Annibale Pocaterra
Two dialogues on shame

English translation of:
Annibale Pocaterra
Due Dialogi della Vergogna
Ferrara 1592

Edited by
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&
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DUE DIALOGI DELLA VERGOGNA
D'ANNIBALE POCATERRA,
DEDICATI AL SERENISS.
DON ALFONSO II.
Duca di Ferrara, &c.

INFERRARA
Appresso Benedetto Mammarelli.
MDXCII.
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A Monologue on Shame

The psychiatrist who listens in on Pocaterra's *Dialogues* is thrown into a heady experience not unlike that of an archaeologist who has stumbled into a treasure trove filled with artifacts that make us uncomfortable. It is a time capsule sealed in 1592, four centuries before the appearance of a readership ready and able to understand it. Books on shame are never easy to read simply because shame is the emotion responsible for privacy; within each of us, shame protects the borders of what we hide. In no era has a book on shame been easy to read. This one is not only the first ever written about shame, but a major, historically significant disquisition—a wide-ranging survey of embarrassment, humiliation, mortification, exposure, failure, and the experience of personal deficiency. Were it presented as a collection of essays, a series of enquiries and personal observations offered for our private consideration, we might be able to approach these ideas with the distance and detachment that characterize our evaluation of any modern text. In an essay, we are asked to stand alongside the author and comment on what s/he has seen. Essays provide their readers with considerable safety.

What we have here is disguised as a play rather than presented as a disquisition. The emotional experiences Pocaterra will accumulate under the rubric of shame, the feelings about which he wants us to think, are much like Poe's *Purloined Letter*—they have been invisible and undetectable because they are too much out in the open, too much a part of our everyday lives to admit investigation until our current era. If this young physician is to force our attention to the power inherent in shame, he must oscillate among dramatic situations in which he produces this emotion in one or another of the protagonists, within us as audience by affective resonance or the mechanism of identification, and also contribute straightforward sequences of explanation within which we can recover toward an intellectual focus. Like Hamlet, who realized that within a play he might catch the conscience of a king who would surely be resistant to any other form of inner looking, Pocaterra sought to render visible what until then had been both obvious and hidden. His use of this device ensures that as spectators, we are forced to shift constantly between observer and participant, pleased that we are superior to the character being humiliated on the stage but relatively comfortable as his discomfiture is explained. The dialogue form is peculiarly suited to this purpose; one wonders whether any previous author had used it to produce the specific emotions he then intended to explain.

Pocaterra, in his insistence that shame is a personal experience of unique form, intensity, and importance, demands that we know and feel each aspect of his subject, that we ignore as little as possible of what has so occupied him. I must assume that the entire subject of shame has made him uncomfortable enough to challenge the revealed truths of his era, motivating the author to make us uncomfortable at a personal level so that we will share his concerns. We are presented with a Socratic conversation between the philosopher Horatio Ariosto and his romantic young friend Hercule Castello, with the equally aristocratic Alessandro Guarino taking the role of a foil, intelligent but speaking as an unsophisticated student whose naiveté helps reduce Castello's embarrassment. Ariosto is nothing like the kindly modern therapist who might offer to assist Castello by reducing whatever emotional pain he carries; in this situation he functions more like an anatomist dissecting the muscles of a living specimen in order to demonstrate them to a theater of students. The die is cast in the opening moments of their interaction: Exposing the latter's secret infatuation with a local
woman of Ferrara, Ariosto teases, taunts, and humiliates his subject into a variety of reactions each of which is a somewhat different form of shame, and each of which will in turn be discussed in detail.

None of this should surprise us, for Pocaterra had completed his training as a physician only a few years earlier in this era when anatomy represented the pinnacle of medical science. Surgery was performed without anaesthesia, and most other forms of treatment were either ineffective or similarly painful and debilitating. One might say that Ariosto rips away the skin of polite disavowal to reveal anything personal hidden within; our word shame (which is perhaps equivalent to the Italian vergogna), derives from the Indo-European root shem or skem, from which also came our words for both the skin that covers the body and the sky that covers our world. Yet such a criticism is anachronistic. The style of "therapy" against which Ariosto would then be measured is a modern invention, barely decades old these four centuries since the interactions in question. As Professor Gundersheimer has noted in his accompanying essay, Pocaterra had no choice but to use the tools available to him — the Socratic dialogue based in Aristotelian logic and classical philosophy, with characters chosen from the well-known nobility of his recent past. If he wished to bring a new kindness to philosophy through awareness of the discomforts associated with shame, the first cuts had to be made without anaesthesia. Castello, who has been caught blushing by Ariosto, must suffer for our sins. Teachers have been humiliating students forever.

I believe that Western history would have been quite different had Castello's embarrassment been broadcast to a wider audience, or made available for a longer period. Young Annibile Pocaterra died of unknown causes scant months after the publication of this masterful book, too soon to have defended it against its critics or to have followed it with other medical and philosophical works that might have drawn more attention to the nature of human emotion. Not until the work of Darwin in 1873 did anybody attempt so thorough an evaluation of shame, and not until the last quarter of the 20th century did shame begin to achieve its rightful place as a major force in human woe.

Our current research and the best of our modern theories suggest that all of the emotions derive from a group of nine "innate affects," basic biological mechanisms that are expressed primarily on the skin and muscles of the face as well as through certain postures and odors, alterations of breathing and heart rate, and tones of voice. Darwin had pointed us in that direction a century earlier, but nobody knew how to turn his ideas into a full psychology until the work of Silvan Tomkins in 1962-3. The specific woes we associate with shame have been linked to an affect mechanism that causes the neck and shoulders to slump, pulls the eyes and indeed the entire face away from what only a moment ago had been the subject of our interest or pleasure, and produces a moment of cognitive shock during which (as Darwin commented) no one can think clearly. Paradoxically, shame affect, (the very mechanism that by its physiology pulls us into privacy) also makes us blush, thus hoisting a red flag above the territory it has conquered and making quite public our private discomfort. Such a dialectic between public and private lies at the heart of whatever problem shame produces for us as individuals, for our ability to form intimate relationships, and for the larger groupings that make us into societies.

Nowadays we use the word shame to refer to the unpleasant emotion resulting from the exposure of something we would have preferred kept hidden; guilt refers to a similar internal punishment following the revelation of something hidden from view but also involving action that either violates a code or is bad for another person. Shame is self-loaded, guilt is action-loaded. The distinction is less
important than you might think because it turns out that guilt is nothing more than the affect shame
to which has been added a dollop of the affect fear (of reprisal). The physiology of fear blanches the
blush, leaving only the averted eyes of shame to alert the observer. It is far more important for our
society to focus on the subject of shame, for the greater inherent toxicity of fear has always ensured
attention and study. Pocaterra's Dialogues were neither seen nor heard by the larger culture into
which they were introduced, and it would take four centuries before similar observations might take
hold and be made useful. No matter what splash was made when this rock was thrown into the
pond, the waters calmed rapidly. Perhaps the forces of shame and disavowal returned his findings to
secrecy, to that most private place in the soul of the individual and the collective mind of the
community that is protected by shame.

The study of shame is vital to any society at any stage in its development. True, the sources of shame
change over time, for what is embarrassing to reveal in one era may be seen as trivial in another.
Classical Greek and Roman statuary celebrated the naked human body, while public nudity was
either inconceivable or considered criminal behavior at the beginning of our 20th century; the
human form is always being wrapped and unwrapped in tandem with each culture's sense of shame.
In his 1981 book The Mask of Shame, psychoanalyst Léon Wurmser observed that we are ashamed to
be seen naked unless the viewing other is held under the spell of fascination in a deeply private
moment. Yet the young men and women of my acquaintance now aver that they would be more
likely to feel shame when seen clothed on the beach. Once it might have been embarrassing to be
cought in a lie; now government officials discuss openly the "deniability" of a presidential statement.
(Where power is so great as to minimize the threat of external punishment, there is little to fear and
no reason for guilt; only shame remains to be quelled.) Freud began his study of inner conflict in a
period characterized by societal shame about sexuality and literally had no idea that the patterns of
emotional common in his era were mere moments in the trajectory of a culture. He was certain
that shame, however expressed or experienced, always could be traced to one's failure to control the
wish for sexual exhibition. Following his lead to a far greater extent then they had known, a century
of psychotherapists grinned secretly and silently at the embarrassment exhibited by those in therapy
and failed to relieve that moiety of the pain later made amenable to sober therapeutic technique.
Shame matters a great deal in every era, however differently it may be experienced or expressed.

Particularly is shame important today, for ours is a time of violent and explosive private and public
reaction to whatever can be defined as insult, disrespect, or invidious comparison. Anything that
casts even dim light on the causes of danger and violence in our society is worthy of serious
attention. In a series of books and papers, I have suggested that shame is not one emotion, or even
what Wurmser characterized as a family of emotions that includes words like embarrassment,
mortification, humiliation, and the experience of being put down, but a group name for four quite
different reaction patterns activated in response to a wide variety of triggers. Grouping these as the
Compass of Shame, I have pointed out that each pole of the compass is a library of responses
scripted somewhat differently as the result of our upbringing in a particular family, neighborhood, or
era. The contributions of Annibale Pocaterra may perhaps be understood better if placed within the
matrix of these current concepts of shame and indeed of all emotion.

Perhaps the most important change in the scholarly understanding of human emotion, the real
difference between the theories of our time and his, may be the significance assigned to emotion
itself. Prior to this current era, it was taken for granted that in the sciences, emotion was seen as
representing a primitive form of mental activity — vastly inferior to such higher cognitive functions as science, mathematics, or the art of musical composition, its atavistic power unfortunately great enough to turn an otherwise normal adult away from the ability to reason that distinguished us from lower forms of life. Emotion was something from the beast within us, untamed in the infant and child, defeated best by the dispassionate philosopher, harnessed by the demagogue, the stuff of recreation and play but certainly not worthy of serious attention. For most serious writers, emotion was the quality of the mind that distracted us from what was truly important. Our youths were spent defending ourselves against critics who said we were too emotional until we learned to argue with cold precision that no one might denigrate.

The best minds of today, those supremely rational scientists and philosophers who have declared this the era of the brain, have reversed their ground. (Do you remember the scene in Woody Allen’s 1973 film "Sleeper" in which the newly awakened protagonist shares his first meal with friends from what should have been more than a century past his death? Recoiling in horror as a pellet of cholesterol is distributed to each guest in the spirit of a sacramental gesture, he remarks how in our era we shunned that evil fat, only to be told by his hostess that we had been "throwing away the best part." ) The clue, of course, was in the very fact that emotion could take charge of our attention. We have come to understand that the evolved biological function of emotion is to command attention, and that there is no such thing as either attention or conscious thought except as directed by affect. As described below, each of the nine innate affects has its own highly specific facial display:

**Table 1** (Nathanson 1992, p. 136)
The Innate Affects of Silvan S. Tomkins (1962,3)

**Positive Affects**
Interest-Excitement (Eyebrows down, track, look, listen) Enjoyment-  
Joy (Smile, lips widened and out)

**Neutral Affect**
Surprise-Startle (Eyebrows up, eyes blink)

**Negative Affects**
Fear-Terror (Frozen stare, face pale, cold, sweaty, hair erect)  
Distress-Anguish (Cry, rhythmic sobbing, arched eyebrows, mouth down. Anger-Rage  
(Frown, clenched jaw, red face)  
Diss-mell (Upper lip raised, head pulled back)  
Disgust (Lower lip lowered and protruded, head forward and down) Shame-  
Humiliation (Eyes down, head down and averted, blush)

No matter what the apparent trigger or the form it takes, any moment or experience of shame must follow a script most of which is unknown to the subject beneath whose surface it operates. Earlier, I mentioned that Tomkins, following the lead of Darwin, recognized the existence of the affect system — a group of nine programmed mechanisms that he called the innate affects and which guarantee nine highly specific but quite different forms of attention to whatever has triggered them. Most of these have evolved as bodily responses not to the content of the triggering situation but to the rate and intensity at which this information has been acquired. For example, from infancy through
senescence, data that enters our system at an optimally increasing rate (as is seen in the condition to which we refer as novelty), sets in motion a program that draws the eyebrows together in the frown of interest, the head in the attitude of "track, look, listen," and accelerates the rate of heart beat and respiration to a pleasantly exciting level. Recognizing that each innate affect may be expressed over a wide range of activity, Tomkins gave most of them 2-word group names indicating the mildest and most extreme forms in which they might be recognized. This programmed response to novelty would then be called "interest-excitement"; it is one of the two pleasant or positive affects.

Whenever any stimulus decreases in rate or intensity, it triggers a positive affect that produces contentment and which Tomkins named "enjoyment-joy," characterized by relaxation of the facial muscles, widening of the lips up and out to produce the smile, and widening of the palpebral fissure to make the eyes bright and shining. If the decrease in stimulus density is rapid, it may trigger the vocalization we know as the laugh. Events and experiences that we describe as "fun" usually involve sequences of both interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy; nothing is experienced as pleasant unless it involves either of these innate mechanisms. Each and every affect produces an effect on the body that resembles in some way what triggered it; the optimally increased heartbeat of excitement is an analogue of the optimally increasing gradient of stimulation that it has evolved to amplify. It is for such reasons that Tomkins (1963) said that the affects are analogic amplifiers of their triggers.

Of the remaining seven innate affects, one is so brief that it has neither positive nor negative flavor. "Surprise-startle" is a reaction to events that have started and stopped very quickly, like a pistol shot or a thunder clap, and the triggered affect does nothing more than reset the internal mechanism of the affect system to prepare us for an analysis of whatever might come next; what we therefore experience is an analogic amplification of sudden and brief stimulation. The six negative affects ("fear-terror," "distress-anguish," "anger-rage," "dissmell," "disgust," and "shame-humiliation") are decidedly unpleasant, and account for the all the discomfits of our emotional lives. We tend to use the nomenclature offered by psychoanalyst Michael Franz Basch (1980), who suggested that the term affect be reserved for the strictly physiological portion of the experience, that we use the word feeling to indicate our awareness that an affect has been triggered, and the word emotion for the complex assemblages and life scripts into which our affective experiences come to be bundled. Affect is a matter of biology; in this language, we reserve the term "emotion" to reference the biography of an individual. These innate mechanisms form the bridge between physiology and psychology. Where Mowrer (1938) declared that psychology is the study of stimulus and response, now we know that this language of "S-R Pairs" was wrong. In the organisms highest on the evolutionary tree, no stimulus produces a response unless it first triggers an affect, after which we respond to this sequence of stimulus and affect. Life is a matter of "Stimulus-Affect-Response Sequences," not Stimulus-Response Pairs.

Daniel Stern (1985), who has spent a career observing the affective interchanges between infants and their caregivers, has commented that most of our ideas about human psychology have been based on what he calls a "pathomorphic distortion." So much have we been discomfited by the portion of our affective lives that seems out of control or that is able to distract us from more pleasant purposes, that our best minds have focused on the many disorders of emotion that rise far above the plane and cast deep shadows on human life. This is the medical model (which learns about nature from diseases, from the errors that plague normal life), sequences that must be undone if we are to survive illness. The medical approach is equal in value but considerably different in spirit from
the biology defined by Claude Bernard (1813-1878) as the instruction to “ask the cell a question” (Inscription on a plaque at the Woods Hole Marine Biological Institute.) Until now, everything we have ever known about shame (and indeed about affective life in general) has been marred by pathomorphic distortion and by our mistaken belief that from the muted, modulated, and richly developed affective life of the adult we can derive adequate information about its neurobiology, its foundations in infancy.

It is shame that must occupy our attention in this communication; I have introduced elsewhere the wide range of the psychology that has begun to emerge from Tomkins’s work, and his 4-volume masterpiece Affect Imagery Consciousness (op cit) rewards close study. My own book (Shame and Pride, Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self, 1992) has for some years functioned as an introduction to the complex world of Tomkins’s theories of affect and script. The physiological trigger for shame has nothing to do with what we come to know as its apparent sources. Shame affect is triggered whenever one of the two positive affects, interest-excitement or enjoyment-joy, while already in progress is interrupted for some reason. Since the affect itself pulls the eyes down and away from the still interesting or enjoyable percept that only a moment ago had triggered positive affect, shame affect may be understood as an analogic amplification of any impediment to positive affect. The innate physiological mechanism, the affect itself, turns down the avidity with which we are able to remain focused on something that remains interesting or enjoyable. In Table 2 I have listed all the situations in which this affect of impediment is likely to be triggered during our lifespan; I know of no trigger for shame affect that does not fit into this list.

Table 2 The Cognitive Phase of Shame (Nathanson 1992 p. 317)
Search of memory for previous similar experiences; layered associations to: A.
Matters of personal size, strength, agility, skill
(“I am weak, incompetent, stupid”) B.
Dependence/Independence
(Sense of helplessness) C.
Competition
(“I am a loser”) D.
Sense of Self
(“I am unique only to the effect that I am defective”)
E. Personal Attractiveness
(“I am ugly or deformed. The blush stains my features and makes me even more a target of contempt.”)
F. Sexuality
(“There is something wrong with me sexually.”) G.
Issues of seeing and being seen
(The urge to escape from the eyes before which we have been exposed. The wish for a hole to open up and swallow me.)
H. Wishes and fears about closeness
(The sense of being shorn from all humanity. A feeling that one is unlovable. The wish to be left alone forever.)

