

THE SPECTRALITY OF SHAME IN PLATO'S *MENEXENUS*

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Abstract: The article addresses the theme of spectrality, the givenness of the other who remains here after departure as a ghost. It explores how this spectrality functions in Plato's funeral oratory in the *Menexenus* dialogue. In the first part, the article discusses J. Patočka's account of the specific givenness of the departed, which is experienced as a privation of a former intersubjectively intertwined life. The deceased other causes a twofold crisis. On the one hand, with the death of the other also comes the withering of part of myself, for I am unable to realise possibilities dependent on his or her presence. On the other hand, the meaning of the other's project, which becomes institutionalised through participation in the events and re-formation of the world, is endangered if no one is willing to take on and realise this meaning as one's own. The second part of the article discusses how Socrates' oratory addresses this crisis through specific temporality of the speech, one in which the past provides the present with a paradigm for appropriate civic action which is to be imitated in the future. In this context, he creatively uses the concept of shame to induce an attitude of responsibility for the polis, whose greatness is grounded in the virtuous deeds of spectrally present ancestry.

Keywords: spectral phenomenology, Jan Patočka, Plato's *Menexenus*, funeral oration, shame, afterlife

The article addresses the phenomenon of spectrality in Socrates' funeral oration (ἐπιτάφιος) in Plato's *Menexenus*. In its concluding part, Socrates "lets" the war-dead speak and remind their living relatives, parents and sons, of their commitments. Socrates speaks as if the dead were speaking themselves, because "[w]hatever I report you must imagine you are hearing from them in person" (Plat. *Men.* 246c6-7).¹ The reader of these lines feels how Socrates, by assuming merely a representative role of the speaker (or a medium) for the voice of the dead, amplifies the persuasive effect of the speech. This passage, however, points beyond rhetorical achievement to deeper underlying experiences, which it inherently presupposes. The dead, albeit non-existent, speak to us. They might warn us and remind us of our obligations; their words are serious and take on a normative tenor concerning our actions. They are departed and yet have not left us entirely. They have attained a form of earthly afterlife and are a presence among and within us which is distinct from the immortality of the soul typical for substantial metaphysics and the theology of Christianity.

¹ In the article, I am relying on an English translation of Plato's works in (Plato 1997). All translations from Greek have been compared with the original texts from the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae database and, if I felt the need, modified for the purposes of clarity.

Various authors claim that in this case, we should speak of the *spectral* givenness of the other because the dead remain here present in the form of “spectres”, “ghosts”, or “revenants”. The rise of interest in the phenomena of spectrality and the use of specific terminology can be attributed to J. Derrida, who, in *Spectres of Marx*, writes: “It is necessary to speak *of the* ghost, indeed *to the* ghost and *with* it, from the moment that no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seem possible and thinkable and *just* that does not recognize in its principle the respect for those others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet *there*, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born” (Derrida 2006, xviii). In this vein, spectral phenomenology is addressed to reconsidering the concept of death by asking the question: what is the givenness of those who are now deceased? Their departure leaves a void which is felt and experienced and thus presents itself as a positive phenomenon (Patočka 2016, 137). With N. de Warren, we can speak here of “phenomenological resonance” (de Warren 2017, 215), which makes this experience susceptible to description.

Such experience has a vast impact on communal life and practices. According to J. Assmann, “death is both the origin and center of [...] memory culture” (Assmann 2011, 45). The fact of mortality does not affect us as mere individuals. Since we are finite beings, the meaning of our actions, deeds and institutions can transcend our life and enable us to attain worldly “immortality” by leaving memories in others as footprints of our former existence. As H. Ruin noted, the experience of spectrality is crucial for transmitting the cultural memory to future generations: “At the heart of the ‘connective structures’ explored by cultural memory studies is the passage from the dead to the living in the forms of institutionalised memory practices, of rituals and technologies that can be said to work according to a logic of the revenant” (Ruin 2015, 63).

