to put him as far as may be on the road to health: it is possible to give excellent treatment even to those who can never enjoy sound health” (*Rhetoric* I.1, 1355b12-14). The many who will never become sufficiently virtuous can at least, through habituation, reach a level of virtue above that which could be reached without effort.

If one is not properly habituated through repeating the actions of the virtuous person, then one will not become virtuous. Habituation can go awry when one’s external resources, including education, family income, social status, birth, etc., are not sufficient. When one worries about obtaining these resources, it is much less likely that one’s parents and mentors will have a clear view of the good, and you yourself will have difficulty focusing on being virtuous when worrying about obtaining the resources just mentioned. If life turns out not to be fortunate, “they crush and maim one’s blessedness; for they bring on pains, and obstruct many sorts of activities” (*NE* I.10, 1100b28-30).

Now, we have discussed why habituation is essential in shaping one’s character. Our repeated actions of a similar sort will become like second nature to us, and we will enjoy those actions that feel as though they come naturally to us. Therefore, we can come to act in ways that are not natural, but truly appear natural to us in that they are the actions that we have come to know to do in a given circumstance. However, the most important detail is that we take pleasure in these habituated actions, and the corresponding disposition will be pleasing to us as well. And

as Aristotle clearly argues, we cannot be just if we do not enjoy just action; in fact, we cannot be any disposition if we do not take pleasure in the actions associated with that disposition (*NE* I.7, 1097a31-1097b5; *NE* I.9, 1099a17-22). Therefore, it is impossible to be virtuous if one does not take pleasure in performing virtuous action. So, one must be habituated in a manner that gradually causes one to enjoy virtuous action as those actions begin to feel more natural rather than forced and uncomfortable. In the following chapter, I will discuss why a child cannot be habituated properly to take pleasure in virtuous action without shame.

## CHAPTER FOUR: ON SHAME

*“Something I fain would say to thee,  
Only shame restraineth me.” (58) – Alcaeus*

One difficulty in describing shame is explaining exactly what Aristotle believes it to be. Yet it is important to understand what precisely Aristotle classifies as, for then we can understand it as another of the category of things that Aristotle thinks it is. Aristotle makes clear that shame is not an virtue. Some of the qualities that qualify as shameful include cowardice, injustice, greed, meanness, having a disposition of a flatter, low tolerance for things, and boastfulness (*Rhetoric* II.6, 1383b21-1384a7).

Shame is not included anywhere in his list of virtues in either the Nichomachean Ethics for the rhetoric. In fact, Aristotle says explicitly that “shame should not be described as an virtue” because it is more like an affection than a disposition (*NE* IV.9, 1128b10-11). Shame then, is not a virtue, because it should not be a permanent characteristic, but it serves as an emotion that guides us. Shame is only for the young, after all, because the virtuous person will not do shameful things (*NE* IV.9, 1128b17-20). At first this is puzzling. Aristotle clearly thinks that shame is a necessary and oftentimes, an undeniably good thing.

What makes team of passion rather than a virtue for Aristotle is that shame causes a predictable physiological reaction in the body, namely that people who are ashamed will blush (*NE* IV.9, 1128b13-15). Something that brings about the change in bodily condition for Aristotle seems to be a passion rather than a state for it overcomes the person suddenly and physically (*NE* IV.9, 1128b13-15). Aristotle also claims that shame’ is a “kind of fear of disrepute” and it is akin to the fear of danger (*NE* IV.9, 1128b11-13). Aristotle clarifies, “people are praised for having a sense of shame too,” though there can be excess and deficient levels of shame and a person also (*NE* II.8, 1108a32-36).

The individual who is excessive in shame Aristotle claims, becomes anxious about everything is well because she makes them wary about acting on anything (*NE* II.8, 1108a32-37). Meanwhile the person who is deficient and shame is shameless which Aristotle says that “shame may be defined as a pain or disturbance in regard to bad things, whether present, past, or future, which seem likely to involve us in discredit and shamelessness as contempt or indifference in regard to these same bad things” (*Rhetoric* II.6, 1383b15-17). So, shame is a fear of acting in a way that dishonors oneself, and we fear this very dishonor. A child’s reputation is important, for they wish to be loved and honored, as was explained in Chapter Two.

Aristotle argues that shame as not an virtue because, while it is a good thing to feel shame if one does something wrong, the virtuous person does not willingly act wrongly (*NE* IV.9, 1128b27-33). Therefore shame as not a feature of the virtuous person, nor is it an virtue. In the same way that “health is the end of medicine, a ship of ship building, victory of generalship, and wealth of household management,” so too is virtue and rationality a sort of end to shameful feeling (*NE* I.1, 1094a7-8).