Yet there is a great deal of difference between a physiological affect mechanism and the complex phenomena we know as our mature emotions. Look again at this list of triggers for shame. You and I have been stung similarly all our lives, even though the degree and intensity at which we experienced
one or another category differed greatly because of our innate biological makeup or the family within which we matured. Some of us were gifted athletes but incapable of singing on key; others excelled at nothing or at least were treated by one or another parent as if we were congenitally defective; while still others of us did actually have one or another major or minor defect that acted as a constant source of shame. The great lottery of life grants us vastly different patterns of experience that require differential magnification of the nine innate affects. It is this difference in the way each of the affects is experienced that in sum makes for personality itself, even though it is the pattern of these experiences of shame affect that concern us here. What we know as our own personal sense of shame is based on what has happened to us in each of the categories of unpleasant experience.

So it is that for each of these portfolios of possible shame experience we come to have a cluster of memories to which we refer whenever the physiological affect is set in motion, as a result of which, certain thoughts tend to come to mind. In Table 2 I have also sketched samples of the thoughts that flood consciousness when something has happened to trigger shame. And it really doesn't matter whether the shaming stimulus had been about a failure in competition, a moment of stupidity, a sexual failure, or had belonged to any specific other of these categories. Whenever we are shamed, any and all of these categories may become salient — what leaps to mind can be literally anything from this list.

Notice that all of these situations in which the innate affect may be triggered, all of the possible sources for shame, are experiences each of us would prefer to avoid. Negative affect amplifies and thus makes salient only unpleasant events. (Affect, said Tomkins, makes good things better and bad things worse.) Were we masters of self-disclosure or true scholars of the self, each episode of shame affect might lead us to study ourselves and adjust downward our self-image. Yet our concept of self is tenacious. We are unlikely to give up our cherished self-image that has been nurtured for so long. Given that the instant in which the innate affect is triggered therefore provides a moment of brief paralysis in which we feel suddenly inchoate and unable to communicate, and that it is followed swiftly by an upwelling of thoughts related to our previous experiences of this affect, what we have discussed so far are only the "S" and the "A" parts of the SAR sequence. The full emotion cannot be said to have occurred until we respond in some way to this combination of source, affect, and accompanying thoughts. As shown in Figure 1, I have grouped these responses as the Compass of Shame. It is through the action scripts stored in these four libraries that we defend ourselves against the pain of shame and try to restore the sense of self that had been so challenged by whatever was revealed in the moment of shame.

![Figure 1. Compass of Shame](image-url)
Whenever we yield to the physiology of the innate mechanism and pull ourselves away from the view of the other, we have operated according to the script library of withdrawal. At its mildest, this is the little kid who hides behind mother’s leg or pretends to cover his eyes while trying to stare at a stranger, while at the most severe part of its range, interest and contentment are ratcheted down to such a degree that we involute and are unable to focus attention on anything outside ourselves. It is this form of shame that produces impotence in men and frigidity in women; without interplay between the drive mechanism that produces arousal and the amplifying affect that makes it exciting, the sex drive is a paper tiger. Most of the time, when we think about shame, it is withdrawal that first comes to mind.

Such withdrawal can enforce considerable isolation from others, then making shame also trigger the innate affect fear to the extent that any individual dreads abandonment. As a partial solution to the problem of shame-induced isolation, most of us have learned to strike attitudes of deference toward those whose hauteur might exclude us from the benefits of their power. It is through attack self scripts that we tug our forelock in the presence of our betters, speak with bowed head to the guy with the gun, and allow ourselves to be viewed as lesser than we might enjoy so as to avoid the full spectrum of whatever danger we assume comes with a less-than-protective attitude on the part of the one with power. Everything we have ever thought of as masochistic submission is really a method of defense against shame from the attack self library of scripts. The psychotherapeutic management of masochism is facilitated greatly by therapist awareness of shame psychology.

For some people, partly because of the way they have been raised, shame is so painful an experience that it must be blocked, avoided, or undone as swiftly and thoroughly as possible. The avoidance pole of the compass involves all the ways we use drugs and alcohol, hedonism or disavowal, to push away the sting of shame. In our attempts to distract the shaming eye of the other from whatever defect has been exposed, shame avoidance powers the way we call attention to whatever brings us pride; it is courage in a bottle, braggadocio, carefree indifference to what might really bear personal scrutiny and change. Since it is shame that rewards examination of our inner world — the land of thoughts previously hidden from the self — one can easily understand why Freud described a "stone wall of narcissism” behind which we hide in order to remain safe. Indeed, I have come to understand that what is conventionally described as the “Freudian Unconscious” is neither as complex nor as mysterious as assumed for the past century. The Unconscious is really nothing more than the bodily storehouse of our accumulated and unbearable shame experiences. Why else would “the mind” remove these moments from ordinary working memory if not to reduce our conscious load of shame?

The remaining pole of the compass contains (and therefore explains) all those moments when any of us (finding no redemption from this peculiar negative affect, and by our own hand unable to produce some saving moment of healthy pride) manages to find someone else who we can reduce, demean, humiliate, put down, or abuse. The attack other pole of the Compass of Shame allows us to view any reduction of our self-worth as if it had been a moment of danger, and the attributed source of the slight as an enemy to be destroyed. Sota, in the Talmud, said that to humiliate someone in public is worse than to shed blood. The old adage that "sticks and stones may hurt your bones but names can never harm you" is based more on disavowal of the power of shame than solid understanding of human emotional life. And of course you know that circumstance rarely allows us to strike out at the person who has actually insulted or demeaned us. The attack other script library most often focuses
our attention on others whose helplessness makes them an attractive and safe target on whom to spend the rage that makes us feel less helpless about our preceding moment of interpersonal shame.

Each of the four poles of the Compass represents a library of scripts for the management of shame over a wide range of intensity. Although a certain fraction of the population is so occupied by shame conflict that one or another pole of the Compass can define an individual’s personality type, each and every one of us uses all four sets of behavior all the time. Little embarrassments are handled so quickly and so "naturally" that we don't even think of them as related to shame. The normal range of attack other behavior is called banter, the normal range of avoidance behavior is the new dress, car, or house we buy as solace when our self esteem has been reduced for other reasons, just as there is a normal range of deference and shyness. And when shame hurts so much that nothing else seems to reduce the discomfort it brings, nearly all of us have learned that shame is soluble in alcohol and boiled away by cocaine and the amphetamines.

At the pathological end of the spectrum lays the extraordinary degree of attack other behavior we call sadism or abuse and its matching form of attack self masochistic receptivity for attacks on our self-system. Not a few of my "depressed" patients have described their withdrawal as a period of years during which they "could not leave home for fear of meeting the eyes of another." As one extreme end of the spectrum for the avoidance of shame, we must consider pathological narcissism with its absolute refusal to allow inner looking and the use of enormous expenditure to provide beautiful or otherwise satisfying distractions from the core of the self. The innate affect Tomkins called shame-humiliation appears equally in men, women, and children, but is expressed along different paths marked throughout development by the Compass of Shame.

Finally, it should be mentioned that since shame affect is a physiological mechanism, it is capable of being activated by disorders of biology. The cluster of illnesses once known to the psychiatrist as the "atypical depressions" seem to be characterized by the more-or-less stable experience of shame due not to relatively continuous exposure or active humiliation by others (no matter how they feel to the sufferer) but to abnormalities in the metabolism of the neurotransmitter serotonin. The international furor in the non-medical press over the class of "antidepressants" called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), of which Prozac became first known to the lay public, is tribute to the ubiquity of shame-based biological disorders, societal disavowal of shame-based discomfort, the ease with which it may be ameliorated by such treatment, and the shame attached to any biological treatment for emotional discomfort. The reader may share my fascination for the consistent observation that the symptoms reported as relieved by these medications include all of those I describe as the compass of shame; no matter what triggers the innate affect mechanism, we can only experience it and respond along one of these paths.

The view of shame sketched in these pages is one that has emerged only recently. As I mentioned above, Freud believed that every experience of shame stemmed from disavowal of our infantile wish to exhibit our genitals. To him, shame (like excitement) could only be linked to sexuality, and was far less important than the fusion product of shame and fear that we call guilt (that Freud mistakenly thought a predecessor to shame) and on which a great deal of his psychology was built. Considering the role of the face as the display board of the affect system, and the physiology of what we now know to be the specific affect protocol for shame-humiliation (which pulls the face away from interaffectivity and makes so bold a statement about its presence), it is more than interesting to
understand that Freud wrote about shame in the early period of his psychoanalytic work when he sat face to face with the patient. It was only when he found it difficult to face patients while thinking about and reacting to their problems that he moved behind the analytic couch, and only then did he both begin to focus attention on the predominantly verbal phenomenology of guilt and also relegate shame to a far less important status. Most of the great scientists of the early 20th Century sought what we term a Grand Unifying Theory. Einstein searched in vain for a unified field theory that would allow him to subsume under one equation all of matter and energy. William Osler, only 7 years Freud’s senior, shifted the ethos of medicine from a tendency to make separate diagnoses for each complaint brought by the patient toward a system in which all signs and symptoms would be assigned to a single ailment. In the last years of the 20th Century, the cutting edge of psychiatry became the idea of “dual diagnosis,” the revelation that patients can have more than one illness at a time.

So it was that Freud believed that there was such a thing as a "life force" that he called libido, and which he believed to be the source of energy for mental and emotional life. Since this life force was thought to ensure the sequence of generations by animating our sexual lives, Freud found it essential to ferret out everything possible about an individual’s sexual thoughts and dreams. In the period when his work was a dominant force in many realms of study, sexuality was wrapped securely in shame and maintained as secret to prevent embarrassment. Freud was motivated to penetrate this veil of secrecy in order to study it. He declared that any reticence to expose sexual thoughts and memories was caused by a force called "the resistance," which he claimed to be a product of a portion of the mind he called "the unconscious." Psychoanalytic psychotherapy became a matter of "resistance analysis," and any sign of shame was misunderstood as evidence that somewhere in this person was a shield that needed only to be removed so the more essential truths of unconscious life could be laid bare. When found, shame was thought to be much more a characteristic of women than men, who experienced guilt and were seen as much more mature and therefore much more amenable to psychoanalytic technique.

Those whose sense of personal shame was so intense and painful that they were unable to look into a self already racked with feelings of inadequacy were branded "narcissistic" and treated with scorn. Around certain clusters of patients (“Narcissistic Personality Disorder,” "Borderline Personality Disorder”) for whom shame conflict loomed largest emerged a mythology, a therapeutic lore that attributed our failures in terms of the twin drives of libido and aggression. Wondrously effective in areas of psychological discomfort free from shame, psychoanalytic therapy of that era pointed to its failures as evidence for the need to teach its principles more widely.

So powerful was the authority of Freud in the development of modern psychotherapy that from the first decade of the 20th century until the recent upsurge of interest in shame, the entire psychotherapy movement ignored this emotion of hiding and privacy and concentrated its attention on real or fantasized guilt. The preeminent goal of so trained therapists was to unearth secrets, to pull away the curtain of privacy that could only have been arrayed around material that needed exposure. The lay concept of a psychotherapist involved this role of psychic detective rather than healer; from such clues as supplied by dreams, slips of the tongue, or inadvertent errors we were to assemble a case. The educated adult took for granted that "everybody needed psychoanalysis" because in each of us, areas of the personality lay untouched beneath the surface. Concepts like solace, caring, or the nurturant treatment of people in pain were treated with contempt because
they supported the defenses erected to protect what needed exposure. When medications capable of reducing the pain of emotional illness became both easily available and wonderfully effective, those who used them were shamed for "taking the easy route" and those who prescribed them were made to feel guilty for ruining the therapeutic relationship by giving such aid.

Not until 1971, when Helen Block Lewis offered *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, did the world of psychoanalysis begin to pay attention to shame. Breaking with Freud, whose view of both shame and guilt locked them to an individual's personal conflict about sexual strivings, she introduced the idea that both emotions were primarily social — interpersonal rather than intrapsychic. Lewis wrote that guilt was a mechanism that had evolved to allow repair of an action that had gone against the rules of the group, and shame a separate force emanating from the unconscious to inform us that our view of ourselves had exceeded what could be confirmed by consensual validation. She saw the blush as a signal that we were aware of our transgression and ready to be accepted back into the herd; shame itself was defined rigorously as the spectrum of emotions I have described above as the *withdrawal* pole of the compass. By the term "humiliation fury" (herein defined as the *attack other* pole of the Compass) she described the rage of those who have moved away from what she saw as true shame into another realm of action. Those moments in which any of us did not experience true shame but found ourselves musing about previous moments of embarrassment were described as "bypassed shame," in which we had hidden from awareness what must have been the original reduction of self. Lewis’s theories had a great impact on a number of clinicians, who incorporated it into their work with patients with good results. Like Freud, she saw men as more likely to experience guilt than shame, and attributed the gender-linked balance between shame and guilt to cognitive styles that could be demonstrated in the psychological laboratory.

In 1977, Carl Schneider published his doctoral dissertation from the Harvard School of Divinity under the title *Shame, Exposure, and Privacy*, in which he called our attention to an overlooked aspect of Freudian psychology. Despite that all of psychoanalytic technique was based on the idea that truth lay hidden from view, Schneider pointed out that to live with all one's secrets exposed left one feeling flayed and raw. He drew our attention to the forgotten work of Nietzsche, explaining that the philosopher celebrated the blush of a young girl as a compliment to the man in whose presence she was sexually aroused, and saw as churlish any man who would seek to look beneath the surface of a woman's finery to discover more than she wished to reveal. Equally well, Schneider reviewed the extensive pioneering work on shame introduced in 1873 by Darwin, and pointed out that 19th century biologists were deeply concerned with shame. (Mark Twain (1897) wrote that man is the only animal who blushes, and the only animal that needs to.) The institution of slavery was defended by the assertion that Africans were not fully human and thus could be treated as animals; eventually scientists used thermocouples to demonstrate that people whose dark skin made the blush invisible did, however, demonstrate the vasodilatation that caused blushing and were therefore equal to their fair-skinned siblings. Schneider opened the world of psychotherapy to awareness of the importance of privacy, and to the long list of failures and errors in Freud's own work that could easily be traced to this refusal to understand the importance of shame.

Following swiftly on this work came that of psychoanalyst Léon Wurmser, whose explorations into the sheer pain related to unanalyzed shame conflict make *The Mask of Shame* even today the most agonizing introduction to the world of shame ever written. Despite that by 1981 I had read more than 80 articles and books on shame (nearly everything that had been written to date in the
literature of psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis) and as a relatively sophisticated reader took on Wurmser's book only a year after its publication, I endured several weeks of nightmares as its deeper meaning became inescapable. Nothing in my training, nothing in my own extensive personal psychotherapeutic experience, nothing in my previous work with my own patients had prepared me for the depth and importance of this culturally ignored realm of psychological discomfort. Clearly, the problem of shame was far deeper and more significant than any of us had ever thought — despite the wealth of such material available for study, no one had integrated it into the mainstream of education and technique.

In 1984 I organized and chaired a symposium on shame for the national meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, one cosponsored by the American Psychoanalytic Association. To the surprise of its faculty, this meeting attracted so large a crowd that standees overflowed into the hallway; later, we learned that it was the first public symposium on shame in the history of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, or psychology in America or Europe. From this meeting came a number of books and popular lectures, all of which soon made the issue of shame both public and quite trendy. Although it is undoubtedly both good and important that psychotherapeutic technique has now been altered to take into consideration this massive oversight of our discipline, and that the word shame now appears with regularity in newspapers and magazines, I remain perplexed at the length of time it has taken our society to investigate what is now described as one of the basic and most ubiquitous woes of human life.

More and more, I am convinced that little or none of this confusion might have wasted trees or slighted patients had Pocaterra's *Dialogues* been distributed more widely in its time. I cannot help but wonder what might have happened to our culture had this little book achieved distribution outside the courtly circle for which it was produced. Nothing can be done to change that history, although careful reading of Pocaterra's work may illuminate other areas of scholarship. But who are we, who will read these dialogues today? We are a culture that has evolved through the very disavowal of shame that so bothered Pocaterra and into an era of Freudian psychology that has influenced our thinking to such an extent that many of Freud's suppositions have become the alphabet of our reality. I write this document late in the first decade of the 21st Century, a period when the doing of psychoanalysis has changed from one of "affectless scientific investigation" to a far more "relational" mode that encourages analyst and analysand to experience each other as equals. Yet even those who think they are non-Freudian or anti-Freudian accept far more of these earlier attitudes than they might understand. If you tend to say that an angry friend is "letting out his aggression," or that someone who looks grumpy has her "aggression all bottled up," then you believe in the hydraulic system of drives promulgated by Freud more than you might have been willing or able to admit. Pocaterra's work is pre-Freudian by centuries, not even slightly influenced by the idea of sexual drive forces or the belief that all emotion derives from sexual arousal prevented from achieving its "normal" goal of sexual congress.