As I intend to show, through spectrality – as it is present in Plato’s funeral oratory – we are not only tied to the past. Since the dead speak to us, they shape and form our present and, with it, affect our future. For this reason, in the first part, I present J. Patočka’s account of spectral presence and its various aspects. In the second part, I will portray how the phenomenon of spectrality pervades the overall structure of Socrates’ epitaphios in Plato’s *Menexenus*. Finally, in the part dedicated to the “speech of the dead”, I will show how Plato creatively uses the concept of shame invoked by the spectral other to reveal the norm of the Athenian citizen.

The Phenomenon of Spectrality

In phenomenological philosophy, the question of death has been a key issue ever since Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. Yet, despite the vast interest in the problem of finitude, the distinctiveness of the experience of the deceased has received only marginal attention.² Spectral phenomenology, on the other hand, endeavours to do justice to the specific givenness of the departed. Jan Patočka was among the few who attempted to describe the distinctiveness of this experience in an unfinished text titled *Phenomenology of the Afterlife*. From the appendix we find at the end of the text, we may infer that Patočka had a larger project in mind. Despite its incompleteness, however, it contains important clues to understanding the “logic of the revenant.”

The deceased other is a kind of non-existence which, however, is not mere nothing. He or she is irrevocably gone, but despite it (or even because of it), something of them still resides among us. The phenomenon of spectrality at first glance appears to be inherently paradoxical: it is a specific presence of non-presence or non-presence of the presence of the other. Patočka solves this paradox by characterizing such an afterlife as a “privative mode of life”, which is a

² For a critique of Heidegger’s limited approach to the death of the other, see (Sternad 2017, 545), who also points out that Heidegger’s view is indebted to earlier insights of M. Scheler.

modification of being for others, because “in our actual life we ourselves are an intersubjective formation” (Patočka 2016, 130). Thus, the analysis of spectrality must be preceded by a description of the complex intersubjective intertwinements between I and Thou.

Patočka in his first step breaks up this intersubjective structure into its basic components (Patočka 2016, 132–133). He characterizes them as follows:

- *Being within itself* (*bytí v sobě*) is our very own being, the original, bursting stream of internal time. For Patočka, this core of our existence is completely private. Not only is it inaccessible to the other, but as a constant flow, it always remains out of our own reach as an ever-escaping residue ahead of any attempt to grasp it. As such, it functions as the very ground upon which any experience and intersubjective intertwinement is built. Without being within itself, there would be no difference between I and Thou, which is not only the core of myself but is also the non-reifiable ground of the other.

- *Being for itself* (*bytí pro sebe*), on the other hand, entails adopting a certain reflective distance towards the original being within itself and, for this reason, encompasses my self-objectification and alienation. Here I am not experiencing but experienced by myself and become, at least to a certain level, “publicly expressed”. While the concept of being in itself characterizes my identity as a living, bursting stream of internal time, in being for itself, my identity becomes reflectively categorized, “solidified” according to whom I deem myself to be.

- In *my being for others* (*mé bytí pro druhé*) I am, according to Patočka, non-thematically aware of myself as given to others, yet the originality of this act to me is not fully accessible, because I do not have “an appearance of myself as such.” In other words, I do not see myself as the others see me. For example, I am able to recognize the specific walk of another whom I have seen walking quite often, yet I will never experience my own walking style as a distant observer. The intersubjective intertwinement presupposes a spontaneous participation of the other. As C. Sternad aptly describes it, “this component of my intersubjective relations does not originate within me” (Sternad 2017, 544).

Being of other for me is, in a certain sense, a doublet of the previous experience. Just as I am aware of my being given to others, the other is reflective of being given to me. The core of this experience lies in “the *possibility of perceiving* the other as such,” which, however, has to be distinguished from the other’s being within itself, which to me is inaccessible. Of course, the other might also appear to me indirectly through the consequences of his or her actions, behaviours, letters, etc., and from these signs, I might surmise his or her characteristics. Yet, this indirect apprehending is grounded on the presupposed perceivable body of the other.

Finally, *my being in itself* (*mé bytí o sobě*) is, according to Patočka, my individual, personal, free project, which is not identical to any of the aforementioned components but nonetheless “circles around” them (Patočka 2016, 132) and encompasses them. By conceiving *being in itself* as a project, Patočka stresses its character as distinct from something *given* in the sense of an enclosed, determined object. On the contrary, we are an ‘openness’ in the process of creation, formation and development.