We also “feel shame at such bad things as we think are disgraceful to ourselves or to those we care for” (*Rhetoric* II.6, 1383b17-19). Aristotle is quick to note that we feel shame in front of those that we consider are equals or better. We wish to take part in the honorable reputation of those individuals of our own ethnicity, nationality, age, family, level of education etc. (*Rhetoric* II.6, 1384a9-16). It is also rather shameful to not live up to the standards of one’s own community, because we are, in a sense, constantly competing for honor and a good reputation within our own communities (*Rhetoric* II.6, 1384b27-30, *Rhetoric* II.6, 1384a9-13). If those like yourself all advance on to get their doctorate, you will likely feel somewhat ashamed at having stopped at a Bachelors or Masters degree.

Along those same lines, we feel shame to a greater extent when we do something shameful in front of those that we spend a lot of time with, those that we know will remember our shameful actions (*Rhetoric* II.6, 1384a35-1384b1).

Aristotle sees something important—that we are only afraid of the disgrace following shameful actions rather than the consequences of the actions:

Now since shame is the imagination of disgrace, in which we shrink from the disgrace itself and not from its consequences, and we only care what opinion is held of us because of the people who form that opinion, it follows that the people before whom we feel shame are those whose opinion of us matters to us. (*Rhetoric* II.6, 1384a24-27)

Shame is unpleasant because it involves the fear of being discredited by one's peers, whom one would rather be held in high esteem. However, we don't feel shame in front of children or animals, because they are, in a sense, below us, and their opinions are not as important to us, nor can it tarnish our reputations if they happen to dislike something we do (*Rhetoric* II.6, 1384b23-26).

Rather, the only people we can feel shame in front of are “those who admire us, those whom we admire, those by whom we wish to be admired, those with whom we are competing, and those whose opinion of us we respect,” as well as those “who possess any good thing that is highly esteemed; or from whom we are very anxious to get something that they are able to give us...[w]e compete with our equals” (*Rhetoric* II.6, 1384a27-32).

So, we feel shame in front of the people whose opinions we value, or whose opinions will color the opinions of others we do care about (*Rhetoric* II.6, 1384a24-27). Moreover, we will

feel even more ashamed if we know an action will cause someone we care for to be associated with our shame as well (*NE* V.8, 1135b16-25, *NE* I.5, 1095b21-27; *NE* IX.2, 1165b13-17)

Feelings of shame are strengthened in front of those who are more apt to judge harshly:

We also feel it before those not open to the same imputation as ourselves; for it is plain that their opinions about it are the opposite of ours. Also before those who are hard on anyone whose conduct they think wrong; for what a man does himself, he is said not to resent when his neighbours do it: so that of course he does resent their doing what he does not do himself. (*Rhetoric* II.6, 1384a35-1384b5)

Throughout his works, Aristotle seems to suggest that shame is effective only because we measure our own value by the value that others ascribe to us. By acting in a manner distasteful to those whose opinions we care about, we sense that distaste, and understand that our actions have lowered our standing in the eyes of others. Then, we feel some loathing for our judgment in acting as we did and making ourselves appear inferior to the way we picture ourselves to be.

Aristotle believed that the youth were the only ones who should feel shame. He holds that “the passion [i.e. shame] is not becoming to every age, but only to youth” (*NE* IV.9, 1128b16). The thinking is that the young do not have the ability to reason yet and are instead driven by passions. Therefore they make a great deal of mistakes, which often lead to feelings of shame in some degree or another. So, shame is something reserved for the young because mature adults are expected to control their action through reasoning rather than through their passions (*NE* IV.9, 1128b16-22).

Thus far, we have established that shame is a passion rather than an virtue, that virtuous people do not experience shame (and if so, rarely), that shame is more acute when one's bad actions are exposed to people that one knows or cares for, that shame is reserved for the youth, and that rationality and virtue put an end to shame. Let us now explore the mechanics of shame, and how it works to create a sense of morality in children.

## CHAPTER FIVE: ON THE ROLE OF SHAME IN DEVELOPING VIRTUE

“Every action of every person either is or is not due to that person himself. It those not due to himself, some are due to chance, the others to necessity; of these latter, again, some are due to compulsion, the others to nature.” (*Rhetoric* I.10, 1368b33-36)

Any action that has an origin, and that origin may be ourselves, or something else. Since we are concerned with action that are due to ourselves, we will discuss this rather than chance, compulsion, or the like.