I can summarize the old and the new systems of thought quite easily: classical Freudian logic was based on the belief that the organism wants to remain at rest, undisturbed by stimuli; whatever stimulus enters the system must be managed by "defenses" analogous to those used by a castellated fortress. Modern affect theory recognizes that the nine innate affects have evolved as ways of managing information, whereas Freudian science saw the brain as a system for the management of energy and the conservation of resources. The early psychoanalyst saw emotion — any emotion — as
the expression of energy that might more usefully have gone into some other function. At our best, we were some sort of factory that needed every bit of its energy in order to produce its product. Sitting behind the analysand, eschewing the mountain of information about emotion available on the face and which the life work of psychologist Paul Ekman (1972) has made clear, the psychoanalyst was required to ignore the true importance of affect and such teaching of its disavowal became a widespread cultural distortion. In the newer view, emotion — any emotion — is part of the system through which some sort of information has been made the subject of our attention and thus brought into consciousness. Like the modern theorist of emotion, Pocaterra was forced to deal with the academic problem that people pretty much think they understand emotion because they have emotions. It is axiomatic that each of us believes that the other guy thinks and feels just the way we do, or at least is capable of doing so if only given the correct information about the situation at hand. The very fact that each of us has our own deeply personal set of experiences that color our understanding of the nine innate affects, and has organized a highly specific series of scripts through which we manage our emotions make it unlikely that we will share more than a rudimentary understanding of each other's inner life unless we each come to know something about the other's history. If he is to explain what we do and don't know about shame, Pocaterra must create scenes in which the emotion is lived, made real, triggered afresh through situations from which we may, by the process of identification, feel the discomfort of the protagonists. A dialogue serves this purpose far better than a text.

Just as modern scholars must worry whether their funding agencies will censor creative work, Pocaterra had need for concern that the Duke of Ferrara might wonder why he was being handed a book about shame. Don't pass too quickly over the apparently fatuous introduction, in which the author states that "no dedication, perhaps, was ever so inappropriate as the one I now intend to make of these two dialogues concerning shame to Your Most Serene Highness," and that "Discussions of shame, it would seem, are not well-suited to a Prince who — acting beyond his years at every age, and always working heroically — walked far from any occasion to feel shame; but that single factor should not restrain me from my purpose, since other, more powerful reasons, compel me." Not to worry, he seems to say to his boss. This is not about you; if anything, you will be fascinated to learn how other, less aristocratic people feel on their off days.

He shifts into a brief disquisition on filial love — Pocaterra loved his father, who loved the Duke just as Pocaterra loves the Duke; the implication is that true love is by nature reciprocal and that therefore the Duke loves both. This is a powerful preventative, for as Wurmser (1981) was to say these four centuries later, "at the core of shame is the feeling that one is unlovable." Shame and love are mutually incompatible; where love is secure, the pain of shame is trivial and any disclosure safe. The "knowledge of these things" contained within the dialogues may disquiet "His Serene Highness" but the knowledge itself will protect him from the far worse disquiet that might attend the innocent performance of some shameful act that might be prevented by awareness of this work. So fortified from disapproval, he lets the play unfold. Shame is due for its outing, and with it, a host of other emotions.

The author faces more problems. This is not an era in which the concept of psychological sophistication has any meaning at all. The *Nichomachean Ethics* of Aristotle is the only reference standard for the investigation of emotionality, and this 30-year old small town physician risks ridicule or the charge of heresy if he is to take on the giant of the ages. Pocaterra sets up Horatio Ariosto as a
parlor magician, an mountebank, an entertainer who will appear to have near-magical powers of mind-reading simply because he understands the facial display of innate affect. Come with me, he says to Guarino, and let us embarrass our mutual friend Castello; watch me expose his most private world because I understand how shame can call attention to what most wants secrecy. Castello’s innocent blush has been caught by Ariosto, who uses it as evidence of a secret infatuation with a woman of lesser social status. He taunts Castello by praising him, and flicks away his objections as if they were trivial.

It is now nearly fifty years since one of my earliest clinical supervisors demonstrated through the use of audiotape that every theme eventually to appear in the many years of an entire psychoanalysis could be detected in the first five minutes of the initial session. There seems to be an unspoken contract between analyst and analysand, the latter made tentative by fear and embarrassment and so prevented from stating with clarity and authority the issues that would turn out to be of central importance; the task of the treatment was to foster the development of such confidence so that all disclosure might be equally possible. Pocaterra, an accomplished poet well versed in the techniques of exposition, does consciously and intentionally what so often happens for unconscious reasons. Nearly every theme that will be presented in the Dialogues is introduced in this opening scene. If he has hooked us by our laughter at Castello's nakedness to Ariosto's x-ray vision, or by our admiration and perhaps envy of Ariosto's technique, we are his to teach. Pocaterra starts at the surface, at the skin itself, and goes deeper with each observation until the heart and soul are exposed. This is a book of considerable sophistication and depth, unique in its time, important today, and full of observations from which we tend to protect ourselves by smiling tolerantly at the occasional long, sophomoric passages and the digressions made for reasons we cannot comprehend at this distance of four centuries.

Right at the beginning, Castello, recalling only the pleasure of his amorous relationship, refuses to believe that facial redness must mean shame, an observation defended by Guarino, who says that "a man can turn red on account of rage, and joy, and love as well as shame." No source of rage being apparent, Guarino votes for love, an observation with which their prosecutor agrees. Castello asks how he could be ashamed of his love, since "love … belongs with things that are good, virtuous, and worthy of praise, whereas shame belongs with things that are loathsome and despicable"; "love is good and virtuous, and ... could not cause one to feel shame. Therefore, how could I feel shame as a result of my love becoming known?" Shame is "nothing but a bitter self-perception, along with the regret one feels at having behaved badly."

I have read that the Inuit have no word for snow, but more than twenty for the various forms of water. Pocaterra starts by making us aware that the mechanism which underlies our conventional definition of shame also animates a host of other experiences not previously thought related to shame. Under an archipelago lies a range of mountains connected at their base on the floor of the sea. One might quibble that Pocaterra leaves out much of our modern concept of shame, ignoring the clear and obvious link between shame and sexuality, the use of shame as a weapon in interpersonal affairs and politics, and the role of shame in psychopathology. Had this work become known, I suspect that the history of psychology would have been quite different, these issues tackled each in their turn. But the 38 known copies of these Dialogues disappeared into personal libraries where they became emblems of the collector's art rather than manuals of instruction and sources for scholarly research.
European psychology moved along another path, one perhaps predicted by the *De Civilitate Morum Puerilium* of Erasmus, which increased radically the number of personal habits and attributes for which one was to feel shame, and the *Galatea* of Giovanni della Casa, which amplified with the authority of the Church the new and increasing sense of shame that I suspect had sparked the attention of this brilliant young physician. Unexamined, shame gained increasing sway over all instinctual behavior, controlling more and more of our inner and outer worlds until Freud was forced to link the entire issue of personal psychopathology to the sexual repression that actually had been caused by the shame he never investigated but only ripped away in order to examine what had been hidden beneath. Without shame as an explanation for privacy and secrecy, Freud had to postulate the existence of an inner world, an entire system of unconscious function that may indeed represent no more than the working of one affect against another. If, as I have suggested, the Freudian Unconscious is best understood as a group name for the repository of our constantly accumulating memories of experiences amplified and made conscious by shame affect, shame shifts from the status of an epiphenomenon quite secondary to other psychological functions to that of central focus for clinical attention.

And yet, no matter how much I protest that this book might have changed history, I am caught by a nagging idea. One might have thought that the great authority of Darwin could have made shame so powerful an issue that others would have investigated its role in human life during the century between his work and our own. True, his Lamarckian view of heredity (that made us turn in embarrassment from what we soon came to regard as truly amateurish in the giver of evolutionary theory) did distract several generations of scholars from the importance of his views on emotion. Yet Freud, who professed great admiration for Darwin, ignored completely the latter's work in this area. More and more I think about the fact that Pocaterra saw no reason to investigate the link between shame and sexuality. It seems unlikely that his era was an island of psychological sophistication or naiveté on which there was no shame associated with sexual arousal or behavior, and perhaps more valid to assume that the association between sex and shame was so obvious that it was not even worth discussion.

It may well be that our society was incapable of investigating shame until Freud's great work had decreased sufficiently the degree and intensity of the connection between shame and sexuality, a linkage that made shame too big for anyone to examine dispassionately. Now, in this post-Freudian era, we are so much more comfortable with our sexual selves that we can look differently at shame and differently at all emotion. The arrow of time travels only forward. Much as I complain about the disavowal of shame and the misunderstanding of emotion common until now, there may have been no other path toward our current knowledge. Pocaterra's work marks him as even more remarkable when viewed in the light of modern psychology.

Near the end of the play, Castello offers a paean to shame: "I will say, moreover, that shame is capable on her own to give us all that the other virtues combined can provide. If I have shame, how can I not be moderate and restrained in my pleasures? ... If shame left me, what good thing would stay with me? What cowardly act, what injustice, what chicanery will I be turned away from committing? And so, O divine shame, you are (I know you well) the root of all our goodness." The argument of the text has changed him so much that he can now make this observation. Yet this speech might be uttered by any contemporary psychotherapist even now learning about shame, the emotion so thoroughly left out of our training, or any literary critic suddenly aware that more has
been written about shame by novelists and amplified in our theaters than ever in the world of psychology. Much has changed in our world now that we are interested in shame. As a physician, a psychiatrist, and a lifelong student of human emotion, I remain awed by Pocaterra’s contribution, and forever curious to learn what other treasures of the Renaissance remain to be discovered and to instruct our contemporary world.

Donald L. Nathanson, MD (2009)
Introduction

The history of ideas is a narrative of anticipations. To the many contemporary psychotherapists who have moved beyond Freud and embraced the affect theory of Silvan Tomkins (1911-1991), that great psychologist’s work was foundational for both the understanding of the affects and now the treatment of their disorders. Donald Nathanson, who as Founding Director of the Silvan S. Tomkins Institute is the leading exponent of Tomkins’s work, is also fully aware that despite its originality, it can and should be located in a long tradition of intellectual inquiry. Perhaps the most prominent antecedent was Charles Darwin. In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1860), a work whose profound originality was long obscured by the luminous glow of *The Origin of Species, The Descent of Man,* and *The Voyage of the Beagle,* Darwin recognized that both humans and other mammals are born with an inboard repertory of emotions, clearly seen as commonalities of expression. His chapter on the blush, full of allusions to the work of contemporary physiologists and other naturalists, seems a pioneering attempt to theorize the ways in which from earliest childhood body and mind function together to generate and express emotional states.¹

Ancient writers, principally Hesiod, Aristotle, and Pliny, had recognized and described certain emotions. Yet in their references to shame and its physical manifestations, they seem to agree that it does not belong among the virtues, and therefore fails to merit close attention. For them, and for generations of later philosophers and physicians, what might be called the negative affects — shame, fear, jealousy, rage — fall outside the parameters of their disciplines. These states of body and mind, rather than emerging as subjects of academic or scientific inquiry, became the more or less exclusive province of poets, playwrights, and visual artists.² This holds true even in early modern European culture, where literary and visual representations of the emotions are commonplace, while attempts to analyze or theorize about them are few and far between. It is only toward the end of the sixteenth century that more discursive and analytical approaches to the affects make their first, tentative appearances, mainly in the form of treatises written and published by men connected in some way with one of the northern Italian courts.

In these micro cultures, aristocracies of birth and wealth mingled with humanists, poets, artists, musicians, priests, physicians, and philosophers. The social pyramids of courtly settings like Ferrara, Mantua, and Urbino were wide at the bottom, narrow on top. A large population of laborers — farmers, artisans, fishermen, soldiers, members of craft and semi-industrial guilds and their employees — provided a tax base and existed within a subsistence economy. At the apex of the pyramid lived, in relative comfort and ease, a literate and refined gentry, fashioners and beneficiaries


² For a brief account of this process, and some suggestions as to its causes, see my “Renaissance Concepts of Shame and Pocaterra’s *Dialoghi della Vergogna,*” *Renaissance Quarterly* XLVII:1 (Spring, 1994), 34-56, which also offers a fuller discussion of Pocaterra’s work than can be presented here.
of the “civilizing process.” It was in these elegant circles, gathering in the frescoed salons, gardens, and feasting halls of ducal palaces or the lecture halls and reading rooms of local universities, that the privileged few gathered. It is estimated that they comprised something on the order of two to three percent of the population, which in the case of Pocaterra’s Ferrara would have meant approximately 650 people, a number equivalent to the size of the faculty of a small to mid-size American university, like Brown. In the case of Ferrara, this setting produced an extraordinary output of profoundly original work in fields as diverse as music, medical and anatomical research, poetry, drama, history, and philosophy.

By the time Annibale Pocaterra (1562-1592?) embarked on his medical studies in the local studium, or university, the corpus of ancient learning had been effectively recovered. Knowledge of the classics was part and parcel of the mental equipment of most educated Europeans. Printed editions of practically all of the major ancient and modern authors were widely available, and the small minority of men with university educations possessed a level of erudition, and therefore a breadth of allusion almost unknown or even unimaginable today. Modern editors of sixteenth-century texts have found the task of tracking down such allusions, or “intertextualities,” a daunting as well as intriguing task. Although it has been possible to identify a number of Pocaterra’s classical sources, and cite them in the notes to this translation, it is safe to assume that many others have escaped detection. The ubiquitous footnote, with its underlying assumption of an author’s responsibility to acknowledge his/her sources, was a post-sixteenth-century development.

In the particular case of the early modern dialogue, the genre itself served to lighten the burden of prior learning. Nathanson thinks of Pocaterra’s study of shame as “disguised as a play,” which is a nice way to think about what its author termed a dialogue. Pocaterra’s speakers are in fact like actors, but it may be helpful to think of them not as strutting about on a stage, but rather as taking part in a play reading. The three characters, who bear the names of people then living at the court of Duke Alfonso II, share the characteristics of many similar figures who populate early modern dialogues from Castiglione’s Il Cortigiano of 1516 on through the sixteenth century. Like most other works in the literary form Pocaterra adopted, his Dialoghi are Socratic in form and inspiration. As in Plato, there is a leading speaker, against whom the other characters present as foils. The form provides a somewhat playful, experimental approach to ideas, enables the author’s personal views to remain uncertain, and affords readers the entertainment of staged conflict amongst the participants. The latter benefit may have had special appeal in a world in which physical jousting and dueling were also part of the fabric of courtly life. As compared to a learned treatise, the dialogue loses the rigor of its arguments. For a sixteenth-century lay readership, that loss was overridden by vast gains in accessibility, liveliness, and a sense of shared intellectual adventure.

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Few if any of his contemporary readers would have been fully aware of the young poet/physician’s originality in devoting an entire volume to the vexing affect called shame; and obviously, they could not have imagined his prescience in focusing attention on a human response that only began to be fully understood four centuries later. Pocaterra was, as are all of us, a person of his own time. His was a moment of high interest in human behavior. The medical discoveries in sixteenth-century Italy were momentous, and carried over into new attempts to come to grips with mental illness. It was shortly before Pocaterra wrote, that Tommaso Garzoni (1549-1589), a lawyer and monk trained at Ferrara, published his remarkable work called “The Hospital of the Incurably Insane,” in which he described and sought to classify various forms of aberrant behavior. Like most of Garzoni’s books, this went through several editions, and the Elizabethan translation appears to have been a source for Robert Burton’s Anatomie of Melancholy (1616).

Pocaterra’s use of the dialogue is somewhat unusual for a medical writer in this period. It reflects a distinctly literary aspect of this young physician’s intellectual formation. As one who came of age in the court where Torquato Tasso was lauded for his own dialogues, and also incarcerated for his bizarre behavior, Pocaterra had a literary role model who also may have doubled as a case study. It is hard to imagine a sensitive young physician in this setting who could have been oblivious to the poignancy of Tasso’s situation, that of a vastly talented writer who, chained within a prison cell, lived out his years in madness and shame. But Pocaterra’s resources for understanding shame were extremely limited. The topic, while entailing discussion of aspects of anatomy, physiology, and neuroscience (in our terms), also mandated consideration of questions of moral philosophy that were part of the mental world of the sixteenth century. Indeed the terms and categories of both ancient and Christian philosophy — virtue, the soul, good and evil — and even the examples of the Greek and Roman gods and their behavior, retain their explanatory force in Pocaterra’s work. Alongside them, however, are the early shoots of a more empirical approach, with canny observations of humans and other animals, thoughtful albeit intuitive perceptions of the complex relations between mind and body, and a keen awareness of the social world in which affects like shame are triggered and judged. In a sense, one of the developments Pocaterra’s work anticipates is the growing movement to incorporate the humanities into the training of physicians, a trend in medical education to combine empirical study of disease processes with a larger awareness of the patient as a whole person.

