

The Shame-free Stoic Warrior?

Stoicism, Shame, and the Cultural Construction of Masculinity

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Introduction

I'm not talking about brainwashing; there is no such thing. I'm talking about having looked over the brink and seen the bottom of the pit and realized the truth of that linchpin of Stoic thought: that the thing that brings down a man is not *pain* but *shame*!

—James B. Stockdale, *Courage Under Fire*¹

In her discussion of *Stoic Warriors* (2005), Sherman explores the significance of the emotions of anger, fear, and grief in combat and torture. Shame, by way of contrast, barely receives a nod—being mentioned only twice throughout her work. Should we regard this as an indication that shame is somehow peripheral to the experience of the warrior? If we place stock in the trials of Sherman's most exemplary 'stoic warrior', the late Vice-Admiral and former North Vietnamese prisoner-of-war James Stockdale, the answer would be an unqualified 'no'. For Stockdale, tortured on 15 occasions, the "devastating agony of shame" far exceeded that of physical pain² (1993: 3-4).

Although curious, such silence in relation to the emotion of shame is not uncommon. Cicero, for example, once declared that he was "ashamed even to speak of shame" (*De Legibus* 1.19.15, cited in Hollander, J., 2003: 1062). Such a reluctance to acknowledge the "hidden emotion" (Lewis, 1971, 1987) may flow from the fact that acknowledgement may be construed as an admission that there is something to be ashamed of. "Ashamed to be ashamed", those experiencing this painful state may repress or displace shame through statements such as "It was an awkward moment". Of more grave concern is the fact that some 'hide' their shame *in* other emotions such as anger and rage (Lewis, 1971, 1987; Scheff, 1991, 1994; Gilligan, 2003) or *from* their shame in self-destructive behaviors such as suicide. This tendency to conceal,

¹ See page 19. Emphasis original.

² 'Stoics belittle physical harm, but this is not braggadocio,' Stockdale wrote. 'They are speaking of it in comparison to the devastating agony of shame they fancied good men generating when they knew in their hearts that they had failed to do their duty vis-à-vis their fellow men or God'.

ignore, or escape our shame is not restricted to the individual. For Scheff (1995), the denial of shame has come to be institutionalized within Western societies over the last 200 years. Cohen (2003), going even further, proposes that Americans have lost even the language to discuss shame.

This “disappearance of shame” (Scheff, 1995) is intriguing, particularly in light of the general claim that shame is “the most visually conveyed of all the emotions...operating across an interface involving seeing and being seen” (Hollander M., 2003: 1327). In this paper, however, it is not the *subject* but rather the subject of *shame* that will be subjected to an evaluative gaze in an analysis structured around what I identify as the key problem for the ‘stoic warrior’: although the Stoic calls for the elimination of shame, the social construction of the warrior is predicated upon it. After exploring this problem in relation to the Stoic conceptualisation of shame and drawing upon the literature on both shame and masculinity to support my argument, I propose some potential Stoic resolutions to this problem.

Stoics on the Emotions

In order to convey the Stoic orientation to the emotion of shame, it is necessary to begin with a preliminary overview of their broader philosophical stance in relation to the emotions. In general, both Greek and Roman Stoic philosophers encourage us to strive for emotional self-sufficiency by emphasizing both the primacy of will and the capacity for moral choice whilst downplaying the significance of ‘externals’—those factors that lay beyond our control. Since they hold that only virtue and vice genuinely lay within our control, they alone are to be regarded, respectively, as genuinely ‘good’ or ‘evil’. Virtue—identical to happiness—flows from living in harmony with our universal nature, which is tantamount to the exercise of our rational nature:

Therefore, living in agreement with nature comes to be the end, which is in accordance with the nature of oneself and that of the whole, engaging in no activity wont to be forbidden by the universal law, which is the right reason pervading everything, and identical to Zeus, who is the director of the administration of existing things (Diogenes Laertius 7.88, cited in Knuttilla, 2004: 58).