All actions that *are* due to a man himself are due either to habit or to rational good, i.e. a *wish*—nobody wishes for anything unless he thinks it good. Irrational craving is two fold, viz. anger and appetite. (*Rhetoric* I.10, 1369a1-4)

We do not act in ways that we think bad. No matter what action we take, we take it because it appears good to us, because we know it will bring us pleasure, or because while the action is not ideal, it is done for the greater good or pleasure over time. Rational craving is one way that adults can decide to act.

Children do not yet have the capacity for reason. For children, their action is due to a combination of habit, anger, and appetite. Actions of a similar sort over time become habit. The collection of one’s habits form one’s disposition. One’s disposition also affects the sort of actions that a child will naturally be inclined to do. However, our dispositions contain bad qualities which lead to us acting wrongly.

We do wrong, regardless of age or maturity, because of the bad qualities we have within ourselves; “For the wrongs a man does to others will correspond to the bad quality or qualities that he himself possesses” (*Rhetoric* I.10, 1368b14-15). An angry person will act with a greater

propensity for anger than a person who is not angry, but calm. The temperate person meanwhile, will not allow their appetites to control them and drive them to satisfy their appetitive desires.

There are actions we do for the sake of the good, but appetite causes us to act for the sake of immediate pleasures (*NE* III.1, 1118b9-23; *EE* II.7, 1223a33-36) Aristotle claims that appetite is the cause of all actions that appear pleasant (*Rhetoric* I.10, 1369b15-16). But, it is almost more pleasurable to give in to appetite than habit, because habit is more natural, and perhaps less conflicting:

Habit, whether acquired by mere familiarity or by effort, belongs to the class of pleasant things, for there are many actions not naturally pleasant which men perform with pleasure, once they have become used to them. To sum up then, all actions due to ourselves either are or seem to be either good or pleasant. (*Rhetoric* I.10, 1369b17-20)

If all actions appear to be good or pleasant, then how is a child expected to change their behavior without reason to let them deliberate what is truly good and pleasant? As soon as we become habituated to do something, it becomes natural, unforced, and therefore, pleasurable; “Habits also are pleasant; for as soon as a thing has become habitual, it is virtually natural” (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1370a5-6). They must be habituated through shame then so that the corrected actions become natural and pleasurable. Over time, these new actions will inform upon the child’s disposition as well.

We are always looking to impress others, and improve who we are in the way we see is improvement. We always have a dispositional goal that we aspire to by adjusting our behavior, or hoping to maintain by acting in a similar way to the past. “Honour is the token of a man’s being famous for doing good” and therefore, what one does virtuously, as the good person would

do, is honorable, and worthy of praise (*Rhetoric* I.5, 1361a26-29). For Aristotle, actions are typically neutral, praiseworthy, or blameworthy. The more praiseworthy action one performs, the more honorable one generally becomes in a community which does in fact value virtue. In order to become virtuous, we must live in a virtuous community.

“Honour and credit bestowed by those whom you think much inferior to yourself—e.g., children or animals—you do not value” (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1371a14-16). Therefore, a child would not be honored by younger children or children that they feel are inferior to them, but only children that they saw as superior to them, adults, parents, teachers, and other mentors.

Honour and good repute are among the most pleasant things of all; they make a man see himself in the character of a fine fellow, especially when he is credited with it by people whom he thinks good judges. His neighbors are better judges than people at a distance; his associates and fellow-countrymen better than strangers; his contemporaries better than posterity, sensible persons better than foolish ones, a large number of people better than a small number. (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1371a8-18)

In other words, honor and repute, hand-in-hand with praise, is extremely pleasant, and children do not need reason to feel the pleasure of these things.

While children do not yet have the capacity of reason, they are not limited to motivation of the appetitive pleasures. Children possess the capacity for thumetic pleasure also. Thumos, epithumia, previously established habits, and a desire to avoid pain are the only means available to a child to lead them to action. We have already described why one avoids pain, is drawn to appetitive pleasures in the absence of reason, and succumbs to the near-natural pleasures of habit. However, we must now discuss how children are affected by thumos.

Children do not have the capacity for reason, and act impulsively with their appetitive passions and habits as a guide to their activity. The question is, how are we to forcibly correct the behavior of a child when they do not have the capacity to reason or simply will away their appetitive desires?

The answer is shame. Children can be molded with shame in a way that can allow them to alter their behavior without reason, and habituate them to act virtuously, thus setting them up to *be* virtuous when virtuous action becomes habitual and pleasurable.