In the theory of intersubjectivity outlined in *Phenomenology of the Afterlife*, Patočka stresses a co-dependence between the subjects grounded in reciprocity through which they are capable of synchronizing. Thus, the other is gifted with the possibility to become an important co-constitutive function of my identity. My self-reflection (being for itself) might take place in solitude without any direct reference to others. However, the structure of how I appear to myself

might be radically modified when penetrated by the other subject. Unlike an inanimate object, the other stands before me as a reflective and self-reflective transcendence, which for me, is never fully given and never absolutely fulfilled. In a kind of reciprocal mirroring, I take the other as reflective of me just as I am reflective of her or him. In my actions and behaviour, I am more or less conscious not only of the fact that they somehow affect others, but that these deeds are a matter of the other's (self)reflection and self-relation through which I cause a certain presentation of myself in the other. The gist of Patočka's approach is to show that because the structure of intersubjective relations is reciprocal, I can manifest to myself through the other. And also, without the presence of others, my being is incomplete and lacks possibilities of manifestation. Some of my possibilities might be revealed only if the other spontaneously partakes in them *et vice versa*. And some possibilities, without the participation of the other, would inevitably be in vain: "Lovers only in and through the other discover themselves as a body, friends in the other and through the other discover their virtues and vices, their own will and individuality" (Patočka 2016, 140). What we long for is completeness which can happen only in the form of reciprocal recognition, i.e. when we accept our being accepted by the other and vice versa.

The idea of becoming oneself through the other is also elaborated by Patočka in his theory of the movement of acceptance, which can also be dated around the time of the *Phenomenology of the Afterlife*.³ In this movement, a child is introduced into the already established world, pre-formed for its coming by the familial community. It comes "naked", lacking any possibilities of reflective projection or self-projection and therefore devoid of any means of taking care of itself. The "communication" of the newborn is here limited to the mere instinctive-affective radiance of its own dependence and need, which requires the protective and safe environment provided by the familial micro-community. Here a primordial, almost silent recognition on an instinctual-affective level takes place (Barbaras 2016, 126). Parents recognise the child in its distinct being by providing care and fulfilling its needs, by building a protective, harmonious environment around it. This process of recognition is not one-sided; the child responds by accepting the protection and also recognises the parent, albeit such recognition takes place only at the instinctual-affective level. Through the sheltering, accepting embrace of the newborn, who lets itself be embraced in the peaceful pleasure of sleep, I come to see and recognise myself as its parent and caregiver. While the movement of acceptance is mostly manifest in the asymmetrical relation between parent and child, Patočka notes that our hunger for acceptance never becomes fully satiated by growing up and attaining independence and our own possibilities of self-projection, for we always long for this basic intimate recognition from the other even in equal relations: "In the eyes of the other I myself begin to exist, and the climax of this reciprocity is the ecstatic pleasure in which I feel accepted by the other and the other accepted by me" (Patočka 2009, 324). In *Phenomenology of the Afterlife* the idea of recognition inherent in acceptance is formulated more aptly: not only do we need the other, but "we need the other to need us" (Patočka 2016, 137). Patočka stresses the distinctiveness of the need of the other in comparison to the mere need, which perishes at the moment of satiation. Through the mutual recognition of acceptance, on the other hand, the bond between I and Thou becomes strengthened, because only through seeing myself as accepted can I achieve the fullness of my being throughout time.