The greatest obstacle to achieving this state of divine wisdom is the tendency to accede to false beliefs or opinions regarding what is good or bad. For, while it may appear otherwise, all other than virtue or vice should be regarded as ‘indifferent’. Although emotions have a ‘rational’ component in the sense of being cognitive propositional structures, they are, as Chryssipus argued, “irrational” in their disobedience to reason, “contrary to nature”, and “excessive” in the sense of a “runaway” impulse (Knuttilla, 2004: 59). In contrast to Aristotle’s program of moderating the passions (*pathē*), Stoics such as Chryssipus and Seneca advocated the extirpation of these false (non-evidential) evaluative judgements:

The question has been raised whether it is better to have moderate emotions or none at all. Philosophers of our school reject the emotions; the Peripatetics keep them in check. I, however, do not understand how any half-way disease can be either wholesome or helpful (*Seneca*, Epistles: 116.1).

When the *pathē* are uprooted, one enters a passion-free state of calm equanimity referred to as *apatheia*³ or ‘the good life’. Here, the sage experiences only certain well-reasoned ‘good’ emotions (*eupatheiai*)⁴.

Stoics on Shame

As Konstan has observed, the emotional lexicon of the ancient Greeks does not map neatly onto our contemporary English concepts of emotion (2003: 602). Regarding the emotion of shame,

³For a useful discussion of the Stoic position on eradicating emotion and the pre-Stoic precursors to this position, see Chapters 13 and 14 (‘The Case for and against Eradication of Emotion’ and ‘The Traditions of Moderation and Eradication’ in Richard Sorabji’s (2000) *Emotion and Peace of Mind*).

⁴ Among the *eupatheiai* are volition—a rational reaching out, caution—or rational avoiding, and joy—or rational elation (See Brennan, 2000: 97).

this is especially true given the extent to which the English language has restricted the usage of this term (Scheff, 1994: 40). In general, however, the two Greek correlates of the English word shame are ‘Αἰδῶς’ (hereafter, ‘*aidos*’) and ‘αἰσχύνη’ (hereafter, ‘*aiskhune*’). ‘*Aidos*’ translates roughly as “respect”, “self-respect”, “respect for one’s own conscience” (Kamtekar, 1998: 136), “reverence”, “awe” and/or “a sense of honor”⁵ (Konstan, 2003: 603). *Aiskhune*, in turn, can be defined as “the fear of bad reputation or disgrace”⁶ (Kamtekar, 1998: 139). For this reason, as Stobaeus has observed, shame is classified by the Stoics as a species of one of four general emotional categories⁷--that of “fear”, or “irrational disinclination” (2.90.19-91.19, cited in Knuuttilla, 2004: 67). Since fear is a pathological condition to be shunned as *contra naturam* (Arnold, 1958: 331-333), Stoic adherents are urged to extirpate *aiskhune* from their mental states. However, according to Diogenes Laertius, the Stoics consider *aidos* as a form of *eupatheiai*, listing it as a species of the virtue of “watchfulness” (*aidemosune*⁸) that comes to replace the *pathē* of fear in the sage (7.116, cited in Kamtekar, 1998: 137). Inasmuch as it is classified as a *eupatheiai*, however, *aidos* can only be experienced by the sage, as only sages can experience *eupatheiai*. Although the non-sage may struggle to achieve *aidos*, they can only experience the corresponding *pathē* of *aiskhune*:

... (O)rdinary people, lacking knowledge of good and bad, pick out the wrong feature of justified censure as bad: they think that the bad reputation that often follows justified censure is an evil; they then try to avoid censure, which, since it is not in their control, they will be unable to do; consequently, they are unhappy. This response is *fear* or some variety of it (Kamtekar, 2003: 139, emphasis added).

Given that they conceptualize *aidos* as only available to the sage and that they encourage the eradication of *aiskhune*, the Stoics, with the exception of Epictetus (discussed below), banish

⁵ Konstan draws his initial translations of ‘*aidos*’ and ‘*aiskhune*’ from Liddel, Scott, and Jones’ (1940) *A Greek-English Lexicon*, (9th ed.) Oxford: Clarendon Press.