People still act wrongly. Aristotle explains that *wrongdoing* is “injury voluntarily inflicted contrary to law...by general law, [I mean] all those unwritten principles which are supposed to be acknowledged everywhere” (*Rhetoric* I.10, 1368b7-9). Children, cannot injure voluntarily, if they have no reason to know what they are doing. But can, in a way choose one thing over another based on their appetitive desires and established habits.

Aristotle writes that “we deliberately do bad things out of either vice[, a lack of virtue,] or a lack of self-control” (*Rhetoric* I.10, 1368b13-14). Children may or may not have virtuous qualities and habits, depending on their habituation. However, in a void, they could not control their appetitive desires. They must build habits to forgo appetitive pleasures and impulses. To do this takes work, effort, and forcible correction.

Aristotle compares the process of habituation to the process that lawmakers go through in shaping the actions of their citizens. Lawmakers must forcibly correct wrongdoers who may have done something out of natural inclinations or because they were ignorant of the law or the good through fines or the like. They reward those who perform good and admirable actions through praise or by some other means to encourage citizens to perform good actions and abstain from wrong or base actions (*NE* III.5, 1113b23-27; *NE* III.5, 1113b37-1114a1).

When we take pleasure in a given activity, it is very difficult to end the pleasurable activity. Perhaps the activity is formed out of habit, or perhaps it has not become habitual yet, but still, there is such pleasure in it that it is difficult or nearly impossible to stop on one's own without an external force, especially for a child. A child does not possess reason that a more mature adult could use to convince him or herself that forgoing the pleasure is for the best.

Aristotle uses the example of a law-making politician to illustrate the use forcible correction:

[T]estimony to this effect seems to be provided by the practice both of different sorts of private groups and lawgiver's themselves; for they forcibly correct and impose penalties on wrongdoers, provided they did not act under force, or because of ignorance for which they're not themselves responsible, while they honour those who perform fine actions, in order to encourage the latter and put a stop to the former. (*NE* III.5, 1113b23-27)

In this manner, when a child acts wrongly, determined by their guardians, mentors, or peers, they may have been in ignorance as to why their action was blameworthy and wrong. However, they can still be shown that their actions were not acceptable, thereby placing a stain of blame and dishonor on the wrong action. This takes away some of the pleasure from the action, and anticipation of the action itself.

When we are aware that discomfort or blame will follow an action, we are less likely to enjoy the anticipation of the action since anticipating the pleasure of the act would also necessitate anticipating the pain of being chastised and dishonored.

Aristotle writes, "that is pleasant which is not forced on is; for force is unnatural, and that is why what is compulsory is painful" (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1370a8-10). Therefore, whenever a child is

shown that an action they find is pleasant is blameworthy and intolerable, they will be compelled to act differently, in a way that does not cause blame to overshadow their actions and bring about the disapproval of those they share relationships with. I will explore this now.

To reiterate, shame is a fear of disrepute. Shame works because it causes one pain that becomes greater than the pain of acting in the way one's appetites and habit lead us to act. Aristotle states that "I count among pleasures escape from painful or apparently painful things and the change of a greater pain for a less" (*Rhetoric* I.10, 1369b26-27). When someone causes us to realize that an action of ours was shameful, we see ourselves the way another does. Our action has caused someone else to see us as inferior to how we previously stood in their view. Again, we can only feel shame in front of those we admire, respect, and feel some kinship to.

Children do not have reason. They do use thumetic and appetitive drives to act. We have not yet discussed thumetic desire and capacity. Essentially, thumos is the will to be honored by those whose opinions matter to us. We mimic those who we want to be like. By imitating a person who has a healthy stride, it appears that we ourselves have a healthy stride, and then we become healthy striders. This is because we mimic the people that we hold in high esteem. We want to be around those we respect, admire, or see as having some degree of virtue within them.

This could be because we admire others based on what our conception of value in another person. Whether or not our conception is correct, it informs the values that we ourselves possess, and we then admire those who have more of those qualities which we strive for ourselves. Aristotle states; "The features typical of friendship for others...seem to derive from a relationship towards ourselves" (*NE* IX.4, 1166a1-3). Our relationship with ourselves seems to inform how we see others. What we wish to become is the sort of person that we admire and try to have a relationship with:

For this sort makes the same judgments as himself, and desires the same things in respect of his whole soul; and he certainly wishes for that is good for itself, and what appears good, and he does it (for it is a mark of a good person to work hard at what is good), and for his own sake (for he does it for the sake of the thinking element of himself, which is what each of us is thought to be). (*NE IX.4*, 1166a14-17)

We have a deep desire to share the company of others who we see as similar to ourselves, those who have similar values as ourselves, and those who have realized the goals that we set for our character and life accomplishments.