How does the reciprocal structure of intersubjectivity attest to the specific givenness of the deceased? What kind of givenness is the being of the deceased one? In a certain sense, the other simply ceases to exist. His or her life project has come to a halt, there are no possibilities left that the other could spontaneously develop and realize. At the most obvious level, what remains

³ According to J. Frei (Frei 2023) *Phenomenology of the Afterlife* was written in the 1960's, probably around 1967.

is only a body or ashes, mere remains devoid of any spark of life, whether explicitly conscious and reflective or at least endowed with the option of attaining such possibilities. The body of the other is not the other, who is irrevocably gone. Patočka does not provide any account of spectrality inherent in material remains. And yet, it should be noted, we do not treat the body as an indifferent, inanimate thing among things. It is an object of special care provided through funeral rites and ceremonies. Treating the body with disrespect by mutilating or disfiguring it is forbidden, as can be seen in the case of Achilles' attempt to humiliate the body of Hector (Hom. *Ill.* 24, 14-21). Apollo, moved by compassion for the dead Trojan hero and his relatives, complains to the assembly of the gods about Achilles' lack of shame (αἰδώς), which for Greeks was the source of respect for the others (Hom. *Ill.* 24, 44). As in the case of fatal accidents, the bodies of victims are covered in order to preserve their dignity, which may be undermined by the gawking of overcurious bystanders. The public view of a dead body is allowed only after certain ceremonial procedures and preparations.⁴ Plato in *Republic* uses the famous example of disrespectful staring at dead bodies to introduce the difference between the appetitive (ἐπιθυμητικόν) and spiritual (θυμός) parts of the soul. A certain Leontius had seen several dead bodies beside the walls and underwent internal strife due to his desire to gaze upon them on the one hand and the obligation to show them respect by not looking at their sorry state on the other; he felt angry about his twisted, shameful urge, to which he, in the end, succumbed (Plat. *Resp.* 339e-440a). Both of these literary examples testify that the phenomenon of spectrality, present already at the bodily level, is closely connected to the potential experience of shame if we do not meet the normative claims of the dead.

Another way the deceased are given is in the form of memories the living carry within themselves. These memories are not a transition from the living presence and experience of the other into "mere being for the other," by which Patočka means fictional figures such as characters in novels. (Patočka 2016, 134). Of course, the deceased become, in memories, "beings for the others", but the core of this experience is based on previous relations into which they entered with their own, living originality. The meaning of a departed person for me is the meaning I give to him according to the impact he had on my life. Thus, the tenor of memories is different if the deceased is my most intimate companion, a close relative or a distant, yet agreeable colleague. Because memories are founded upon the former living spontaneity, they can arouse within us a resonance of which no fictional character is capable. For example, if my former friend proved to be a traitor who hurt me, I may be angered if he is described as being trustworthy. An interesting point here is that although the life project of the dead is over, he or she might still affect the meaning I attribute to these memories. One way is through the memories of others, which might provide me with a "bigger picture", wider context or life-mosaic of the dead. Another way is through the personal transformation of my attitude. For example, I might blame the dead for his or her deeds which hurt me in the past, but after experiencing my own guilt or failure, the former burden of blame might turn into compassion and forgiveness.

The core of the experience of the deceased others is the spectral presence in the form of experiencing their *absence*. Death is the point where, as already mentioned, a project comes to a halt, with no possibility of further self-realization. But my and other's *being in itself* encompasses the reciprocal intersubjective intertwinement, where I can achieve fullness only through the other and vice versa. For this reason, with the departure of my intimate Thou, not only his or her possibilities are halted; in a certain sense, a part of me withers away as well, for my "need to be needed" bursts out in vain, as Patočka shows in his account of grief: "the loss

⁴ Of course, there are examples of public exhibition of dead bodies which have not been appropriately treated, such as photographs of victims of wars, mass graves or natural disasters. The purpose, however, is not to disrespect the deceased, but to reveal the horrors of such events.

of reciprocity also means the loss of this possibility to be awoken for myself. We *feel* this loss, it is not a mere diminution, but a diminution felt and experienced as a loss of one's own most original possibility, as an annulation of one's own existence, it is *lived death*, the other's non-existence becomes *life as if it was not lived*. Not only is the fulfilment on which we were dependent and used to *missing* (and, therefore, our intention is aimed at nothing), but we also lose the possibility to *feel ourselves*, which the other person gave us, which we were for ourselves through the other" (Patočka 2016, 141). Mourning is one possible outcome of the spectral presence in the form of experienced absence. Another option is liberation and an opening of possibilities which were halted by the other. There are such cases where one person is not a subject of reciprocal acceptance, but instead, for instance, as an object of mistreatment or abuse, where the existence of the other is felt as a burden. His or her demise might thus provide a human being with an opportunity to thrive existentially.