The Dialoghi, then, reflect the transitional moment at which they were composed. Without explicitly toppling, in fact even while appropriating and praising the received wisdom of ancient and medieval thought, Pocaterra sought a new approach to understanding a complex and ill-understood emotion. Shame, for sixteenth-century minds, had not been in any real sense a medical issue. Pocaterra’s use of the vernacular dialogue signifies that his intended audience was not primarily the learned world of

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6 L’Hospitale de’Pazzi incurabili (Venice, 1586), and later printings. An English translation appeared in London in 1600. Garzoni’s classifying impulse found expression in several related works, such as Il teatro de’vari e diversi cervelli mondani (Venice, 1583), and La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo (Venice, 1586). Paolo Cerchi edited a one-volume edition of Garzoni’s Opere (Fulvio Rossi: Naples, 1972). More recently, L’Ospedale de pazzi incurabili has been edited by Stefano Banchi (Antenore: Rome, 2004). See also John Martin, “The Imaginary Piazza: Tommaso Garzoni and Late Renaissance Italy,” in Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living: Essays in Honor of David Herlihy, ed. Samuel H. Kohn, Jr. and Steven A. Epstein (University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 1996), 439-454.

physicians, but rather a late Renaissance counterpart to what in our times is called the “general reader.” Writing in everyday Tuscan rather than the Latin used for much serious work in the learned professions, he sought a literate lay audience like the courtly society in which he had grown up. In that world, people read for pleasure as well as instruction, and the texts they favored approximated the cadences of polite conversation. Pocaterra’s most immediate circle of readers would have found it natural that a fictive dialogue such as this one, or something rather like it, might actually have taken place between these three speakers.

However clear and accessible Pocaterra’s writing may have appeared to his original Italian readers, it poses a serious challenge to the translator. The first draft of the present translation was made in 1989 by Piero Allongi, who was at that time a graduate student at Georgetown University. Funding for Mr. Allongi’s work was made available under a grant to Dr. Nathanson from the 76 Fund of the Institute of Pennsylvania Hospital, in Philadelphia. Mr. Allongi’s task was to prepare a faithful, literal English version of Pocaterra’s text, providing the two editors with a common basis for their discussions and commentary. In considering the possibility of eventually publishing the book, however, it became apparent that a number of editorial and formatting changes would be desirable. These were undertaken by Gundersheimer in 1994. Since no modern edition of the book exists, and few copies of the early edition survive, our primary purpose was to make available a translation faithful to the sense of the original. Since sixteenth-century Italian syntax, punctuation, and conversational style differ considerably from modern usage, another goal was to produce a version today’s readers would experience as lively and straightforward, much as the original might have been read in 1592. Since that entailed some editorial decisions, it is worth explaining how the translation in its present form differs from the original.

Pocaterra, like many of his contemporaries, made little use of the paragraph. Moreover, he favored long, prolix sentences, and had the habit of starting many of them with such connective words as “and,” “but,” “thus,” and “truly.” After a while, this strikes one as a verbal tic, not unlike the lamentable American addiction to the word “like.” Pocaterra also made extensive use of long parenthetical phrases. He habitually used double, triple, or even quadruple negatives (when it would hardly have been impossible to do otherwise). Much though by no means all of this bad writing has been straightened up. We have broken almost all the longer speeches into paragraphs, repunctuated the run-on sentences and brought syntactical structures more or less in line with modern speech patterns. We have retained a fair number of archaisms and infelicities, thus allowing a contemporary reader to experience the somewhat stilted pace of the original. The connective words and transition phrases cited above were eliminated only where their absence had no effect on the continuity of the argument. Hundreds have been edited out, but plenty remain in place. The same is true for the double negatives and other mannerisms. The guiding principle was to remove from the reader’s path a reasonable percentage — perhaps two-thirds — of Pocaterra’s stylistic stumbling blocks, while interjecting as little as possible of the editors’ tastes and styles.

In writing about shame, Pocaterra used the conventional vocabulary of his time and place. Finding precise English equivalents for some of his terms turned out to be problematical. The editor has had to make some arbitrary, and occasionally uncomfortable decisions. For example, Pocaterra often refers to shame as an *affetto*. Several English words work reasonably well as equivalents. “Emotion,” “feeling,” or “affect” will all do. But these English “equivalents” have their own, differing connotations. Hence, we decided to favor the English word “affect,” not only because it is a cognate,
but also because the English word comes closer to current usage in psychology and psychiatry. Yet in several instances where Pocaterra uses the word *affetto* repeatedly, one or another of the English synonyms has been substituted for the sake of readability. Such iterations should be obvious to the reader, as will others, such as *infamia*, generally rendered as “infamy,” although “baseness,” “wickedness,” “depravity,” or “ill repute” might serve as well, and occasionally do.

Similar difficulties arise with nouns like *appetito* and *appetenza*. These words signify desire, natural instinct, or an instinctual drive; that is, a non-rational, inner compulsion to acquire some real or imagined satisfaction. “Appetite,” the English cognate, is more closely linked to alimentation than its early Italian equivalent. The English word “appetency” is archaic, and in any case lacks the urgency of the Italian, which is almost invariably used with reference to a natural tendency that needs curbing. Therefore, with attention to their contexts, these terms have been translated using functionally equivalent English terms, such as “drives” or “instincts,” and only rarely by their cognates.

A final class of problems concerns Italian words and/or phrases for which no fully satisfactory English equivalent exists. A case in point is *uomo da bene*. What sort of man is that? The phrase is used in Italian to signify a man who combines a decent pedigree, a comfortable standard of living, a certain rectitude, and high social status. It is a bit more descriptive of personal qualities than, say, *gentiluomo*, and also less suggestive of a particular place in the social hierarchy. Therefore, “gentleman” doesn’t get it quite right. (In fact, “gentleman” doesn’t even work well as a rendering of *gentiluomo*, which implies lineage rather than a particular set of qualities). One ends up, not very happily, using phrases like “man of substance,” “reputable person,” or “respected citizen.”

Paramount about Pocaterra is not his gifts as a writer, but his originality in bringing a good mind to bear on an important and neglected subject. Had he lived beyond his third decade, Pocaterra might have developed into one of the capacious intellects among early modern physicians. The *Dialoghi Della Vergogna* give evidence of such promise. But it is a young man’s book, oscillating sometimes even wildly between ancient commonplaces and startlingly modern observations. At its best, it suggests new questions and lines of inquiry into a topic that, for centuries before and after its composition, was generally considered to be a closed book. For us, in a world in which shame has all but disappeared — even among presidents, princes and prelates — Pocaterra advances the discussion of both the positive and negative aspects of a fundamental human trait.

Werner Gundersheimer
Williamstown, Massachusetts
September 2009
Preface

To My Most Serene
Sovereign Lord
And Beloved Patron

The Lord Duke of Ferrara, etc.

If in dedicating one's works, one had only to consider the subject they contain, then no dedication was perhaps so inappropriate as that which I now intend to make to Your Most Serene Highness of these two dialogues on shame. But in making such gifts, if one wants to consider other reasons, then no one ever matched me in debt and sense of duty. Discussions of shame, it would seem, are not well-suited to a Prince who — acting beyond his years at every age, and always working heroically — walked far from any occasion to feel shame; but this single reason should not restrain me from my purpose, as other, more powerful reasons, compel me.

First of all, nature inspires me to offer these first (shall I say?) flowers of my studies to that patron whose subject she made me by my birth; for it would seem that the field and all that it produces ought to be remitted to this same lordship. In addition to this, I can say to have been born not just his subject, but also his servant, as I was born of an old, faithful, and dear servant of his; the master of the father has no little claim over the son and everything pertaining to him.

We can add that my studies not only came to life under the universal favor of your Most Serene Highness — which all men of learning enjoy — but that they flowered under his particular grace and protection. I shall not mention all the others. I shall restrict myself to one: that most singular grace he sometimes accords me in giving me commands and expressing pleasure — as he pleases to do with so much humanity — in my little services. This grace does not allow me to ignore any occasion to demonstrate publicly the obligations and devotion I feel toward him. And this I do now with these dialogues, all the more eagerly because I prefer to believe that this topic is not as unbecoming to his goodness as one might believe; for, in the end, shame is an honest thing and, if it is not a virtue, it is at least very close and very similar to virtue.

Although the knowledge of these things may bring with it some imperfections, however, there can be no doubt that doing shameful things but not knowing about them, is what befouls man. For we know that in itself all knowledge is excellent and divine, and that it brings splendor and beauty to the soul not any less than the stars bring beauty to the sky. And so, never having himself committed any mistake by reason of which he might have experienced or felt contact with shame, it should not displease the Duke to have some news of it through my writings. Through them, he will be able to see his own shining candor set against other people's redness. All these things together with many others compel me to dedicate in all humility these first labors of mine. Clearly, his immense goodwill persuades him to please himself with my devoted affection. I beseech and pray him as humbly as I can to make me worthy of his good grace before which I bow in reverence.

The most faithful subject & most devoted servant of Your Most Serene Highness

Annibale Pocaterra
L´Ariosto
Primo Dialogo Della Vergogna

Ari: There is Castello, just where I expected to find him. Let's go meet him, we will take this opportunity to amuse ourselves a bit. A Dio, most kind Signor Castello: now I have no need to go searching for proof to arrive at the truth.

Cas: And why so, Signor Ariosto?

Ari: Because you will testify against your own misdeeds. There is no need to run or hide. The truth is already too clear to me. You will not be able to dissuade me. Swearing against it will only confirm that you have fallen in love with a local lady. It was enough to see what I have seen. What, you ask? That is of little importance. You do well to behave as you do; hide yourself from others. However, you should not, for any reason, hide yourself from me because, should the need arise, I more than anyone else could give you liberal, no, prodigal help and counsel.

Cas: Always ready to poke fun at me, Signor Ariosto.

Ari: Oh you happy being, whom Amore gave to love such a worthy woman; but not less happy she who, through her loving, can be loved back by a lover such as you. Indeed, God and nature have so liberally and equitably bestowed their gifts upon you, that I could not say which of you should be more proud to be loved by the other.

Cas: I think it will be in my best interest to laugh at myself along with you. I am even disposed to see what will come of this business.

Ari: A happy ending will come of it. You two beautiful people, now a happy couple, must follow your adventurous loves. I hope that Love will continue to look upon you kindly and favorably. And by God, Signor Castello, I hope that you will not be so miserly with your secrets anymore, especially towards your friends, who take as much joy in your good fortune as you do. I know only too well that the webs of love need to be spun in secret, and I also know that a secret must be well guarded if it is to remain such; yet your secret could not find better custody than within the ears of such a faithful friend as I am to you. I will tell you more: Love perhaps benefits more from being disclosed than being locked in because, when communicated, its joy grows rather than diminish, just like a sunbeam on the moon.

Cas: So I was right, you have come armed with your usual barbs. I think that during the day you must accept your nightly dreams as facts and try to pass them off as truth.

Ari: I dream, Signor Castello? Now if I dream when I am awake what must I do when I am asleep? And if I cannot believe what my own eyes tell me, what must I then believe? Ah, it is clear that you would like me to see day for night, but your tricks are useless because I do see and see the truth.

Cas: And in truth I say that you mock me and that you dream. Let us ignore the part where you sing my praises, since it is clearly intended to poke fun at me; even then, who would believe the stories you go spinning about my loves? And whatever did you see, pray tell? Me, walking down a street? To conclude from this that I am in love seems like an awfully big conjecture. If I had a woman
everywhere I go, I would be constantly occupied, and then, from my roaming, you could deduce that I was in love with all Ferrara. In short, I think you are too resolute with these conclusions of yours, which, as far as I can tell, do not follow from the original facts. Yet I know that you say all this jokingly, and with me you can joke as you will for I hold each of your jests as a token of your affection.

Ari: Oh, what a charming gentleman is this! Listen how well he masks the facts, Signor Guarino. So cleverly, in fact, that to one who did not know any better, his words might seem to issue from the mouth of truth; but not to me, for I am already well informed about this practice of his. What did you say when you were attacking my deductive reasoning? You should know that the weaker my argument, the more vigorous and worthy of faith was that sign that first revealed your guilt — guilt, that is, if we can call guilty a young man who burns with love.

Cas: Poor me, what was that sign that spoke so eloquently against me?

Ari: You laugh? You want to know what sign? It was that pretty color that your conscience painted on your face with the brush of shame.

Cas: Now look how you go jumping from one lie to another. You want me to believe this one too?

Ari: I do not want you to believe anything without proof. But if you lack a mirror, I certainly do not lack eyes. If you still do not want to believe me or, rather, if you do not want to believe your own self, believe at least the word of Signor Guarino. Ask him what he has seen, and then we shall see if I am the liar that you accuse me of being.

Gua: Indeed I saw him blush earlier, but if that was due to shame or some other cause, I could not say. I would not want to run the risk to appear such a poor fortuneteller as you, Signor Ariosto.

Ari: Is it then possible to blush for reasons other than shame?

Gua: As if you did not know that a man can blush for rage, and love as well as shame.

Ari: But, in your opinion, to what can we then attribute that color which earlier flamed in his cheeks?

Gua: We certainly cannot attribute it to rage, since he had no reason to grow angry. Nor do I think we can attribute it to shame, since he did not commit any action worthy of shame. More likely, it must have been the joy he felt when we reminded him of his good fortune in love. Truth be told, however, I believe that love and nothing else was the reason for that blush.

Ari: I would agree with you if it had happened in the presence of his lady. I know well how a lover's complexion flushes when he stands close to his flame. But since it occurred in her absence, I think that it was a fire of shame rather than of love, just as I said earlier.

Gua: If, as you say, a lover blushes in the presence of his beloved, how is it possible for Signor Castello not to be always blushing, since she is always with him?

Ari: How can you say that?

Gua: I can say that because a man in love always feels the presence of the thing he loves, and takes the thing with him everywhere he goes. The external image is merely a shadow, but the image that lives
in his heart is truer than life. Therefore, it is not surprising that he should feel the effects of love always and everywhere, especially when some external accident awakens and excites the image in his heart. Because then, the soul turns towards it and it glows, illuminated by a divine ray. I think your words worked such an effect: beating at the door of his heart, they awakened in his mind the beautiful idea of her whom he respects and loves so dearly. And so it happened that you stirred within him the fire which had been glowing under its ashes; and that, in its excited state, it released the few sparks which you saw flying in his face.

Ari: I do appreciate your platonizations, Signor Guarino, because they favor my own argument and, anyway, the fact remains — and it is enough for me — that what we are contending about was a sign of love. But if, with his permission, I can speak freely, I will say that a little shame lay heavy on his forehead, even though he had nothing to feel ashamed of.

Cas: Since you so conveniently hand me the weapons, I am forced to defend myself. Consider your own words, Signor Ariosto, see how full of unpleasantness they are, and then you will understand why I felt shame. Love (as far as I know, and as you yourself seem to believe) belongs with things that are good, virtuous and worthy of praise, whereas shame belongs with things that are loathsome and to be despised. How could it be then that I might be ashamed of my love?

Ari: What you say is correct, yet it does not contradict what I said earlier. And I could prove it without great difficulty if time allowed.

Cas: And why shouldn't time allow it? Are you engaged in some love affair of your own or otherwise busy with some other matter?

Ari: I am not busy, but I do not wish this business to prevent you from receiving what I cannot give you. Without realizing it, you have allowed my words to steer you away from your original course, so perhaps you should head back towards the pleasures of love.

Cas: It is no surprise that I should have allowed it to happen. The virtuosity hidden in your words worked such magic. I tell you, if you do not restrain your eloquence I will have to follow you for the entire day. That is, if my company is not an imposition.

Ari: An imposition? As long as what is good and beautiful can please, your company cannot displease.

Cas: Do not think that I intend to compete in games of courtesy with you, who are courtesy personified. I already surrender and consider myself won. But do not hope that I have so easily released you from your promise to answer the question that I posed earlier. But first, gentlemen, if you could tell me where you were directed?

Ari: Toward the Montagnuola, where we sometimes go to enjoy some exercise. But, for my part, I would be happy to follow you anywhere you might prefer to go.

Cas: Such a nice plan should not be changed. Let us go there; I could not think of a more appropriate place. In the meanwhile, prepare yourself to satisfy your promise and to prove the truth of your words. I have resolved not to leave you today until I have taken some profit from you.

Ari: I assure you that you will not leave without profit, most kind Signor Castello. So continue with your argument.
Cas: I was saying that love is good and virtuous, and that one could not feel shame of such a thing. Therefore, how could I feel shame when my love was found out?

Ari: It cannot be denied that love is in fact good, virtuous, legitimate and commendable, and, especially at your age, a most befitting thing. And I say at your age because, perhaps one is not meant to love at all ages; after all, we see that some things, though intrinsically good, are not meant to be enjoyed at all times. We see spring adorned with grasses and flowers; summer, blond with wheat; autumn, laden with grapes and fruits; winter, dressed in ice and frost. We admire all these things in their order, as nature has fittingly arranged. We enjoy and benefit from each thing in its time, and in fact we enjoy the snows of winter just as the roses of spring.