⁶ Konstan observes that this definition is taken from Zeno, as recorded in Diogenes Laertius, 7.112.

⁷ The other general categories include pleasure, pain (distress), and appetite. Pleasure and pain correspond to the present while fear and appetite relate to the future.

⁸ ‘Watchfulness’ has also been referred to as ‘temperance’ or ‘caution’.

shame from the acceptable emotional repertoire of their adherents. In the following sections, I discuss the difficulties associated with any attempt to eradicate shame, along with the potential benefits and drawbacks that may flow from such attempts.

Eradicating Shame

Although Stoic adherents are encouraged to regard shame as an indifferent, the following statement by the Stoic philosopher Epictetus suggests otherwise:

For it is not death or hardship that is a fearful thing, but the fear of hardship or death. That is why we praise the man who said:

Not death is dreadful, but a shameful death.
(*Discourses* 2.1.15)

In this passage, Epictetus implies that, while pain or death should *not* be feared, a fear or dread of shame *is* warranted. In this formulation, the coward's experience of shame (were s/he able to experience emotion following death) could be construed as a 'truthful' rather than a 'false' judgment. Since emotions that represent truthful judgements are considered 'good emotions', this suggests that shame may be categorized among the *eupatheia*. It is also consistent with Epictetus' suggestion that the capacity to experience shame is in accordance with human nature: "How are we endowed by nature? As free, as honorable (*gennaioi*), as reverent (*aidêmônes*). For what other animal blushes or has an impression of what is shameful (*aischron*)" (*Discourses* 3.7.27). Epictetus' comments regarding the 'dreadful(ness)' of a shameful death also resonate with Vice-Admiral James Stockwell's dread of shame mentioned at the outset of this paper. What is intriguing about their mutual orientation to shame is the relative weight they assign to it in relation to pain or death, both of which they genuinely seem to regard with a sense of indifference. Why, one wonders, are they unable to cultivate a similar indifference with respect to shame?

Although not concerned with the subject of shame, Brennan (2005) indirectly touches upon this problem when he inquires whether Stoics conceal their expressions of physical pain to avoid “humiliation”, “the pain of being publicly seen to express emotions”, and “being called a crybaby” (4-5), asking:

(Is it rather that the Stoic treats one kind of pain—physical pain, say—as indifferent, because he is so concerned about another kind of pain—the pain of being laughed at?...On this model, the Stoic feels pain just as deeply as you or I do, and works just as hard to avoid it. The difference is simply in our tender spots; he has a less sensitive body and a more sensitive ego (Ibid.).

Although Brennan does not discuss this issue in relation to gender, it seems that he is addressing a particularly *masculine* shame as men are culturally discouraged from crying and are therefore more likely to be called a ‘crybaby’. This suggestion is reinforced by the fact that he proceeds immediately from this point to a discussion of Hume’s claim that Stoicism is a “misguided attempt to model a whole way of life on a fleeting feeling, that of ‘heroic virtue’” (Ibid.)—a virtue that has traditionally been associated with masculinity. What both Brennan and Hume unreflectively allude to is a relationship between shame, Stoicism, and the social construction of masculinity.

War, Shame, and Masculinity

In his multidisciplinary compendium of information on *War and Gender*, Goldstein (2001) observes that, while gender norms outside of war reflect considerable diversity, there exists a universal gendering of war—with considerably less than one percent of warriors throughout history constituting women (9). Inquiring why the gender-war connection is temporally and culturally more stable than both gender roles outside of war and the forms or frequencies of war itself, he concludes that, while killing in war does not come naturally to either gender, cultures develop gender roles that equate ‘manhood’ with toughness in the face of battle (9). In some pre-modern societies, including examples from ancient Greece and Rome, the link was explicit: a

man could not be called a man or marry unless he had proved himself in battle (274). What war requires of men is not “bloodlust or the activation of murderous impulses”, but a willingness “to undergo an extremely painful unpleasant experience—and to hang in there over time despite every instinct to flee” (26). Part of the necessary training for war thus involves cultivating the qualities of bravery and emotional self-control. Given both the historical consistency and geographical ubiquity of war coupled with the fact that the mere potential for war—rather than its actuality—is enough to mobilize cultures to prepare for war, both courage and the ability to control emotions—particularly fear and grief, come to be associated with and cultivated *as* masculinity. Men are thus ‘made, not born’:

Unlike women, men must take actions, undergo ordeals, or pass tests in order to *become* men. They are told to “be a man” whereas women are not told to “be” women (though certainly women too are socialized into gender roles). In this way, a surprising number of cultures converge in treating masculinity as something that must be created by individual and collective will against the force or instinct of “doing what comes naturally.” (Oddly, the term “real men” refers to the aspects of masculinity that are the least real biologically) (64).

Masculine values associated with warrior codes also come to be reflected and enshrined in moral codes. Cicero argues that the very word ‘virtue’ derives from the word for ‘man’ (*vir*); Those aspiring to ‘be men’ must pursue ‘virtus’, which translates as ‘virtue’, ‘manliness’, and even ‘courage’ (*Tusculan Disputations*, cited in Jantzen, 2004: 268). According to Miller (2000), even in the earliest discussions of courage, it was ‘unambivalently place(d)...either first among virtues or no lower than third among the four cardinal virtues’ because “(c)onstrued narrowly as the capacity to face death in feud or war, courage was frankly granted to be necessary to defending self, family, and one’s own against external threat, and thus absolutely crucial to securing the space in which other virtues could develop” (5).

As an emotion, shame is particularly conducive to the cultivation of those traits required in warfare. Unlike guilt, according to Gilbert (2003), which has evolved from a care-based context

where violence to others was discouraged, shame has evolved from a “self-focused, social threat system related to competitive behavior and the need to prove oneself acceptable/desirable to others” (1205). As such, it is ideally suited to the context of war, which represents a form of competition fueled by the perception of social threat and the need to ‘prove oneself’ in the eyes of one’s peers. Where guilt tends to involve an appraisal of one’s actions, shame entails an appraisal of one’s entire self, making it an important motivational tool. Another important feature of shame, according to Gilligan (2003), is that it can trigger automatic defenses such as flight responses, submissive behavior, or anger. With respect to the first, the ‘flight’ response may entail ‘flight’ from a particular emotion such as shame (‘ashamed to be ashamed’) or fear (ashamed to ‘look like a coward’ in front of one’s peers). In this sense, shame can be understood to have ‘metacognitive’ properties. As Lewis (2003) describes it: “...a loud noise may put me in a state of fright. But to experience this state, I need to be aware of my state of fright. To be in a state of shame I must compare my action against some standard, either my own or someone else’s. My failure, relative to the standard, results in a state of shame” (1182).

It is this metacognitive property that renders shame useful as a means of ‘overriding’ other survival-based emotions such as fear and encouraging ‘positive’ warrior qualities such as courage. As the Greek war historian Thucydides observed, “*aidos* partakes most of modesty, courage [*eupsukhia*] of *aiskhune*” (cited in Konstan, 2003: 603). This relationship between shame and courage can be witnessed across culture and time. The active role of shame in fostering heroic courage, for example, can be observed in warrior cultures such as the Samurai—who enshrine many Stoic virtues such as fearlessness in the face of death, duty, and self-reliance (Preston, 2003). As Mukoh observes in the introduction to his translation of Yamamoto’s interpretation of the ancient Samurai warrior code, *Bushido*, the warrior’s “unflinching mind to dive into possible death saves one from shame” (Yamamoto, 1980: 16). Miller supports this

claim, arguing that “(s)hame bears a close connection with courageous motivation; it might in fact be its chief motivator”(2000: 70).