Patočka notes that death and the resulting spectrality might be an impulse for existential thriving in an authentic way, where I take on a task of the deceased other as my own: "there is also an experience that the other did not exhaust the energy of his reciprocity because he does not exist anymore and does not co-create our future, and because he does not actualise his or my possibilities. It is possible that *I am* only ex-post actualising a lot of what the other was, that his being will become for me an impulse for what is always new through deeper realising of what his existence meant and means, that I will henceforth expose myself to the problematisation which for me this being is" (Patočka 2016, 142). The fact of mortality does not provide a threat only to the remaining others because they lose the possibility of seeing themselves accepted in the sight of the departed Thou. Patočka here points in the opposite direction. What is also threatened is the meaning of the existence of the dead in our own eyes, the meaning shining through their actions, participation in historical events, in faced challenges or founded institutions. A certain facet of the world, carved by the existence of the dead, might also die as well if there is no one willing to accept their tasks and meaning as one's own. Through the possible decline of the world which is dear to me, the deceased other becomes a spectral exemplar, my personal model (see Steinbock 2001, 187), speaking from the memory of his or her deeds and calling me to preserve the established world.

The Challenges of Plato's Epitaphios

The death of the other potentially awakens a two-fold crisis. On the one hand, it causes a withering away of part of myself, halting possibilities which could only be realized through the spontaneous, accepting sight of the other. And on the other hand, the established world might be in terminal decline if it is not renewed, re-generated and re-animated by posterity. Both moments of this crisis were challenged by the funeral oratories.

We can truly speak of challenge. According to K. Derderian, epitaphios is agonistic in its nature on various levels: "Each epitaphios is agonistic both politically and generically, in that it asserts Athens' uniqueness among the poleis as well as its own generic primacy over prior epitaphioi, the poetic tradition, and other traditional forms of mourning, including lament and the funerary monument" (Derderian 2001, 165). These various challenges have one common denominator in facing the spectrality, which requires, on the one hand, the need to provide consolation for grieving living relatives, and, on the other hand, renewal of the polis, which is in its being dependent on the virtuous deeds of its citizens. These aims are met by praising the death of the fallen warriors. As Socrates says in the opening of the funeral oratory: "Clearly, what is required is a speech that will praise the dead as they deserve but also gently admonish the living, urging their sons and brothers to imitate virtue (ἀρετήν) of these men, and consoling their fathers, their mothers and any of their grandparents who may remain alive" (Plat. *Men.* 236e3-a1). The thematic centre of the speech (λόγος), of course, is the outstanding deed (ἔργον), the current

courageous death of warriors in the service of the *polis*, which, for its significance, deserves to be remembered and recalled by present and future generations. The speech, on the one hand, has educational value by presenting a paradigm of virtuous action which should be emulated. And, on the other hand, by embedding death in the wider context of the meaning of the polis and its place in the lives of its citizens, it challenges possible excessive mourning and provides emotional relief after the loss of the beloved one.

Challenging mourning and the possible withering of the world reveals the distinctive temporality of epitaphios. We can outline this important role of time by referring to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. A funeral oration is a genre of epideictic speech (ἐπιδεικτικόν), the function of which is, according to Aristotle, either to praise or blame (τὸ μὲν ἔπαινος τὸ δὲ ψόγος; Arist. *Rhet.* 1358b12-13). He differentiates it from other genres of speech on the basis of temporal orientation (Arist. *Rhet.* 1358b14-21). While deliberative speech (συμβουλευτικόν) concerns the future, for it deals with events which might happen and with the best course of action in upcoming circumstances, judicial rhetoric (δικανικόν) addresses the past, an event which has already occurred. The function of the epideictic genre consists of praise or blame with a temporal focus on the present, "for all people praise or blame in reference to the given circumstances." Epideictic rhetoric is specific, however, for it can also make use of the past and future. According to Aristotle, people who praise or blame "often make additional use of recollections and of conjectures in anticipation of future ones" (Arist. *Rhet.* 1358b17-20).⁵ This use of all three temporal orientations is not merely additional, but crucial in epideictic funeral oratory, for the praised deed of "beautiful death in the battle" is not mentioned in historical isolation but embedded into the wider context of the history of the polis.