But we are bothered when these things break out of their cycle; and when, on occasion, certain transgressions of the laws of nature occur, they cause great wondering, and we regard them with a disdainful eye. It seems to me that much the same happens in life. Nature divided life into different seasons — that is, in different ages — and endowed each with different attributes, which, in turn, it denied to the others. Youth was granted the special privilege of beauty — the mother of love — so that it could love and be loved. A youth who loves outside of his age group looks almost like a barren plant among trees heavy with fruit, a dry stick in a flowered field. It would be equally monstrous to see spring, the year’s youth, frosted with snow as to see youth stripped of love and dressed in sternness.

So I agree with you, and I too affirm that love is neither a bad nor evil thing, but excellent and divine, nor most befitting to the greenness of your years. But if you truly understood the nature of shame, you could easily see how, occasionally, some feel shame of good things.

Cas: Yes, I would like to hear more about this, as it seems a rather novel and strange notion. And if the nature of shame can shed some light on my confusion, do let us go in search of it if you will act as my guide, dear Signor Ariosto.

Ari: This time you have chosen an untrustworthy guide, Signor Castello. But since you so desire, let us move on, for your wish is my pleasure. Let us go: I want to be your guide to your own self. So, to begin, what do you think shame is? And by shame I intend what causes us to blush, not what is disgrace or insult brought on by others.

Cas: Truly, I could not say. If I had known that I already knew, I would not have proposed, as I have done, to discover it with your help. But if I were to say what I believed it might be, I would say that shame is nothing but a bitter self-acknowledgement and the regret felt for having behaved badly.

Ari: You have painted a good semblance but you have not used the right colors.

Cas: And what is the importance of the right colors?

Ari: I mean that you defined shame by describing what comes before and after it, rather than what constitutes its true being.

Cas: I begin to understand, but not completely; though that is my fault.

Ari: I say that recognition precedes shame because we cannot feel shame unless we first acknowledge our fault. Repentance follows shame because, after shame, we feel anguish at the thought of our fault,
and would eagerly retract our guilty action, if this were only possible. Thus, from recognition comes shame, and from shame repentance; one being its father, the other its son. If you are still somewhat in the dark about the nature of shame, consider this: those who feel shame recognize their fault, as you said, and repent; but, conversely, not all those who repent and recognize their fault feel shame. Those whose faults are hidden from the eyes of the world often recognize their faults and even repent, but, having nobody to condemn them for their actions, they do not blush.

Cas: Up to this point I am very satisfied with Signor Ariosto. But since I cannot hope to understand the nature of shame on my own, I should be even happier if I could do so with the help he promised me.

Ari: I am here at your disposal, to fulfill at once your wish and my obligation. But here we are. We have reached the Montagnuola almost without taking any notice.

Gua: When I look at this place, I am completely taken by its beauty. How it shines with the munificence of its lord. It seems as though art and nature were competing in his honor to beautify it; as though a prize were to be awarded to the one who did the most to adorn it. Consider this park, filled with every kind of animal, how pleasant, yet how grand! And here are most beautiful gardens and lawns painted with a thousand varieties of flowers. Here are fertile vineyards, here splendid woods — both cultivated and wild — artificially planted with innumerable trees, all beautiful and beautifully pruned. Who has ever seen longer, wider, straighter avenues? As a matter of fact, though I am used to this sight it still inspires great wonder in me. Consider then this happy hill dressed in spring that, like a queen, stands off to the side, raised above all things; how it towers and rules above all else. And is she not perhaps crowned, if with a diadem of green limes and orange trees which, bejeweled with fruits and flowers, bring double delight to the eyes and the sense of smell? Seeing her so clean and well adorned, I would swear that she was in love too.

Ari: And whom do you think she loves?

Gua: The Sun, more beautiful than any lover and beloved, who taking pleasure in his reflection in this lake, delights in his beauty. I have seen many gardens of this kind throughout Italy, but of all I have seen, or heard about, this one would be without equal if it were only enlivened by some running water, fountain, or stream, for then no other amenity could be added or wished for.

Cas: You forget its greatest adornment.

Gua: Which one do you mean?

Cas: I mean one who can often be seen by the beautiful, kind and loving ladies when, in the company of brave and charming gentlemen, they promenade along these paths taking a thousand turns and detours. I speak of that ornament who, as I should have already said, is sometimes brought to this place from the presence of the Gentleman of gentlemen and of the Lady of ladies — if we can deem one so beautiful and so angelically attired a mortal lady. He is perhaps that Sun, Signor Guarino, in whose honor, and for whose pleasure, this hill makes itself beautiful.  

Gua: You are truly right. However, as a mortal man, I can only speak of mortals and do not dare to speak of the divine. In fact, if you will follow my advice, we shall steer clear of the vast forest of praise grown around these two greats for, if we entered, we might lose our tracks and even ourselves.
Ari: How fortunate to find oneself so lost. But for now I would also suggest that we satisfy ourselves with
having at this forest from afar; and, having bowed to it, I suggest that we enjoy the shade of one of
these small woods.

Cas: I do not see any comfortable place to sit here. I would not want to carry on peripatetically all day.

Ari: No, indeed. This is neither the time nor the season. Let us go to the loggia of the palace; we will
certainly find a place to rest there.

Cas: Let's go.

Gua: What a stroke of luck. Here is a place to sit.

Cas: Yes, luck is favoring us today.

Gua: Not so much luck as the foresight of those kind individuals who, predicting our need, left these seats
-- here. We could not have wished for a more suitable place. This hill at our back will provide shade.
On this side we will have a view of that beautiful avenue, on that side, of that great plain; at the
same we will enjoy the view of our Euganaean Hills

Ari: The view and memory of Padua is dear to one of you, isn't it?

Cas: Perhaps to both of us.

Ari: Sit down and take up your argument at the point where the beauty of the place interrupted us.

Cas: If I am not mistaken, it had been proposed to investigate what shame was.

Ari: Now wait. It is a fact that those things that we harbor within ourselves are powers, passions, or habits.
So then, to which of these can we reduce shame, according to you?

Cas: I am not sure if we can reduce it to an affect or to a habit, but I think that it might be an affect seeing
as I do, that the soul changes together with the body.

Ari: Well said. But if it were a passion, where would you place it among the principal, that is among the
better-known and more common passions?

Cas: I would say that it could be reduced to anguish [dolore], if anguish is in fact an affect. You have
already shown me that repentance is not the same as shame, but that it follows shame as the
shadow follows the body. I would say that it can be grouped together with ire, because that one who
feels shame does not feel anger against his transgression but, in a manner, he feels outrage at his
own self. Yet, from what I can see, this is not the case. Ire is ferocious and combative, mixing daring
and dare to, while shame is humble and contrite, shy rather than bold.

Ari: Do you think you can find this timorousness in all those who feel shame?

Cas: Yes, I think so.

Ari: And how did you arrive at this belief?
Cas: By observing that men who are attacked by shame would like nothing better than to run and hide from themselves and from the eyes of the world, even if had to burrow underground to do so — all these being signs of fear. There is further proof of this in observing that the brazen and the shameless show such boldness that they seem to be afraid of nothing.

Ari: So you would agree that shame and fear could be equated?

Cas: Why not, I think so.

Ari: As far as I can see we are halfway there. Let’s move on then. Shame is fear; now, one fears evils, but not all evils, only those that are to come, because the present ones bring anguish but not fear. So, if the ashamed fears — and he cannot fear any good thing — what does he then fear? Death, the evil of all evils? No, because the subject of death never caused anyone to blush, though it has caused many to pale and almost die without death. And, besides, men most often feel ashamed of some small shortcoming which would hardly be punishable by death, if punishable at all.

For example, one might be ashamed of speaking in public or in the presence of the Prince. But what could this man fear? Blows, wounds, illness or some bad stroke of luck aimed at his children or parents? It is a fact that men often fear such things, but they never feel ashamed of them, not unless they are in some way connected to some shameful thing. So, then, what shall we say is the fear of one who is ashamed? If we consider carefully, we find that the ashamed can only fear the presence of that person who is somehow aware of his shortcomings. After all, wouldn’t it be horrible to meet the eyes of one such man, especially if one were connected to him by a bloodline or love bond or even ties of goodwill? Or if that person was venerable by reasons of age or outstanding virtue?

It is in the presence of such people that one feels most often feels shame. One has to admit then that one does not fear the external appearance, but the internal opinion of these individuals — a thing, which, in itself, is not truly frightening. Not frightening, I should say, until it receives the seed of our error, because it then conceives, carries and gives birth to infamy — a horrible monster, most feared by those wellborn. Infamy is, without a doubt, what one fears, and with great reason, since it is the destroyer of that great good, of that most precious treasure that is honor. Who would rid the world of infamy would rid the world of shame. So, to link the beginning of this discussion to its end, I could conclude that shame is nothing more than fear of infamy.

Cas: Part after part, you have painted the portrait of shame with such admirable skill that I could not imagine it any truer to life. Yet, despite all my efforts, I still cannot find the answer to my initial question that you had promised, and that I had hoped for. In fact (see what a paradox) the more I attempt to use your words to extricate myself from doubt, the more readily I sink in.

Gua: I am not as taken by your theories, Signor Ariosto, as Castello was. Perhaps this is because my weak eyes do not see the light well and so your portrayal does not appear to me as true or as vivid as it does to him.

Ari: It is a question of subtlety, not of poor eyesight: he who doubts the most sees the most. In your case, the trouble stems from abundance. The image that I have placed before your eyes is of ancient origin; it comes from a most excellent teacher. My desire was none other than to copy it and invest it with new colors — as it is usual to do with old paintings — to make it more revelatory and
accessible to Castello. If you have doubts about it, I will do my best to dispel them, just as soon as I have satisfied Signor Castello.

Cas: You will hear me repeat what you have already heard. You have defined shame as fear of infamy and have established that infamy is born of a foul deed, like a plant from its root. Now if it is true, as we know it is, that love is not a disgraceful thing, how can it then be possible for love to cause shame? This is my first question; and I do well to repeat it for it redeems me of my fault and, by confounding you, it bitterly punishes you for laughing at my expense. So may guilt fall where it is deserved.

Ari: Unhappy me if I cannot ward off this attack. Now let's see if you can tell me what brings infamy.

Cas: The same thing that brings honor.

Ari: And what could that be?

Cas: Public opinion, I think.

Ari: I think you are right, although I know that there are some wise and widely respected men, men of great fame, who share a different opinion. Some day we shall be privileged and delighted to hear it.

Cas: I know a dear friend of ours who holds this same view; I do not know if you speak of him.

Ari: I mean none other than the unique Signor Guarino.

Cas: And I speak of that friend of ours who so bitterly complained of his bitter fate as we walked along the Giovecca the other night.  

Ari: He is a man to be trusted, but I did not know that he was of that opinion. Are we then to assume that they might agree with each other's opinion?

Cas: I could not tell you because I have never heard them discuss their views; it might be a good thing if they met. I, for my part, do not believe it. I can tell you this much: I once told this friend of ours how surprised I was that others might have such an opinion of honor and he answered: "You should be even more surprised that not everyone is of this opinion, and that the world has for so long fooled itself into believing that true honor is founded on the elusive and changeable opinion of man, which is like a great palace of diamond erected on foundations of glass."  

Now let us go back to the original point if you do not mind.

Ari: I was saying (leaving always room for truth) that honor and infamy depend on public opinion, and here we all seemed to agree. Now, if one had reason to worry about an unfounded opinion, might he not then fear infamy, and fearing for his good name, feel shame?

Cas: Without a doubt.

Ari: And if a virtuous lover were in the same position, couldn't he also be struck by shame?

Cas: He certainly could, but then that is the point.

Ari: And why? Is loving good or not good?

Cas: You seem to have forgotten that you defined it good.
Ari: Go slow; let’s understand each other. I mean every kind of love.

Cas: In that case, no. Because not all kinds of love are good. We are only speaking of virtuous love not of that dirty thing which undeservedly goes by the name of love. That kind of love cannot be said to be good, or legitimate, or worthy of praise.¹⁴

Ari: Yet both are commonly said to be love.

Cas: That is true.

Ari: Thus we discover duplicity and ambiguity in the word love, as it can be interpreted in both a good and a bad sense. It can happen, and in fact it often does, that people choose the negative interpretation over the positive one, giving rise to that bad opinion which is the cause of our shame. And hasn’t the world of today been corrupted by evil ways? It has degenerated so, my dear Signor Castello, that not even a good or excellent thing can be recognized in its natural guise any more. This is much the manner of those who, looking at the world through tinted glasses, cannot see things in their natural colors, but are forced to see them red or green, depending on the color of their lenses.¹⁵ The majority of the men of this century do much the same, and, following the base ways of the populace, they cannot recognize gentle and virtuous love. It is no wonder then that a kind lover might sometimes suspect that his legitimate love is inspiring less than legitimate thoughts in the minds of men; therefore, he might fear infamy and, through this, feel shame.

Cas: This would be suspicion of infamy, not fear.

Ari: This is more or less the only difference I see between suspicion and fear: suspicion is nothing more than a doubtful and wavering fear which, at times, falling short of its mark, dissolves into nothing, while, at other times, it grows into fully developed fear. It is not unlike a fog which, as an immature cloud, we either see dissipating and vanishing in the wind, or rising high and changing into a rainfall. I believe that we can then call suspicion an immature fear.

Cas: Now I can finally declare myself satisfied, so I turn the field over to Signor Guarino, who seems rather eager to join in.

Gua: I have little to contribute; my feat will be to abandon the battlefield of shame without suffering shame, although I would always consider it to my glory to lose at the hands of Signor Guarino.

Ari: What a good tactic on your part, Signor Guarino. To exalt your adversary in order to garner greater glory from your victory. Oh, the self-serving prodigality of man. I am neither so blind, Signor Guarino, nor so poor in judgment, as not to take notice of your tricks.

Cas: I do not know what to make of your tricks, but it seems to me that this kind of contention is better left to courtiers of princes, than to Muses like yourselves.¹⁶ For my part I would much rather hear you subtly examine the matter at hand than hear you exchange formalities.

Ari: It’s Guarino’s fault; he was the first to challenge.

Gua: What I said I said in good faith. But to escape every little suspicion of vanity, I will speak my doubts plainly. Following the pronouncement of that great teacher, Ariosto said that shame is fear of infamy.
First, I doubt that we can call it fear; second, that it is fear of infamy at all. Still, supposing that shame is in fact fear of infamy, I doubt that this description is a perfect and living image of shame, as Castello has proposed, and not a bust without arms and legs.

Several different reasons inspire me to doubt that shame is, in fact, fear. Mainly this one: it seems that opposites fight under the same standard and the same captain, that is, they are placed under the same orders. So, black and white both fall under color, and bitter and sweet under taste. Yet if a thing were necessarily what it seemed, it would have to be said that impudence was also fear while, in fact, this is far from the truth. Furthermore, if I am correct, a species cannot be dissimilar and certainly not opposite to the order that produces it, and it possesses nothing that cannot be traced back to the parental legacy. If we assume this to be true, and if we also assume that fear is a cold feeling while shame is hot, how can it be that fear is shame and that a daughter of fire is born from a father of ice?

Cas: You could add that instead of making men fearful, shame can make them daring and courageous, and that, on occasion, it has given encouragement to men who had lost their spirits to fear. Take the case of the Persians who, defeated and on the run, were driven back into battle with the scourge of shame by their wives, and then conquered instead of being conquered.¹⁷

Ari: Inconstant mind. Not long ago you were constantly affirming that those who feel shame are afraid and would like to run and hide and that shame is timorous. But now having allied yourself with Guarino, you have armed yourself against me, striking even at your own self by destroying your previous opinion. See what comes of changing your views according to your mood.

Cas: It was not a change of mood that inspired me to question of your view, but only a desire to learn more and to form my own opinion more solidly. For, as you well know, the stirring up of doubts is, in itself, a form of confirmation and a useful practice for arriving at the truth. And for this you think I deserved such a harsh tirade?

Ari: Oh, go on. You have revealed yourself to be even shrewder than I had suspected. But let us allow Signor Guarino to continue with his argument.

Gua: To continue, I say that shame is a virtue; and as such she is an equal, perhaps even a sister of honesty, both being warriors of chastity. Listen to the proof.

Full armed with her did all the sisters stand,  
The Virtues, arrayed in a mighty line;  
And two by two they held each other’s hand.  
Honesty and shame came first, of all divine 
Virtues, they are the noblest and most fair,  
And make her proud above all womankind. ¹⁸

The praise lavished upon modest and bashful women offers further and undeniable proof of this truth. It then cannot be denied that shame is a virtue and thus a habit, whereas fear is not a habit but an affect — so it follows that shame is not fear. Furthermore, we all agree that fear resides in that part of our soul which produces ire, but shame does not belong there; it lives in that part which is
rational. Who affirms this? Your great peripatetic teacher, Aristotle. These reasons, as well as others, rationally lead me to the belief that shame is not, as you said, a fear.