Gilbert (2003) identifies “sensitivity to dominant others and submissive behavior” as a “precursor for shame” (1206). Shame thus evolves to incorporate submission as a “salient defense” (1205). On the one hand, this feature of shame is conducive to a military context organized about a premise of rank. On the other, at least for warlike societies such as ancient Greece and Rome, it is conducive to a tendency to interpret the world, and through this, to re/construct it in terms of such perceived traits.

The opposite of manliness in Roman thought, according to Cicero, was *mollitia*, or effeminacy, which indicated having to submit oneself to another:

Now this contrast of *vir* and *mollitia*, the manly and the effeminate, has a direct bearing on the genealogy of death. To penetrate, to stab, whether with the penis or the sword, was the act of a man. To be penetrated was womanly. Putting it another way, to kill was manly; to die was womanly; unless of course one died fighting, stabbing in return. It was shameful in war to die with one’s back to the enemy; on the other hand to be a courageous warrior was manly indeed (Jantzen, 2004: 271).

Interestingly, the Indo-European base of the Latin word for shame—*pudor*—translates as “striking with a weapon”⁹ while the German *Scham*—linked to the English ‘shame’, meaning “to cover”, is linked to the female genitalia (Hollander, J., 2003). The binaristic social construction of gender as masculine-penetrator vs. feminine-penetrated may have even influenced prevailing opinions regarding the acceptability of suicide in relation to Stoic thought. Cicero’s ‘masculinization’ of suicide as a refusal to ‘submit to’ or ‘passively accept’ death would help to popularize the Stoic celebration of suicide as a reasonable, and even honorable, alternative to compromising one’s honor:

⁹ I here interpret shame as a verb, where striking one with a weapon shames them.

It is impossible to say whether the actual frequency of suicide was higher in the late Republic and the Empire than it had been in fifth- to four- century Athens, or whether it was simply given higher prominence. What is significant is its construction: suicide comes to be seen as a manner of death which enabled a person to retain virtue—manly control and autonomy—as they took the violently active role in their own death rather than passively submitting to events. Thus in Rome, suicide—especially suicide using a sword (as contrasted with drowning or hanging)—could be the most manly of all acts, the active contempt of death (Jantzen, 2004: 271).

The gendered metaphors relating to shame persist throughout the ‘modern’ age of warfare, through an emphasis on masculine ‘hardness’ that defines itself against the shameful ‘softness’ of the feminized body. In *Male Fantasies* (1987), for example, Theweleit discusses how the martial masculinity that emerged as part of post-WWI Weimar culture continued to glorify war as a ‘bath of steel’ which would temper men feminized by civilian life into tough, emotionally disciplined and remasculinized combatants. This masculine ideal was reflected in art such as Joseph Thorak’s 1936 sculpture, ‘Comradery’ (right), where body fused with steel to create an impenetrable armored skin that could “dam in...any force that threatens to transform [the male warrior] back into the horribly disorganized jumble of flesh, hair, skin, bones, intestines, and feelings that calls itself human” (160).



Ritual humiliation also represented an effective method of ‘hardening’ recruits. “The epithets of drill instructors—‘faggot,’ ... ‘pussy,’ or simply ‘woman’—left no doubt” according to Goldstein, “that not becoming a soldier meant not becoming a man” (2001: 265). Males who failed to