The subject of praise in a funeral speech is not only death in battle but also a presentation of the political and historical context which endows the demise of individual citizens with meaning. The oration primarily highlights the greatness of Athenian history and its political constitution surpassing that of any other city and, with it, the character of the citizens who built up its fame (κλέος) through their own virtuous, courageous deeds. Thus, the praise of death is turned into praise of the Athenian polis. Plato's speech begins by portraying the noble origin and autochthonous birth of Athens and continues by highlighting the primacy and uniqueness of the Athenian constitution. After a description of the Athenian form of government, Plato addresses in the most extensive part of the speech the historical greatness of Athens in various conflicts, beginning with the mythical defeat of the Amazonians, describing famous victories in the Persian Wars and the long-lasting conflict with Sparta and finishing with the events of the recent Corinthian War.

At the centre of the accounts of the constitution and Athenian war history is the interplay between the character of the polis and the character of the citizen. "Constitution," as Socrates says, "is education (τροφή) of people," and while the beautiful constitution forms good men (ἀγαθῶν), the opposite creates bad (κακῶν) characters (Plat. *Men.* 238c1-2). From here, Socrates intends to show, that "our ancestors were moulded in a beautiful constitution, thanks to which both they and the present generation – among them these men who have died – are good men" (Plat. *Men.* 238c3-5). Good citizens are with their courageous, virtuous character indebted to the form of government of the polis; at the same time, the greatness and character of the city is a result of the character of citizens. The testimony to the distinction and supremacy of both the Athenian constitution and its citizens are the noble deeds carried out in numerous battles fought over generations. Furthermore, there is a historical continuity in the formation of citizens, for

⁵ For this reason, an epideictic speech might also adopt features of judicial as well as deliberative speech. An example of this is Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, which praises rhetoric via apology, i.e., judicial speech, of Helen of Troy. (See Suvák 2014, 257).

deeds of previous generations function as a normative paradigm for the present one. Thus, the virtuous citizens “became good by being sons of good fathers” (Plat. *Men.* 237a6), which functions as an exhortation of present generation to imitate their predecessors. As K. Derderian writes, “The civic paradigm of the past is realized in the present and the present accomplishments of the warriors and the citizen audience provide a paradigm for the future” (Derderian 2001, 179).

Calling on people to imitate the deeds of the past and attain “immortal fame” in the memory of posterity is a way a funeral oration attempts to prevent institutional decline. How does Socrates, on the other hand, challenge the grief of the living? One way is that funeral orations generally omit and suppress the praise of individuality. The praised deed is always a result of collective effort and stresses the primacy of the city over individual achievements. Furthermore, parents should draw solace from the fact that the honourable death of their son is not in vain. On the contrary, by falling in the service of his city, he crowned his existence with proof of virtue, which the parents should reflect while mourning in adequate measure (Plat. *Men.* 247e5). Insufficiency of grief is, for obvious reasons, inappropriate. But so is an excess of grief as it would dishonour the memory of their son by revealing that their private good has greater value to them than the city. And finally, since the man died for the sake of polis, it is the responsibility of Athens to represent him and act as a substitute for the fallen son or father, assuming some of his roles: “for the dead she [the city] stands as son and heir, for their sons as a father, for their parents as a guardian; she takes complete and perpetual responsibility for all of them” (Plat. *Men.* 249b7-c3). The city is there for the sake of the citizens, just as the citizens are there for the city.

The Role of Shame in Plato’s Epitaphios

In Plato’s funeral oration, the concept of shame plays an important role in exhorting those present to imitate the lives of fallen warriors. The Greek word for “shame”, αἰσχύνη (and its derivatives or related words, such as αἰσχρός standing for “ugly”, “shameful” or “base”), appears here seven times, and in five instances it is found in the passage in which Socrates speaks in the place of the dead themselves.⁶ The frequency of the term in the speech points to the fact that for Plato, the emotion of shame could function as a key stimulus to personal transformation.