Ari: What luck that you chose not to release all your dialectical arrows at me, or I would have certainly expired. As it is, I am only bleeding from four wounds and I am not yet beyond help, as I think you realize. Your aim was simply to reveal the sharpness of your wit and the dullness of my own, and perhaps only for the benefit of Castello. Now allow me to smooth out those tracks that you laid to prevent me from reaching the road to the definition of shame.

To begin I say that not all opposites are of only one kind; there are in fact many kinds. Some opposites you rightly said, are placed under the same kinds; others, under opposite kinds; and others yet under related kinds. Opposites fall under the same kind, when there is no kind opposite to their own. These opposites are like branches stemming from the same trunk: so black and white issue directly from color, and sweet and sour from taste. But, whenever a particular kind divides itself into two opposite kinds, these two, in turn, give rise to their own species; these species are opposite to each other but issue directly from opposite kinds. Their consanguinity does not derive from their parent kind, but from that other, more distant relation. So opposites from the first offshoot share a fraternal bond, while those from the second share a cousinly bond.

Now, if we consider carefully, we shall see that shame and impudence are in fact opposites, but they belong to this second group, because shame is fathered by fear and impudence by audacity. Since fear and audacity are feelings [affetti], shame and impudence are feelings as well. As for that most ingenious difficulty you pointed out, that of fear being cold and shame hot, I will say this: there are not one or two types of fear, but three. Only two of these are known as fears, one being a kind, the other a species. One of them sits up high and has below him two sons. The first of these is the fear of an evil that destroys an external good called honor — this is none other than fear of infamy, known as shame. The second of these is the fear of an evil that destroys an internal good which is our life and good health. This last one takes its father's name, as some sons do, and therefore is known as fear; he is the conqueror of men, a pale and frigid feeling. That original fear which we called the father of the other two is neither hot nor cold, if not in virtue of what scholars call a potential. From that potential, or occulted virtue, the species derive the characteristics peculiar to their kind in the same manner that a plant or animal grows from its seed; and from that potential, they steal their proprieties, here one, there another. Thus shame is hot and fear is cold.

Therefore, a species is not opposite to its father, the kind, but it is opposite to its sister species. In fact, if we observe closely, we shall see that their differences are not so great as some might think: shame is not any less cold than fear, and fear is not any less hot than shame because shame burns on the outside, while fear burns on the inside. Fear drains heat and blood from the external regions, and shame drains all warmth from the most internal regions — and so, as you see, the two are differently similar.

Cas: I would act against my desire to learn, if I did not ask you where this difference originates.

Ari: You would not only act against your desire to learn if you did not ask what you pleased, but also against my desire to serve you. To begin a bit further back, you must know that when nature had to place us, her beloved children, on this round earth — a battlefield of opposing factions — she did not abandon us naked and unharmed. Indeed, as a most shrewd and pitiful mother, she provided us with
knowledge so that we may recognize amicable and inimical things. She then instilled a certain appetite in our hearts so that we may surpass all obstacles which block our path to happiness, and that we may pursue and obtain all things that we know to be good, while we abhor and eschew all the things we know to be harmful. Thus the family of feelings came into being — love, hate, ire, not to mention all the others, which, following good and escaping from evil, act not for their own sakes, but for one overriding good: the preservation of our beings. Each time some harmful thing appears before us, our souls swell up with a kind of displeasure full of hatred which, dreading evil, desires only to escape it. Fear is that feeling which rises in us and rouses our nature. Our nature is only concerned with its own — and thus our own — preservation; quickly she races there, where she feels the need to be greatest and, with all her strength, she raises her shield against the looming evil.

Now, the soul is linked to the body by such a mighty knot that the body cannot move one step without pulling the soul along with it. Because of this, as the soul races in this or that direction, she carries off with her the bodily spirits and the blood, which she uses as her ministers in the deployment of her actions. And so it happens she may lead them to the surface of our body, or to its very center according to the need. If they turn inwardly, towards their very fount, they leave the outer regions cold, pale and trembling, since those outer parts are starved of the blood and spirits that produce our natural heat. The reverse happens in those motions that start in the heart and move towards the exterior; because then, the external regions, swelled up with blood and spirits, assume the color of flame. From what I have just said, you yourself could undo that knot of doubt that ties up your mind.

Cas: If I am not mistaken, you intend to conclude that the iciness of fear occurs when nature, armed with blood and spirits, runs to the deepest regions, taking with her all color and heat; whereas, in shame, nature emerges from the more secret regions thus heating and coloring the body through an abundance of spirits.

Ari: That is exactly what I intend to say and nothing more.

Cas: I understand everything up to this point, but I still cannot fathom for what reason the soul hides itself in response to some fears, while it reveals itself in response to others.

Ari: You could also find an answer to this in my explanations, if you considered that, as I have said, nature moves from one region to another according to the most pressing need. This need varies with the variety of evils that may plague us; different evils have to be countered in different manners. There are just as many sorts of evil as of good; but if all sorts of evil are to be avoided, two especially are to be feared above all others. One destroys our life, which is the most precious gift nature has given us, while the other destroys our honor, which we consider to be the most precious of all external goods. Of these two gifts, life allows us to "be" and honor gives an infallible proof of that virtue through which we acquire our wellbeing. For these reasons, we cherish these gifts and hold them dear above all others.

Now, a thing must simply be, before it can be well, and so the first is a necessary condition for the second. Therefore, I can only be surprised (and I mention this only in passing) at those who put honor before life. It seems to me that they should love most that which can give the other a context for being, and that can exist alone without the other; after all, honor is not essential to life and cannot exist without it. According to the order of nature, since life is the first gift to be obtained, it should
also be the last to be given up. In that, if one is not, how can one desire and obtain one's wellbeing? So, life is dear — and to say so is true honesty.

But let us return to our starting point. There are two evils, we said, which we must fear above all others, death and infamy. Sense and reason are posted as though on high towers, on the look out for whatever good or evil may come our way. Now when these sentinels spot some evil approaching, bent on harming our health, they alert nature. And nature, which had been extended throughout the body tending to her duties, runs to the depths of the heart. The heart is in fact the principal seat of life and, until this stronghold is over-run, one cannot be overcome by death. Having gathered all her forces there, nature grows even more vigorous, better to defend the stronghold from the enemy's attack. This is the reason why nature retreats within in response to fear; and because of this retreat one then experiences those symptoms that you yourself have felt, namely, cold, pallor and trembling.

Cas: Most absolutely true.

Ari: But, if at the first attack nature realizes that damage and offence are to be dealt to an external good, such as honor, she does not stay in the heart because its defense cannot take place within the heart. With a great pounce she jumps outside to ward off the coming blows. This she does as best she can, by covering the face with a crimson veil of blood, intending to cover the sinning soul as well. This is no wonder, because hiding and covering are some of the natural properties of shame. We have proof of this when we observe those who, feeling shame and being unable to hide themselves otherwise, cover their face with their hands and lower their eyes as though they wanted their whole face to disappear under their brows.

Gua: It was just so — in corroboration of your statement — that Icarus first devised the icon of shame as the figure of a woman with her face covered. He drew it from Penelope, his own daughter. Having been asked whether she wanted to remain with him, or follow her husband Ulysses, Penelope only answered by pulling a hem of her gown over her face. The father recognized the virtue of her blush and, having said his good-byes to her, he erected a temple on that place. Within that temple, he built an image and an altar to shame.

Ari: Yes, indeed. Let me repeat once again that nature draws a veil of blood over the face of the ashamed. And let me add to this that, to my knowledge, shame is always accompanied by ire, and that this ire increases the intensity of the fire already burning within man. The ashamed becomes angry at himself in the manner that a man can feel anger against his own self, but also becomes enraged against those who are aware of his faults — even though, under other circumstances, he may love and respect them. This happens because the love we feel for ourselves is more powerful than any other kind of love, the spring from which all other loves, like rivers, run. These are as many explanations as I can give you in answer to your questions.

Cas: You have solved my difficulties even better than I had hoped. Yet all sorts of questions continue to take shape in my mind. I am especially puzzled by what you said about the act of feeling shame. You said that in case of shame nature does not stop in the heart, as it does in case of fear, but that it springs outwards in a bounce, as though it performed two movements: one leap forward, the other backward. This notion seems to me both novel and peculiar.
Gua: You have begun to reap your way into my fields, Signor Castello; I do not know with what right.

Cas: The sower is wealthy enough to look favorably upon my poor harvest and to help me fulfill the needs of my age and my education.

Gua: You speak in modesty where I spoke in jest. Please continue, for, as you well know, you are my absolute master and the owner of all that is mine.

Cas: You are too kind; but please let's leave these terms behind -- the ship of your reason risks to sink in the sea of your courtesy.

Ari: I was also waiting to see where your nice words were leading, Signor Castello. Do they use these niceties in the court of the Parnassus?

Cas: Mocking tongue. You would do better to answer my questions.

Ari: I would be happy to oblige. You marvel at how nature can run back and forth in response to shame — as I mentioned in my previous explanation. You will understand how this is possible as soon as you have understood this metaphor.

Imagine yourself in a town enveloped by the darkness and silence of night; its entire population is sunk in a heavy and restful slumber. Suddenly there is a blaring of trumpets calling the people to arms. In an instant you would see all the inhabitants armed, spilling into the streets which, like swollen streams, lead to the central square and to the fortress, the heart of the town, where the Prince, its life and soul, resides. Having gathered at the fortress and having discovered it in danger, the citizens defend it to the death because, in this fortress, lives the sum of all things. But, in case they heard the enemy outside, surrounding the city, they would immediately turn back, racing to the defense of the walls.

The same happens with this nature of which we speak. She is blind and, on her own, she cannot know anything. She only strays from her humble offices at the bidding of the sovereign natures, that is, sense and intellect. When an evil comes in her direction, she can only make out its rough outline, insomuch that it is evil, but she cannot determine its kind. Thus, ignoring the facts, she quickly runs to the heart, the residence of life; if she sees that there is need of her help there — as, for example, when there is reason to fear death, or some other awful and frightening thing — she does not go any further. However, if she sees that her defense is needed elsewhere, she does not dally in the breast but, following the orders of reason, she quickly flies out and flames in the face more readily than gunpowder. Let me clarify what I said about reason governing nature. I do not mean that through reason we have the power to rule over our nature and thus to move our spirits and blood about our bodies as we see fit. The human will simply cannot control all these movements because they are not all of one nature but are, in fact, various and distinct, originating from different principles. These movements, however, can be categorized in three ways.

There are some which are purely voluntary like walking, speaking, moving a hand, or foot, or even the entire body as we please. There are others that are completely instinctive, such as the transformation of food, nourishment, growth and the like. Others yet are both natural and voluntary, for example, the swallowing of food, breathing and the performance of some other bodily functions that are better left unnamed.
Now the moving of blood and spirits is not an effect that proceeds freely from our wills, but only from our nature, which our will cannot control. Experience teaches us this if nothing else; we soon learn that we can neither spur or slow those rash impulses, and that we cannot control the changes in our complexion. It is true that some excellent actors accomplish this trick on stage when, during a performance, they alter their countenance as readily as a chameleon changes color; yet they can only do so through great artifice. Their art is such that when they wish to alter their coloring and to feign some feeling, they first invest the imagined virtue with some terrible, disdainful or merry form so that their reason can better control their feelings. In virtue of this new form, their appetence moves in one way or another. This should not surprise you at all, since our appetence cannot distinguish between true, false or feigned images. Rather as they take shape, the appetence feels pleasure or displeasure according to its natural inclinations, and it is then either moved to love or hate them.

Since the body is inextricably tied to the appetence, it alters accordingly, and its outer coloring changes in accordance with the inner feeling. If our will came forward on his own and, intending to assert its authority on nature, said: "Go out," or “Retire within,” “Do this, do that,” he would be no more listened to than I might be if I ordered these plants to bear fruit. Now you will say, "If things are as you say, that is, if nature flies out to veil the face of the ashamed, does it not do so at the command of reason?"

To clear matters once and for all, I will say that nature acts under order of reason insomuch that reason alone can sense honor and infamy, and recognize them as good and evil. The natural senses are completely insensitive to these things; only reason can appreciate honor and dread infamy. Recognizing infamy as an evil, then, the reasoning side feels abhorrence for it and, in so doing, it warns nature and, in a manner of speaking, asks for her help. Nature cannot help on her own but only through the powers of the senses that are tightly connected to her. But listen to how it comes about. When our sense of sight or hearing recreates an image of infamy before our learning faculty [nostra apprensiva], this faculty relays it to the intellect which, turning to it, judges it an evil thing. As such, it is refused and condemned by our will, and turning to fantasy, it falls into appetence. The appetence, whose nature is upset by an evil, is so perturbed by this image that it transfers its unease to our nature, blood and spirits to which it is inextricably tied. So, as you have just heard me say, this movement of the imagination progresses to the intellect, from there to the will and, falling again into the fancy, it turns back and descends through the appetence, it finally becomes a commotion of the blood which, as I said, is principally governed by our nature.

From all this I concluded that nature acts at the commission of the reasoning virtue. All this is true when it is interpreted as follows. The movement originates in reason and, in fact, it would not occur if reason did not judge infamy a despicable thing and did not call on nature to ask for her help. It is true, then, that reason can only rule over nature through the intercession of fancy which, acting as a mediator between the two, can also work many other great marvelous things that now I cannot describe. And if it is true that reason can only do these things by means of the imaginative virtues and the other sensitive faculties, it is also true that she is unable to do them without their help and intercession; two contrary statements being true without contradiction.

It should not seem strange to you that reason, the queen of all the forces of our soul, cannot move nature at will without the help of so many mediators, even though nature greatly fears any force at all. Reason would not have it otherwise because of its nature, because of its removal, and because of the height and decorum of its position. I say by reason of its nature, because reason is intrinsically
clear, brilliant, free from all impurities, and free from all bonds to matter, while nature is strictly physical; it is due to this discrepancy that one cannot work on the other without the help of suitable mediators. I say by reason of its removal, because the reasoning part is the first link in the chain of the powers of our soul, while nature is the last; therefore, it is impossible even to imagine that the first link could pull on the last unless they were connected by other links. Furthermore, reason is a very noble and highborn lady so it is not fitting that she should personally command such a lowly servant without going through the proper channels. So, the not commanding is a further proof of the superiority rather than weakness or impotence — loathing such a lowly subject, reason does deign herself to speak to nature, even to give orders.

It is the same with great and noble lords who, engaged in all kinds of important matters, will not go down to the fields to give orders to the men who are working the land with their oxen. And if these lords did go down to the fields, they would not be obeyed for the workers would not recognize them as their masters. Indeed, these rough and uncouth men would not be as awed by the commandment of their lords as they might be by the words, gestures or even the presence of some bailiff or steward. The same happens when the nobler, loftier forces address the lowlier ones.

I believe that the kingdom of the soul (and I speak of a healthy, free and well-disposed soul) is organized by fateful decrees that are inviolably observed. According to these decrees, there must be various ranks within the soul, some superior, and some inferior; there must be those who rule, those who provide and those who serve; those who come first and those who come last. It is all ordered according to constant laws that do not allow for any deviation from the prescribed terms. Only reason, who is free through her own nature, is not subject to these laws but can do as she wishes. As for all the others, those who must obey, obey, and those who must command, command. This common and reciprocating system of allegiances is source of freedom, peace, and wellbeing for the whole kingdom.

How happy we should all be, if we could maintain the government of our republic in its original state; and how much happier still, if we had the eyes to see and the skill to imitate such a superb concept of government as that which nature, the universal servant of God, has sculpted in our hearts. Because then we would not experience, as we do now, the sight of such large regiments roaming the streets of our cities and kingdoms. In these unhappy times of ours, there is no good custom that has not been corrupted, and no good law that has not been contaminated. Every man wants to abandon his station in life and take up another and, ignoring his own duties, he only wants to engage in those of others — and so all hierarchies are disrupted, and all honors and ranks are confused and distributed blindly. In this manner those who now rule should serve, and some serve undeservedly who were born to rule. Everything is full of quarrels and questions giving rise to all the misery and pettiness of this world, so that I do not know whether to laugh or cry about it.

Cas: Among all the roses I have gathered with my mind, one thorn of doubt has pricked my soul. If our nature is not concerned with honor and infamy because they are not essential to life, then it seems to me that she allows herself to be dragged mindlessly about like a madwoman or, worse still, like a beast on a rope, without knowing where she is going or why.
Ari: What I said should have been enough for you. Our appetite is saddened by any kind of unpleasantness that in any way appears before it. And nature, being chained to it, is forced to follow its movements. But let us ignore this fact.