conform to and exhibit these ‘hard’ masculine ideals might be humiliatingly labeled as “feminine” or “latent homosexuals” by military psychiatrists (Bourke, 1998: 231). Loss of emotional self-control through battle strain was often labeled “hysteria”, a medical condition that, unlike its masculine counterpart “neurasthenia”, derived from the Greek term for ‘womb’ and was generally associated with female patients. According to Shephard, one American neurologist summed the “diagnostic rule of thumb” here as: “Finding the patient lachrymose and emotional [the doctor] calls the disorder hysteria; if depressed and inert, he calls it neurasthenia.” (2002: 9). In some cases, attempts to castrate the ‘cowardly’ were more than symbolic. Bourke reports that Colonel Amos R. Koontz, writing in *The Military Surgeon*, insisted that “men who had broken down in service should be sterilized—only such a measure would prevent men from showing fear”. “Is it not”, he asked, “time that our country stopped being soft and abandoned its program of mollycoddling no-goods?” (1998: 234). In some cases, those who failed to exhibit the requisite emotional ‘hardness’, were forced into the ultimate act of submission. “It is beyond debate”, Holmes (2003) reports, that some of the British soldiers who were shot for cowardice were “by today’s standards, sick men” (256). Ironically, a recent study exploring Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD, formerly ‘hysteria’) in prisoner-of-war veterans indicated that shame-proneness was positively correlated with PTSD (Leskala et. al., 2002).¹⁰

Perpetual Warfare: The Cycle of Shame

¹⁰ Although it has long been believed that guilt is associated with PTSD, there had been no research undertaken on the relationship between shame and PTSD. What is surprising about this study is that shame, rather than guilt, was positively correlated with the development of PTSD. Once the effect of shame-proneness on PTSD symptom severity was removed, guilt was actually *negatively* associated with PTSD symptoms. The researchers speculate that attributional style—the difference between blaming one’s behavior (guilt) vs. one’s entire person (shame) could account for these differences.

Ensure, Seneca counsels, that a person is left something to lose because a man with a reputation ruined beyond repair cannot be further shamed (De Clementia 1.22.1)¹¹. What Seneca recognizes here has been observed by those who study shame in relation to violence: that constant shaming leads to a “deadening of feeling, an absence of feeling” (Gilligan, 2000: 47). This breakdown of the shame mechanism often leads, in turn, to ‘shameless’ acts of violence. For example, in some cases, torturers are themselves subjected to humiliating brutality as a means of making them more ‘effective’ (Shapiro, 2003: 1138). According to Scheff and Retzinger (1991), a particular sequence of emotions underlies all destructive aggression, including war: shame is first evoked, which leads to rage and then to violence (3). One example of such a shame-rage sequence can, they argue, be observed in a passage written by Hitler who, himself consumed by feelings of shame, railed against the “abject humiliation” of Versailles (111-117):

How could every single one of these points have been burned into the brain and emotion of this people, until finally in sixty million heads, in men and women, a common sense of shame and a common hatred would have become a single fiery sea of flame, from whose heat a will as hard as steel would have risen and a cry burst forth: Give us arms again! (116).

This link between shame and rage can be observed in language, according to Gilligan (2003) as when people who suffer an ‘indignity’ get ‘indignant’ (and may become violent) (1151). This feature operates not only on an individual scale, but on a national scale as well. Interviewing contemporary terrorists and suicide bombers, Stern (2003) indicates that the key motive for such behavior is humiliation—not only personal but also a collective sense of national humiliation when an aspect of their cultural or religious identity was subjected to indignity.

The Shame-free Stoic Warrior?

¹¹ “You will more easily reform the culprits themselves by the lighter form of punishment; for he will live more guardedly who has something left to lose. No one is sparing of a ruined reputation; it brings a sort of exemption from punishment to have no room left for punishment”. See Lucius Annasus Seneca. *Moral Essays*. Translated by John W. Basore. The Loeb Classical Library. London: W. Heinemann, 1928-1935. 3 vols. Volume I. http://www.stoics.com/seneca_essays_book_1.html

Given that the military institution and, more broadly, society utilizes shame as a means of producing warriors, is it possible to imagine a stoic warrior free of this emotion? One possible resolution to this problem may entail the decoupling of the qualities of masculinity and courage. Such an approach is indirectly alluded to by the Stoic Musonius Rufus, who proposes:

The best sort of woman must be manly and cleanse herself of cowardice, so that she will not be overcome by suffering or by fear. If she cannot, how can she be chaste, if someone can compel her to endure disgrace by threatening her or torturing her? How can it be that women do not need courage? That they are capable of taking up weapons, we know from the race of Amazons who fought many nations in battle (Cited in Jantzen, 2004: 281).