For the purpose of this article, let me briefly introduce A. J. Steinbock’s concept of shame, to which I am here indebted. Steinbock characterizes shame as a “diremptive experience, in which I am revealed to myself as exposed before another,” where diremptive experience means “experience of a unity in difference of orientations, where one orientation is more basic than another and, as it were, ‘measured’ against another” (Steinbock 2014, 72). In shame, we feel a sort of internal split, conflict, or discordance, where I engage in realizing a possibility which goes against the grain of how I optimally act. I may experience such an emotion when I am seen doing so by someone else or just imagine myself being seen. Due to the fact that in experiencing shame, we feel the sight of the other watching us as a burden, we often tend to understand it as a negative emotion. Against this view, Steinbock offers a positive account, for the function of shame consists in protecting my optimal I whom I deem myself to be the norm: “Shame is an emotion of self-protection, not in the sense of protecting myself from the others, but in the sense of protecting a positive value of Myself, which is challenged by the action or set of circumstances” (Steinbock 2014, 77). For example, Achilles’ mistreating Hector’s body did not arouse in him any shame, and, for that reason, he did not reflect that his actions were shameful. But Leontius would have felt shame if seen, for only after an internal struggle did he

⁶ However, we do not find any case of the concept of αἰδώς, nor of its derivatives.

succumb to his twisted desire to stare at the pile of dead bodies. As this case shows, the source of danger for Leontius' is only ostensibly the other. The shame rather stems from Leontius' optimal I, which is threatened by an opposite base tendency. The sight of the other is here an exposure of myself in opposition to my "true me", a revealing returning me to Myself through the other.

In order to investigate whether and in what way this concept of shame is at play in Plato's funeral oratory, let us turn to given passages, where "shame" or related terms are mentioned. At the beginning of Socrates' speech of the dead, the deceased warriors present themselves as an example, for they made a choice between two possibilities unequal in value: "Free to live on ignobly, we prefer to die nobly rather than subject you and your descendants to shame and bring disgrace (αἰσχῦναι) on our fathers and all our ancestors. We consider the life of one who has brought disgrace (αἰσχύναντι) on his own family no life, and we think that no one, human being or god, is his friend, either on the earth or beneath it after his death" (Plat. *Men.* 246d2-7). Human life is presented as a being at a crossroads. On the one hand, we can freely choose an ignoble life, which, however, leads to loneliness due to the fact that by refusing to act virtuously or courageously, we expose our ancestry and posterity to disgrace and thus become disgraceful ourselves. Or we choose a noble life in which we expose ourselves to the possibility of our own demise. In this passage, there is a strong appeal to intergenerational continuity. The previous generation did not want their posterity to fall into disgrace and therefore struggled to avoid disgracing themselves by imitating their fallen ancestors. Rejection of a noble life is not a mere personal disgrace but weakens the polis making it prone to losing its freedom and, finally, in a certain sense, it disgraces our ancestry, which loses that public space which institutionalized their commemoration and "earthly afterlife". Loneliness thus comes as a natural consequence of weakening the city and letting down others to whose deeds my being is indebted. In other words, shame and disgrace are a result of my refusing to act in accordance with my optimal I, of my failure to honour intergenerational commitments.

In the following passage, the dead identify the noble life with virtuous activity, thus exhorting their sons to place virtuous actions above other values: "do whatever you do with virtue (μετ' ἀρετῆς), knowing that without it all possessions and all ways of life are shameful and base (αἰσχρά καὶ κακά)" (Plat. *Men.* 246d8-e2). A focus on virtuous action is, again, embedded in the context of agon. The adversaries of the noble are significant ways of life which primarily strive either for wealth, bodily beauty and strength, or knowledge and wisdom. These ways of life are not *per se* invaluable but are a source of disgrace if they are seen as worthy for their own sake, irrespective of the primacy of public virtue. The funeral oration thus highlights the primacy of service to the city, for the goodness of the public sphere comes before other approaches to life and actually makes them possible. The opposing dualities of noble-ignoble, virtuous-shameful flow into the duality between the public and private, in which pursuing values exclusively for private interest – irrespective of public commitments – is seen as worthless and parasitic.