The friend, the mentor, the role model, is nothing more than a version of ourselves. And we act towards our friends as we would ourselves, and hope that our friends will act in ways we admire or would approve of ourselves, for “[one’s] friend is another self” (*NE IX.4*, 1166a31-32).

We also tend to think well of ourselves; “[S]ince everything like and akin to oneself is pleasant, and since every man is himself more like and akin to himself than any one else, it follows that all of us must be more or less fond of ourselves” (*Rhetoric I.11*, 1371b18-20). And “what is our own is pleasant to all of us, as for instance our own deeds and words” (*Rhetoric I.11*, 1371b23-24). Since we tend to seek out friendship in those whose deeds and words are like what we imagine to be good, we seek the friendship or other relationships with those we find similar to ourselves, or what we wish we could be.

And since we tend to love and think fondly of ourselves, and our relationship with our friends is parallel to one with ourselves, “[f]riends belong to the category of pleasant things, it is pleasant to love—if you love wine, you certainly find it delightful” (*Rhetoric I.11*, 1371a16-17).

Yet, in the same way that we may lose interest in a friend who diverges from acting in a way that we can relate to as “good,” we must ourselves remain somewhat a certain way at the risk of losing our friends and other relations:

[F]or example with children’s friendships: if one side continued to think as a child while the other became a man of the most powerful sort, how could they be friends, when they are not satisfied by the same things, and when they don’t share pleasures and pains? (*NE IX.3*, 1165b26-30)

Therefore, if we ourselves begin acting repetitively in a way that repulses, displeases, or confuses our friends and relations, then those communal bonds we have will be strained and may break apart. Since it is not pleasant to lose the love and respect of those we admire, and enjoy the company of, we do not purposely displease our friends and relations, for we do not want to destroy those relationships we value.

Perhaps the greatest reason why we do not do this is that it is pleasurable to be loved, admired, cared for by another; “It is pleasant to be loved, for this too makes a man see himself as the possessor of goodness, a thing that every being that has a feeling for it desires to possess: to be loved means to be valued for one’s own personal qualities. To be admired is also pleasant, simple because of the honour implies” (*Rhetoric I.11*, 1371a18-22).

Honor is inextricably tied to friendship. Friendship is a relationship based on one’s honor and another’s. Depending on how we feel about ourselves and our own reputation, we will become friends with people of greater or lesser virtue, or what we think to be honorable qualities. We will not accept friendship from anyone; “As for honour from just anyone, and given for things, he will whole despise it, because *that* is not that he is worthy of—and he will reject dishonours in the same way, for it will not justly attach to him” (*NE IV.3*, 1124a10-12). It becomes

dishonorable to stoop in one's friendships or have someone far inferior to yourself (that clearly does not have the potential to be as virtuous as you) bidding for your friendship seriously.

Since "it is a noble thing to surpass men who are themselves great," and "any superiority is held to reveal virtue," it is the most honorable thing to surpass individuals who are more virtuous than ourselves (*Rhetoric* I.9, 1368a23; *Rhetoric* I.9, 1368a26). By surpassing individuals more virtuous than ourselves, we find pleasure in knowing that we can use our progress to forge relationships with people with even greater stature. The thumetic pleasure of being a recipient of an honorable person's friendship, admiration, and respect is great, and we will continue seeking such pleasures. Thumetic pleasure is a quasi-rational pleasure to do with honor. Since friendship is a relationship with another person who reflects our own values and sense of honor, it is also a thumetic pleasure.

It becomes pleasant to imitate a person that is admired and honorable. The honor that that person is the recipient of is due to their honorable qualities. Children quickly find that imitation is pleasant because it brings the admiration of their betters. Furthermore, "since learning and wondering are pleasant, it follows that such things as acts of imitation must be pleasant" (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1371b4-5). Imitation is enjoyable when it allows a child to learn to act in ways that bring the praise of those whose opinions they care about.