Does it seem to you that nature ought to be considered dumb because she ignores where she will end? Do you not know perhaps that it is her privilege to work without knowing for what end? Does she not perhaps have someone to know it for her, and to guide her away from danger? What good would she derive from knowing? What has she to do with honor and infamy? She is well enough without them. Should we call mad any man who does not always guard his own interests? But then we could call mad all true friends who put the wellbeing of a friend before their own. Likewise, we could call mad that faithful servant who works to the best of his abilities for the good of his lord, going even beyond his own interests; or we could call foolish that good citizen who, in addition to his own wellbeing, works to ensure public and common happiness in his republic — a Regulus who loved Rome and not himself. 20

Nature is a servant, a subject of the sovereign powers; if, on occasion, in serving them, she works for the common good of the soul, we cannot say that she is working stupidly or purposelessly.

Cas: I do not know if I draw more profit or enjoyment from your words. But I know that my profit and my enjoyment are so great that I know you answered my questions even more fully than was required. I am more than satisfied and I am sure that Signor Guarino himself is not dissatisfied with the parts that touched his arguments.

Gua: How could I be anything but satisfied? Was he perhaps not as eloquent towards me as he was towards you? Or have I perhaps completely lost my taste for mental skill? Only the third question remains unsolved; and it seems to present more difficulties than the other two. Although Signor Ariosto's skill has never known a difficulty that it could not master.

Ari: Your satisfaction was recompense enough without all your exorbitant praise. I have strayed so far from the original path, that it will be no easy task to lead you back to it. I still remember that you used the poet Petrarch as an authority to place shame among the virtues. You attempted to show that, being a habit and not a feeling, shame could not be a fear. In truth, I have always greatly esteemed poets who — as reason tells me — are the most divine of all writers. And I have always admired this poet above all others, for he has brought glory through the centuries and splendor to our language. But, in this case, I must say that I esteem the author more than the authority. Poets do not have to establish the truth of things as perfectly as philosophers. In fact, being such universal craftsmen, they have the right to move through the entire gamut of opinions — true, seemingly true, or held to be true; and, more often than not, it is proper for them to speak improperly. 21 Therefore, I believe that the authority of a man who speaks poetically is too weak an engine to knock down the truly steady foundations of the philosophers.

Gua: I would have sworn that a poet like you would have trusted such an authority more than you have. But let’s leave the poets be. Now, if you would be good enough to tell me what praise is if not a form of speech revealing the greatness of another’s virtue.

Ari: It is just that, I believe.
Gua: If that is so, then, in all fairness, we can only praise virtue or a thing deriving from virtue, isn't that true?

Ari: It would seem so.

Gua: We can surely conclude that shame is a virtue, since we hear its praises sung all day. And, if this is true, then we can also easily conclude that shame is not at all a feeling, as you said. Further, insofar as our feelings are naturally planted within our souls, and insofar as they are among the things that are given to us by nature, then, by common agreement, we can neither praise nor fault them.

Ari: I can tell that you speak only for the fun of tempting me. You know better than I that there are many things we receive from nature that can be praised for their perfection and virtue — for example, grace, beauty, wit, memory and many other things along this line. As proof of this, we need only consider those lovely works composed in praise of some beloved beauties. If some natural things deserve just as much praise as some of our actions, then I cannot see why we should deny praise to some feelings. Feelings, after all, are like swords; they are only as good or evil as the end to which they are used. Now, if our feelings are used well, why should they not deserve praise? By common agreement, our feelings (I say this for Castello's better understanding) sit in that part our soul which feels and which is naturally devoid of the light of reason. Having said this, however, we have to add that this part of the soul is like the moon. The moon is dark and opaque on her own, but when the sun looks lovingly upon her, she becomes adorned with his rays, so that she becomes as lovely and bright as she can be.

The same happens to a soul filled with loving movements; though dark of its own nature, she becomes full of light when turned towards the sun of reason. Further, we see that some lunar regions shine brightly in the light, while others remain mottled and foggy; similarly, within the loving soul, some movements appear brighter than others depending on the diversity of their nature, that is, some movements always being good and others bad. Those movements that are more conducive to the light of reason — mercy, for example, disdain, shame and others of the kind — are then praiseworthy even though they are only feelings. So, as you see, your argument comes tumbling down.

Cas: Brilliant. But please tell me, Signor Ariosto, couldn't we say that a feeling illuminated by reason is the same thing as a virtue?

Ari: No sir.

Cas: Why not? I have never noticed any difference between a virtue and a feeling regulated by reason.

Ari: I believe that there is a difference, and not a small one at that. It is the same difference, in fact, as that between the measure and the measured.

Cas: I think I begin to understand your answer and I like it, but I want to hear more.

Gua: At this point I must agree with Signor Horatio, even though he is my adversary. Let me see if I can explain what he means. After wheat is measured (I speak to you, Signor Castello), isn't it always wheat?

Cas: Sure it is.
Gua: Then the same goes for the feeling of ire, for example; it is always ire and always feeling, both before and after it is regulated. It is very true that, in being tempered, it acquires perfection, however, it cannot lose its nature — this would be like saying that, after being measured, wheat improves in quality and increases in price. Measured ire is then not the form, but the matter of meekness, the core around which she grows. The virtue then may seem to be the same thing as the feeling, just as the wheat may seem the same thing as the full bushel. So, if you like, we could say that the measured feeling is the wheat, the mediating habit is the measure, and that reason, through prudence, is the measurer.

Ari: Your commentary is much better than my text.

Cas: I recognize the error to which my mind had fallen victim, but my mind is still its prisoner. Even if a regulated feeling is not the same as a virtue as I had believed, it must still be true that, wherever it is, there must also be virtue — just as a measured thing is always within what measures it.

Ari: To understand this point it is necessary to see that reason can regulate feelings in two ways. It can do so either on its own, without any other intervention, or by tempering the feeling with the aid of a habit. Listen to this example.

It is the duty of temperance to restrain the unbridled ardor of lust; but sometimes, within the moderate man, lust is repulsed at least once or twice before the habit of temperance takes over. What would you say regulates this effect? It is not the habit, which has not been produced yet, but the force and rectitude of reason, which has the power to regulate some feelings like shame on her own. Having been regulated by reason, these feelings then become worthy of praise.

Cas: Your reasons are convincing, but not very instructive.

Ari: Perhaps I can make myself clearer, but I will have to go further back.

Cas: I appreciate nothing more than learning. Signor Guarino will forgive me if I break the thread of his argument.

Ari: I see that I need to give you another example, so let me say this: as I have already said, if we were to look within our soul, we would see an excellent form of regal government. We would see reason rule as queen over nature and dominate all the faculties of the soul. We would see her reign over them lovingly, governing prudently, and commanding with her sovereign authority. As for these faculties, we would see them serve their lady obediently, according to their duties.

Now, it is not fitting to the person of a prince to provide for and to command his humble populace; but it is customary for him to do so through some respectable minister. Similarly, it is not befitting to the venerable majesty of reason to step down and control with her own hand the rabble created by the tumultuous disturbances of our covetous appetece.

Therefore, nature assigned that part of our soul that grows angry to serve as a minister of reason; being fierce and combative, it can fight for its sovereign. Never leaving her side, it takes her orders and sees that they are obeyed by the less deserving parts. When the need arises, it chastises and corrects the rabble of the seditious feelings; it pushes, spurs, restrains, redirects the rabble, forcing it to become submissive and obedient to the royal commands. It is true that, on occasion, this warring
part encounters a wild and obstinate crowd, previously untried; and that these rebellious passions may then offer some resistance and refuse to surrender readily, however, they eventually give up after a short struggle. Thus, in the act of continence, we see a bridled feeling, but no habit of virtue bridling it, since continence is not a virtuous habit, but the victory of reason over the senses. Often, during these exchanges, it happens that some feelings readily submit themselves to the will of this minister of reason; having been previously mastered by her, they are already used to obeying without delay. We observe this in the act of temperance, where any ugly, fetid thought falls as soon as it rises, so that we can clearly see the light of virtue shining.

From all I have said, I would like you to understand that the same could happen to that part which grows angry; even though this part is a minister in the administration of the lesser parts, and thus nobler and more magnanimous, she is still in need of the bridle of reason. If her bit were loosened enough for her to become mistress of her own will, she might become too proud and too hasty in her movements — and perhaps so insolent, that she might dare to compare herself to her queen and overthrow her. Yes, reason has good reason to restrain her; however, she does so without any help. This warring part is all the more ready to execute the orders of her sovereign because reason is far more generous and noble than cowardly appetite. So to sum it all up, the feelings of this part, and those of the other, come to follow reason in two manners. They either learn to walk the straight path after much study — for example, the habits of fortitude and magnanimity and other similar virtues; or, they simply learn to move in the wake of her natural light, without the intervention of habit — for example, the feeling of mercy, or the feeling of shame that we are speaking about.

Thus shame is not a virtue but it still deserves praise because it depends on reason. As we said, reason stirs and awakens shame, but she also governs its flow so that it is neither too scarce nor too abundant. Further, since shame maintains some ties with the virtues, it becomes worthy of our praise. This is what wise man meant when he said that shame sits in the reasoning part — and this was Signor Guarino’s last argument, if I am not mistaken.

Gua: By looking at Castello’s face I can tell that you have further complicated matters for him. If virtue is to be found in the middle of things, leaning neither on the side of deficit nor of surplus, then how can we say that shame is not a virtue? After all, shame is balanced in the middle between brazenness and another form of shame so stupid and untimely that it does not deserve a name. We should add that since shame is an enemy of brazenness — as the latter attacks and corrupts the former — and since brazenness is generally considered to be a vice, then we can reasonably assume that shame must be a virtue if we can assume anything at all.

Ari: Your reasoning appears sound but, in fact, it has no value. Just as we cannot deny that shame resides between these two extremes, we cannot affirm (and you know this very well despite your act) that the nature and strength of shame grow from this middle ground. A virtue requires other conditions to be legitimate and shame lacks these conditions altogether. It will be enough to say that, where virtue is concerned, shame has no beginning and no end if not in honesty.

Gua: If this is so, it lacks two great parts. So, please, tell me — what are they?

Ari: It is pointless for me to tell you; but since you insist that I tell someone, I shall tell him. Shame lacks prudence and the careful determination that not only produce but also safeguard virtue. In addition, shame lacks the capacity to produce any action. We observe, for example, that the habit of justice
yields just works; that of strength, strong works; and that magnificence creates magnificent works. In short, we observe that every virtue can conceive some operation. But what does shame produce, by God, other than the act of coloring the face? Please do not say that shame is occasionally the cause of some virtuous action, because then I shall be forced to answer that shame is neither the direct or indirect cause of such an action; but that, in fact, it acts only as a bridle, to pull us back from a dishonest act, or as a spur, to reawaken our sleeping habits so that we can be moved to action.

Thus the words of the Persian women inspired shame in the breasts of their fearful soldiers, and roused the daring and strength that lay dying therein. Shame can thus become a cause by accident. In addition to all this, no one has ever seen a virtue unaccompanied by prudence and discrimination because these two, like two loving mothers, would never abandon their charge; for, if they did, even for a short while, the poor thing would be sure to die. Shame, on the other hand, has no familiarity with prudence, for it is born in us at that age when we are least equipped with good sense and discrimination; so that, when the one advances, the other retreats. I say nothing of free will as it is clear that shame is born on her own, without permission from our will, and in fact, sometimes, even as we do not realize it, shame is born against our own will, in the manner of all the other affects. I dare any man to choose to feel shame or not to feel shame in the same way that he can choose to be or not to be just.

It is no wonder that blushing is not born of choice, as, in itself, it is not a thing to be desired or a thing full of pleasure and sweetness like the virtues are. Rather, with shame comes regret and the anguish of the ashamed. Similarly, it does not make sense to say that brazenness is a vice because it is as much part of the nature of vice as shame is of virtue, and it is equally worthy of condemnation as the other is of praise. Anyone who will consider this matter carefully will see that both shame and brazenness are feelings; one being the fear of infamy, as we said, and the other an excessive confidence or a disdain for those things which produce disgrace.

Do you wish to see even more clearly (if it is possible for it to be any clearer) that shame is not a habit but a feeling? Look at your bodies and see how they can change slightly. This only happens because our sensitive soul, whose appetencies are the springs of our feelings, dominates the body so completely that it is obliged to move in accordance with her movements and to share in her passions; and conversely, because of their reciprocal bond, the soul sometimes shares in the pains of the body.

Gua: This cannot be denied, because if it were not true that kind physician would not have noticed the fever of love burning within Antiochus; nor would we see a jealous eye poison men, nor the fire of anger burn a fever within a body; nor would we see a person grow ill due to anguish, or healthy due to a great joy or, sometimes, even die from it. In fact, I would allow myself to be convinced that what you said was true, if I did not have other reasons which, pulling me almost by force in the opposite direction, leave me hanging between the two points. In truth, if a habit is only an old and well-established custom of doing something, then, a soul well-born and better raised in the love of honesty and the hate of its contrary could, after a long period, grow used to feeling shame on every instance, in every place, and with every person who made it necessary. Who could truthfully say then that this was not a habit, a virtuous habit, and thus a thing to be praised?

Ari: I would continue to deny this if I was not afraid to bore you with all my chattering.
Gua: Poor us. I hope that we do not seemed listless that you might think we would be bored by the precious gift of your words.

Cas: Signor Guarino, don't you see as I do the aims of Signor Ariosto? He wants to be prayed, don't you understand? So, please, let us pray him.

Ari: You can see as well as Argus or as a lynx, but in this case you are blinder than a mole. I shall never let myself be prayed by those who can give me orders. I am more eager to serve you than you can imagine and so I will proceed, since it is your will. In my opinion, what Guarino described cannot in any way be a habit, because it must not take such a hold on our soul that it could not be easily rooted out as we grow older. Shame cannot grow with the years, nor can it persist for long, without attracting the reproof of the one who nurtures it in his heart.

But let us assume that what he describes happens in the tender years of youth; what could we say then? We could say that this is not a habit as he maintains, but a certain disposition that is followed by a kind of feeling. And I think this kind of feeling is halfway between habit and feeling so that we can either call it a felt habit or a habitual feeling. It is hardly surprising to see such mixtures in man; the world is full of so many varied things that man — being a very diminutive but very faithful portrait of the world — could not be otherwise.

Let us examine all the natures. According to the opinion of some, we shall find the demons between the corporal nature and the bodiless. We shall leave aside the human nature placed in the middle between the angels and the mute animals; but let us look further down and we shall see what the writers call the imperfect mixtures between the simple and composite bodies. Among the perfect mixtures there are some halfway between those with soul and those without. And even among the animals we find several who can live with equal ease on the earth or in the sea; and on the earth we find many which are composed of two different species; sometimes, we even see a species that mixes the sexes. These mixtures are a wonderful artifice of nature intended to tie together with great strength all the parts of the world that, otherwise, would be too disjointed. In this way, nature brings everything together in the manner of an expert painter who never connects a light to a dark region without many varied intervening gradations; little by little, he adds and diminishes light and shadow so that the observing eye moves from one region to another before it has time to realize it. The more expert is a master at this artifice, the more accomplished he is, and the more pleasing and cohesive his painting will be. In the same way, a good singer can harmoniously raise his supple voice from low to high notes in such a sweet crescendo that, to the ear, a hundred such voices seem but one.

Now, to return to my original point, I say that since all that is large and small in the world was created by the same hand in the same style, it should be no wonder that if we should find habits and feelings within ourselves, we should also find a third nature constituted equally of both — and thus we have shame and others of the kind. So both your reasons and mine are valid. Shame is part feeling and part virtue — but a most imperfect virtue at that, and thus not completely unworthy of praise but not completely deserving either.

Cas: As a matter of fact, I am one of those who gather darkness from the light — the more I hear it said that shame is a virtue and that it deserves praise, whether much or little, the more I am surprised. It seems strange to me that from such a bad and bitter root such as vice could grow such good fruits as virtue and praise; in short, that good be born from evil.
Ari: Go slow, my dear Signor Castello; do not let this trouble my soul. I never said that shame was wholly a virtue, or fully praiseworthy, but only partly so. Shame is only good because it is the disposition and the road to good. Have you never seen a rocky and muddy path leading to a most noble town? Please tell me (perhaps you will understand better this way), if one fears a certain thing, does he not also abhor it?

Cas: Without a doubt.

Ari: And if one abhors something, does he not try to run from it when possible?

Cas: You are asking me if the sun shines — who can doubt it?

Ari: And if one runs from an evil, does he not also run from the reason of the evil?

Cas: I cannot deny this.

Ari: And if one runs from something, does he not run toward its opposite?

Cas: This sounds reasonable too.

Ari: If all these things are true, we can say that one who fears infamy runs from it; and one who runs from infamy also runs from its reason — and what is this reason if not vice?

Cas: We shall be forced to admit it.

Ari: But then what is virtue's intent if not to run from vice? One who runs from vice loves virtue and thus follows it; and, following, his soul on fire, he finally acquires virtue; because one who runs from the extremes must make for the middle. Does it seem of little account to you to see greed of honor in a tender soul? Or burning love of virtue in a youthful spirit?