As I have already mentioned, the spirit of *agon* pervades the whole funeral oratory as a genre. In Socrates' speech, we see that the differences 'virtuous vs. shameful' and 'public vs. solely private' are presented as agon, in which the former has precedence over the latter. In epitaphioi, the challenging spirit culminates in agon with the ancestry and fallen fathers. In Pericles' famous oration, it has been mentioned that the living brothers and sons of the fallen warriors face a difficult struggle for supremacy in virtue with their dead relatives because the fame of the dead is guaranteed, while the fame of the living is corrupted by envious rivalry (Thuc. 2.45.1.1-4). In other words, the only way one can reach the fame of the fallen is to die a beautiful death in battle, for then it cannot be questioned. Plato's approach to intergenerational struggle is different. "For these reasons," the dead encourage us, "make it your business from beginning

to end to do your absolute utmost always in every way to surpass us and our ancestors in glory. If you do not, be sure that if we excel you in virtue (ἀρετῇ), our victory, as we see it, brings us shame (αἰσχύνην), but if we are excelled by you, our defeat brings happiness” (Plat. *Men.* 247a2-6). This passage is striking for the surprising outcome of the struggle, one where victory ends in shame and defeat in happiness. It becomes less puzzling, however, if we read it through the prism of intertwinement of the past, present and future in the phenomenon of spectrality. The future of the city rests upon the determination of the virtuous character of the present generation, which arises from imitating the virtuous, courageous deeds of the past. To imitate the past means to accept its challenge to confirm the value of those alive in its eyes. If the living are not able to meet these demands and be victorious, they fail in acting virtuously, undermining the grounds of the existence of the city. By failing to demonstrate virtuous supremacy over the past, the city finds itself in a state of decline, incapable of renewal. In such cases, everybody loses: the present generation, ancestors and posterity.

By thematising agon with ancestry, Socrates aims to arouse a feeling of responsibility for the heritage of the past’s greatness, which is transformed into the obligation to preserve it through outstanding deeds. One cannot passively rely on the greatness of Athens – that would be shameful and weak – one is called to actively attain honour (τιμῆ): “for a man with self-respect nothing is more disgraceful (αἴσχιον) than to make himself honoured not through himself, but through his ancestors’ glory. Honours that come from ancestors are a noble and magnificent treasure for their descendants, but it is shameful and unmanly (αἰσχρόν καὶ ἄνανδρον) to enjoy the use of a treasure of wealth and honours and fail to hand it on to the following generation because of a lack of acquisitions and public recognition on one’s own part” (Plat. *Men.* 247b2-7).

In what way is the aforementioned phenomenological concept of shame present in the speech of the dead? Plato creatively uses the theme of agon to arouse the feeling of shame in the audience. The agon is always presented as a conflict between two orientations, one of which is always credited with less value than the other, or, to be more precise, attains value only as a supplement of the higher orientation without which they would be shameful. The present struggles are to be seen through the eyes of the spectral past, for contemporary wars are always an agon with the ancestors. Yet, all these challenges point to the final challenge, which is fought inside of an individual, someone who might potentially avoid his commitments to the city which, through deeds of the past, provides conditions for the person’s existential thriving towards virtue. The function of fallen fathers present in spectral form is crucial in invoking the feeling of shame. First of all, even though they speak as a collective, each of them addresses their own son and thus confers upon their address strong personal and emotional dynamics (even though the private aspects of the familial relationships are suppressed for the sake of public ones). Second, by being adversaries, they also serve as beholders, to whose sight the actions and deeds of sons are exposed. And third, they are presented as exemplars, as embodiments of the life project corresponding to the orientation of an optimal I. In other words, by invoking shame in the audience via comparison to the *highly idealized* past, the rhetorician achieves the revelation of the optimal normativity of what it means to be an Athenian citizen and to be a member of the Athenian community not only in the present time but throughout history. To be Athenian as a norm means to go against anything which may prevent one from becoming a part of the story of Athens’ greatness, i.e., from becoming a spectre.

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