Just imagine, if a child's behavior is erratic, spoiled, or quick to anger, how would one go about correcting the child's behavior and initiate the shame process? First, you would begin also by praising what the child does virtuously and say why that is admirable:

Consequently, whenever you want to praise any one, think what you would urge people to do; and when you want to urge the doing of anything, think what you would praise a man for having done. Since suggestion may or may not forbid an

action, the praise into which we convert it must have one or other of two opposite forms of expression accordingly. (*Rhetoric* I.9, 1368a8-10)

It is absolutely necessary to praise a child for good behavior and positive actions. When they know what brings their role models a sense of pride in them, they will continue to perform these actions because it is pleasurable for them to please those they consider to be their superiors. The child's sense of self will be elevated because of this praise in a way that makes them want to live up to the higher expectations and prove their worthiness.

Now, when they act negatively, attaching a connotation of blame and shame to actions that are vicious or unwanted will have the opposite effect. Take someone the child cares about and thinks of as a superior calls negative attention to the action performed by the child. The child will now begin to feel ashamed that they have displeased someone whose opinions they care about. When this occurs, the child feels as though their image has slipped. They have become inferior, and must make this up to the person who expressed the displeasure so they can re-establish their status with them. Though reason has not developed in children, they still have access to appetite and spiritedness. The highest thumetic pleasure is having honor bestowed upon us.

Once a child sees that their action has caused them to lose some favor from those they admire and care for, they will know that they must fix their behavior and avoid what brings them appetitive pleasure for the sake of the much more gratifying pleasure of honor from those we admire and respect. Aristotle states that it is easier to forgo pleasure than to withstand pain. Therefore, it will be easier for the child to forgo appetitive or habitual pleasures for the sake of avoiding the pain of shame and feeling themselves unworthy of honor from their community (*NE* III.12, 1119a25-28; *NE* III.4, 1113a33-1113b2).

Further, shame causes a need to repair something defective in oneself. When we set out to change ourselves for the better, we become pleased by this project because it is an effort of ours that we know will have a pleasant and satisfying outcome for us. It is also pleasant to feel that one has the power to improve when others struggle. Or know that one can improve oneself and see the approval in others' eyes (*Rhetoric* I.11, 1371b22-24).

Shame is critical for a child to develop morality and virtue, yet there are circumstances in which it is done improperly, and does not work in the way I spoke of earlier. It is ineffective when someone that the child does not respect the person attempting to invoke a feeling of shame. It also does not work when the child becomes angry with the person invoking shame. This is most likely to occur when the shame goes too far to humiliation and when the person shaming the child uses physical force or fails to explain why the action is associated with those who are inferior to what the child wishes to be.

Without shame, a child cannot become virtuous. Shame affiliates a once pleasant action with thumetic pain that supersedes the pain of forgoing that pleasure. The influence of a child's mentors and guardians are great, so the child's will to seek their approval will give them cause to act in ways that please them. In this way, the child gradually begins to avoid actions which previously were brought on by appetitive impulses for the sake of improving their standing in the mind's of those they care for. Each time a child acts in a way that their superiors would deem virtuous, they will become more and more habituated to act as the virtuous person acts. And so, once a child acts as the virtuous do out of habit, it becomes natural to them, pleasant. In this way, a child becomes virtuous by way of shame and in the absence of reason.

## CLOSING

Aristotle details how reasoning, mature adults are able to habituate themselves. The adult with reason simply thinks through what he thinks to be the best, most virtuous action, and does that action. If an adult wishes to become healthier and more temperate, all he has to do is figure out what are the healthiest sorts of habits and begin working to form those habits. At first, this will not be easy, but over time, if he is diligent, he will desire the healthy foods and exercises he has become habituated to enjoy. Children, however, do not have reason, and so they cannot figure what is good. All they can aim at is the apparent good. Thus, Aristotle leaves us wondering, how children become virtuous without reason to guide them? In the thesis I argue that shame is the key emotion that allows children, with the help of a virtuous community, to become habituated to act virtuously. This is one reason Aristotle claims that in order to be virtuous one must belong to a virtuous community.

Children do not, according to Aristotle have reason, but their parents, older relatives, teachers, and mentors do. When a child acts in a way they should not have, those who know this and have a close relationship with the child can invoke a sense of shame in the child, thus causing the child to feel he has been dishonorable and diminishing his sense of self-worth. More importantly, it makes the child fear that future actions of a similar strand would risk losing the love and respect of those they care about and look up to. This fear mixed with the sense that they acted in a way that did not demonstrate a good and admirable character, causes them to alter their future behavior. Gradually, the unwanted behaviors will be eradicated from a child's repertoire of habitual actions. Shame, and shame alone, is the one emotion that can invoke the drive in children to correct their behavior in the absence of reason.

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