If courage was not so strongly associated with masculinity, its absence may not be regarded as ‘unmanly’ and thus shame worthy in relation to one’s masculinity. As Goldstein (2001) observes, men who do not take the “manhood bait” suffer less emotional damage in war (271). However, while in this scenario shame may relax its psychological grip on the male warrior, it may also compensate by extending its reach to emotionally ‘harden’ women who demonstrate ‘cowardly’ behavior. As such, Goldstein argues, it does not represent an effective solution:

Biology endows us with a range of emotional responses because they are useful in a complex language-using social species whose members depend on each other’s cooperation. To truncate this range of responses—such as by losing the ability to cry—diminishes a society. It is better for only half of the population to pay this price, especially since the other half has primary responsibility for young children. Apparently this solution is obvious enough that it recurs in many cultures. Men are trained to suppress emotions, in case they have to fight a war. Women pick up the slack in emotional work and relationships (Goldstein, 2001: 269).

Epictetus, I believe, offers us a more effective way forward. Where typically the Stoics contrast the healthy *aidos* with the pathological *aiskhune*, Epictetus, by way of contrast, advocates the selective use of both these qualities in Stoic therapy as a means of encouraging the adherent to progress in their moral development. Epictetus’ notion of progress is crucial here, for in it he sets out to account for the novice’s ability to make the transition from the ignorant state of *pathē* to the wise state of *eupatheiai*, a transition the earlier Stoics cannot account for (Kamtekar, 2003: 142-143). In Epictetus’ formulation, *aidos* is not the exclusive preserve of the sage but can be

employed, along with *aiskhune*, through a pedagogical orientation that plays one off the other to discourage, at one and the same time, both ‘conceit’ and ‘diffidence’ (3.14.8-9, cited in Kamtekar: 154). The resultant discrepancy in our self-worth, between “our god-like potential and our nearly worthless actual state” is designed to goad us into the awareness of a higher standard through which to evaluate ourselves, thus facilitating self-improvement (Ibid.). However, with progression, *aiskhune* is increasingly shed as the novice comes to understand that the judgements of others—and through this our reputations—are indifferent to virtue. Eradicating *aiskhune*, we come to rely on *aidos* which, in its fruition, assumes the role of ‘conscience’¹² (*syneidēsis*) or “a self-evaluation that restricts conduct from within” (Kamtekar, 1998: 160). As Cohen (2003) remarks: “With face, you have to convince others of your worth; with self-esteem, the only one you have to convince is yourself. As the saying goes, it’s good to know the judge” (1078).

Can a measure of *aidos* or healthy self-respect safeguard one against an overwhelming shame and the negative consequences that flow from it? According to some, yes. Based upon his 25-year study of violent men, Gilligan (2000) defines shame as an “absence or deficiency of self-love” which he posits as the opposite of pride or a “healthy sense of self-esteem” (47). Did Vice-Admiral James Stockdale, like Epictetus, understand this? I believe so. Confronted by the recently tortured fellow inmate who tells him “You don’t want to talk to me: I am a traitor”, Stockwell counters: “Listen pal, there are no virgins in here. You should have heard the kind of statement I made. Snap out of it. We’re all in this together. What’s your name? Tell me about yourself” (1993: 13).

¹² Marietta, Jr. indicates that the while Chrysippus was one of the first to employ the term *syneidēsis*, he did not employ it in an ethical sense. Although the notion of conscience was a commonly held view in the Hellenistic era’, he suggests that its most philosophical development seems to have been in Stoicism’ (1970: 185). The Greek Stoic concept of *syneidēsis*, he adds, probably influenced the equivalent Roman sister/parent concept of ‘*conscientia*’, utilized by Roman Stoics such as Seneca and Cicero, who were known to be influenced by Greek thought.

“To hear that last was, for most new prisoners just out of initial shakedown and cold soak”, he writes “a turning point in their lives” (Stockdale, 1993: 13).

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