Cas: No, it certainly does not seem of little account.

Ari: There you have it, then, how shame can be said to be good. In our opinion, shame is like a medicine — bitter to the taste but sweet to the health; and, just like a medicine, it extracts the sinning humour from our body and restores our health. Although a medicine is not healthy in itself, we call it so. Similarly, shame is not good with respect to its generating reason, which is sin, but by reason of the effect it produces by purging every evil from our souls; in addition to this, it ensures that man does suffer a recurrence of those errors that he has once had the misfortune to make. In this guise, it is like a once shipwrecked sailor who, with every care, stirs his vessel away from those rocks where he inadvertently crashed his ship. And be advised that if shame is beneficial as a cause, it is even more so as a sign, because it gives hope that the actions of those whom it marks will come to a good and happy ending. In this guise, it is like those wild weeds that, though not good of their own nature, give expert farmers an infallible sign that the untilled fields are rich and fertile. I think that through these examples you will understand how shame is both good and not good. If you are still bothered by hearing it called a virtue (for this is a magnificent and awesome name) then, with Signor Guarino's kind permission, I will give you leave to call it a vicious virtue or a virtuous vice.

Cas: Truth be told, that seems to me like mixing black with white or light with darkness.
Ari: But in fact, if you considered this carefully, you would see that shame is a mixture of light and darkness yielding a crimson tint similar to that of dawn. And again, if you considered carefully, you would see that shame is the dawn of rising virtue. When the sun, the father of the rays and the light, rises on the horizon, it sends forth a vague splendor which, gilding the mountaintops, brings joy to onlookers and fills them with hope (by announcing the day) of greater light; similarly, a small ray of the rising virtue, called shame, brings light to our faces and promises greater enlightenment to come. Believe me, Signor Castello, the dawn preceding the sunrise does not grow so beautiful or so crimson as the shame preceding virtue. If you are interested in pursuing this truth, you must listen to how shame came into this world, for I am sure that you have never heard it told. But be aware that it is necessary to exercise the eyes of the intellect.

Cas: Do tell me, I am most anxious to hear it.

Ari: We read how the goddess Pallas was born of Jupiter, the king of all gods. She was not born from his union with a mortal or immortal woman like all his other children, but from his own divine head, which he had intentionally broken with some hard blows. Now, Minerva did not emerge from her father’s head a small girl, but a grown young woman of singular and marvelous beauty; since she had been born chaste without the stain of any impurity, she chose to lead a chaste and virginal life. It was no use that more than once Amore, encouraged by Venus his mother, should do his best to ensnare her, for he always found her fully armed; nor that he should attempt to wound her because, on every occasion, he became frightened by the lightning in her eyes as much as by the shaking of her lance and preferred to flee. And it was also no use that Vulcan should burn for her and that he should ask Jupiter for her hand, because he always found her opposed to his wishes and always more constant and determined in her chaste resolution.

So she lived, happy with her fate, until she saw that sterility was too contrary to the divine laws which deem it most fitting to be fecund; and thus she made up her mind to give birth on her own — in the same manner, that is, that she had been born from Jupiter. This was perhaps so that, in addition to her birth from a father without a mother, which had been rare and singular, the sky could also witness a progeny (such as were the virtues) born from a mother without a father. And so, one day, having already conceived within her head, she struck it, and out came the sciences first, the arts, then prudence and, with it, all the other virtues one by one. In their features and in their beauty, they all resembled their mother more greatly than any daughter had ever resembled her mother and, therefore, they also greatly resembled Jupiter, their grandfather. Thus he was as pleased with these new births as he had been with that of his daughter and, seeing himself in his granddaughters, he felt an incomparable joy in his heart.

Now, Jupiter had long ago seen humankind fallen in a deep precipice of misery due to the tyranny of vice and ignorance (two horrible monsters of the abyss); he had long been waiting for it to pick itself up but in vain when, moving his gaze towards the earth, he saw humankind even more deeply buried in its unhappiness. Moved to pity, he began to say to himself: “Alas, why wait any longer to give aid to unhappy mankind that, without any regard, goes falling from misery to misery and seems almost ready to die from it, unless held up by a divine hand? Am I perhaps not that same Jupiter I always was? Must our effort in caring for and maintaining this creation be any lesser than that spent in creating it? No, our goodness is always constant and equal to it and would not allow it. Here is an opportunity to exercise the goodness of he who is the cause of every good. Let there come an end to
the infinite pains and anguishs of man; let him be delivered from his harsh and bitter slavery. And let these damsels of ours execute all this."

When Jupiter had resolved all this to himself, he had Mercury call an assembly of all the principal deities. Without delay, the gods assembled reverentially before him, according to their order and rank; and he, in his royal costume, sat at the pinnacle, on a starred throne, with a majestic and august aspect. With everyone silent and listening, he began to say: "Oh gods inscribed in the eternal registry of the muses, you are well aware of all the numerous benefits we have mercifully showered on man and of all the gifts and graces we have generously lavished upon him. We have raised him above all mortal excellence so that the earth does not contain anything nobler than him — an animal most perfect in all parts, made in our image and, excluding his mortality, only slightly inferior, in fact, equal to you heavenly creatures.

Now turn your eyes toward that hell and you will see man indifferent to our generosity and to that treasure he received in gift from us — that divine, sincere and pristine nature which he has since tainted and fouled a thousand time over. You will see that those who, by our grace (what more can be said?), were born to rule are bitterly tyrannized by vice and ignorance through their own fault. And, what is still more serious, you will see man has stepped all over religion and, having moved away from the true path into the dark of his blindness, he has distanced himself from us who are still his beginning, his end and his principal good. This is a true affront against us but, ultimately, one that turns around to strike at its perpetrators. Now, what must we do? Allow ire to burn up our soul? Arm ourselves with lightning bolts of vengeance? Add evil upon evil and anguish upon anguish?

Ah, let us keep our feelings of outrage at bay — they are better left to humans. Let men feel outrage, anger, fear, and hope, as they please. Ours forever are pity, clemency, and that good desire to be of help to others that so befits our name and nature. Human cruelty must never cause divine goodness to wane. Let us then call back this lost herd and let us restore it (if it is willing) to its ancient dignity and original state. And let all this come to be through the intervention of these dear damsels of ours so dear to the sky. Let them go, win and banish the tyrants; let them bring peace to those at war; let them heal the mortally wounded hearts; and having broken the terrible chains of slavery, let them assume lordship over men. For I swear by the River Styx (and call to witness the sky and the earth) that, from now on, to serve them will be the single, the highest freedom, and the greatest happiness." This he said, and nothing more.

Jupiter's good proposal was unanimously and concordantly approved by all the gods and, with great commendation, it was deemed worthy of him and no one else. The exchange having terminated, it was established by disposition of the celestial state that the virtues should be tightly united under the command of a captain, in order that they might fight more vigorously and effectively against such rough enemies and their hordes, and so that they might never have to be separated one from the other. Prudence was made the commander because she was loved by all as a sister, but also because, as the firstborn, she was held in the greatest regard. It was all ready; nothing else was required but the provision of a guide to conduct these noble pilgrims through parts of the world to them unknown, and to walk before them as a herald to locate and prepare inns where they may rest. They elected a pretty and graceful girl called Shame to this office whose mother was Honesty, and whose father was Desire for Honor. These two had lived with their daughter among the innocent men, but then they had escaped. They were of divine extraction too, blood relations of the virtues. Since she
had shared the customs of men, Shame was neither ignorant nor inexperienced of their nature. Having been summoned, she appeared — very modest in her demeanor, her eyes downcast, her face more red than pink — and she offered to serve at their disposal.

Since everything was ready for the departure, they all took their leave from Jupiter, who wanted to kiss each one on the forehead, and from their mother, who did the same. Then, having opened the doors of the sky towards the orient, which looked all pink, they sent Shame forward. Then the virtues emerged all dressed in a white more white than snow and crowned with olive; and, after them, came the sciences. And from then on, they never stepped on any spot that had not been chosen and solicitously prepared by farsighted Shame. Thus, just as no thunder comes without lightning, and no sun without dawn, so virtue cannot come without shame. Fortunate and happy is he who opens the doors of his heart to shame; he must rest assured that every vice will vanish before her, and that, after her, every virtue will follow. On the other hand, unhappy is he who does not welcome her or, having done so once, has now divorced himself from her and banished her forever.

Gua: What do you think now, Signor Castello? Do you understand yet? You do not answer. Have you perhaps grown mute?

Cas: And who wouldn’t? Have you not noticed that Signor Ariosto has stolen my spirit with his marvelous tale? And, having taken me out of myself, he has robbed me of all speech?

Ari: Ah, Signor Ercole, is this perhaps how you intend to take your revenge on me for your imagined affronts?

Cas: I speak the truth.

Ari: You should know, Signor Castello, that I cannot steal one’s spirit on my own as another has already managed to do. But, what do I say? How foolish I am. It is your great fortune that your spirit be held prisoner. I am sure that its prison is so pleasant that you do not care ever to have it released back to your custody; all the more so because you now possess another just as dear to you as your own. But look, as I spoke the day failed and the sun moved swiftly towards the horizon. Let us go, and do not let your sun hide itself before you are able to see it again this evening.

Cas: There we are again. You want to conclude where we began. We shall let it be as you desire. But what will happen to the rest of Signor Guarino’s questions that you are still under obligation to answer?

Gua: It is about time you remembered my case. Because of you, the day has concluded to my disadvantage.

Cas: Do no worry about this, my dear Signor Guarino; I am about to make it all up to you. I offer for us to meet again tomorrow at the same time that we met today.

Gua: Tomorrow is not convenient, as I shall be engaged in some important affairs of mine.

Cas: Let us make it the day after tomorrow, then. I propose my garden as a neutral field. You will be able to discuss your questions in the shade of my trellis, and then you will both stay on for dinner.
Cas: And so, like Penelope, I shall have to undo the web that I have just spun? And I shall have to fall out of love today with one whom your words inspired me to love the day before yesterday?

Ari: Yes, that will be best.

Cas: Oh slippery and changeable mind. You can be so contrary with others because you are so discordant with yourself. But here's one who will come to my help; here's a just and careful judge to whom I shall complain of your inconstancy.

Ari: Too bad for you that he is just, for he will then be forced to rule against you.

Cas: Most kind Signor Guarino, you have arrived just in time to resolve our differences and to bring peace to our disharmony.

Gua: How sweet and lovable must your disharmony be; perhaps not unlike that which created the world, and which separated and produced things, and now maintains them so. I would not presume to extend my hand and to break up your contest. But what reason leads you two kind and graceful spirits to quarrel?

Cas: Love and mutability; the former at my side, the latter at his service. I charge that Signor Ariosto deceived me. You heard yourself, the other day, how carefully he worked to show me the beauties of shame and the fruits that man can receive from loving it. If you remember, he called it bliss to open the doors of our heart to it for, then, all other virtues would be sure to follow. And for all his efforts, I fell in love with it just by listening to his words. But now, as I was telling him that I was so enamored that I longed for nothing else but to make it mine forever, he changed his mind and told me that I should not be so impetuous in my love, as though shame were not the same beautiful and worthy thing that it was the other day. I am confused by his words and so I give voice to my complaints.

Ari: If it is not enough to say it again, then I reaffirm and swear it. Cas: What else can I say? You have heard it from his own mouth.

Gua: Wait, Signor Castello; he cannot be saying this without a reason. Cas: So, today, you will be contrary, too.

Ari: Did I not tell you so?

Gua: God forbid, I never had such a thought. I said what I said because I do not think that he wants you to rush into loving shame, since he did not discuss it in its entirety, but only demonstrated one of its aspects and, perhaps, not even a representative one. And it is not right for one to love something until he is thoroughly familiar with it. And this is because from knowledge comes love.

Ari: See what kind of peacemaker; listen to his manner of settling a difference. Instead of bringing resolution, he brings forward another difficulty more complex than the first. How can you maintain that I have shown only one aspect of shame and, then, not even its own true one? I see that I am about to have more trouble than I expected, today.
Gua: Slow, there. Do not get upset. I never said that I did not want to propose questions; I merely said that I did not want to pass judgment over yours. Don't you remember that, the other day, I expressed great doubt that shame was the fear of infamy? And that I doubted it was — as Castello maintained — a true and living image of it but, rather, a bust without arms and legs?

Ari: I well remember what you said, but I do not remember that you proved it. Gua: Proving it will not prove any more difficult than saying it.

Cas: I am so pleased by your proposal, that I shall gladly forget my own. But first, let's sit down on these chairs here.

Ari: Now, what can you say against my — well, not really "my" — definition? Gua: Only that — if you will allow me — your definition is not equal to the thing defined.

Ari: A small difference. But what makes you say that?

Gua: I have observed that there are some men who fear infamy but do not fear shame and, on the contrary, that there are others who feel shame but do not fear infamy. But allow me to dwell on the first point.

Ari: Go ahead.

Gua: It seems to me that many men would put all their desires into action if they were not prevented by the fear of infamy to which — following their appetencies — they fear to fall prey. They fear it without a doubt, yet they do not blush because they have not yet committed an error that would condemn them to do so.

Ari: It would not be difficult to reply to this.

Gua: In due time, please. Then, there are those others who fear infamy because they are afraid that their hidden faults, if revealed, might attract public scorn. They are even more afraid when these faults become known; then they are disposed to disappear from the world and so they do not dare even to show themselves in public. These men do in fact fear a bad reputation, but they do not blush because there is no one present before whom to feel shame. Nor do they experience that pounding of the heart, nor that burning of the face, nor any of those accidents that follow shame. And so these are two types of people who fear infamy without feeling shame.

Cas: So, Signor Ariosto, now you are not confronted by an inexpert youth as you were a few moments ago. But before we can proceed further, gentlemen, accord me a special grace: that I may be free to ask either of you any question I want.

Ari: If that is all you wish, with the permission of Signor Guarino, I shall grant you that privilege. I know well that this discussion is undertaken for your benefit.

Cas: Then, please, let me add one question to those already posed by Signor Guarino. Everyday we hear of men feeling shame when they hear themselves praised. Yet when one is praised, one is honored, in that praise is a sign of honor. How can it be then that one may fear infamy when one hears oneself so honored?
Ari: A good point, and one worthy of your wit, yet one that is easily clarified. Is it not true, tell me, that arrogance is a thing to be reproved?

Cas: Very true.

Ari: And isn’t praising oneself a great arrogance? Cas: Without a doubt.

Ari: And to agree with praise, or to take too much pleasure from it — are they not the same as self-praise?

Cas: The same, or little less.

Ari: You can already see where my answer is leading.

Cas: I do see. You mean to say that one who is praised feels shame because he fears that others might believes that he invites this praise and that he takes too much pleasure in it; and he fears that they may believe him to take too much pride in it, and thus accuse him of arrogance — this seems true to me.

Ari: Add to this that praise often resembles ridicule. And that man, dreading ridicule, may then feel shame.

Now, turning to Signor Guarino’s question, I say that fear of infamy is very similar to that other feeling that we simply call fear — and the results of one are often also expressed in the other. As you know, fear is only an expectation of evil, but this evil can be more or less distant from us. A distant evil does not inspire fear, especially when we can run from it; thus it does not truly have the power to harm us. But if an evil moves in our direction and we have no way to stop it, then, of course, we experience fear. We have to imagine the same happening with infamy. If we suffer infamy because of some transgression of ours, and we know that we cannot be rid of it, then we do fear it and we blush. But, on the other hand, if we see it in the distance and we make to avoid it, then we do not feel shame because we are not led by a pure feeling, but by a form of advice, resolution or choice.

We could say the same of one who, looking down from a high place and seeing a ferocious beast killing and dismembering some pilgrims, refused to go down there but walked away in his certainty that, if he did go, he would lose his life. This man could not be called timid, but prudent and cautious. Similarly, if, having spotted the horrendous monster of infamy from afar, he were to go against his appetencies and cease to behave badly so as not become a victim to the monster’s poisonous bite, then he could not be considered bashful but, in fact, he might be considered a temperate man. Thus we can say that one who commits a transgression for this reason does not fear infamy or, at least, does not fear it in the way of one who actually feels shame. The difference between the two can help us to understand: the first is ill, the other in good health; one sad, the other merry; one timid, the other daring; one repents, the other consoles himself; one is guilty, the other innocent. The fear of the first brings praise; the other’s fear leads to reproof. The first fears infamy from afar with the condition that he can take measures to avoid its movements, without any change but with discrimination and consideration; the other fears infamy already up close, without any shelter and without deliberation, but with a lot of blushing and not a little anguish and confusion.

That great teacher who wrote that shame is fear of infamy also wrote that shame is pain and confusion of those evils that bring disgrace; he wrote this to show that he meant that fear which
goes arm in arm with anguish. A contemporary of ours was also right in saying that shame is a form of sadness.

Gua: From one question to another — this inconstancy of yours has always troubled my soul. I cannot see how these two definitions can be reconciled.

Ari: They are not as discordant as they might seem. Have you ever thought about those waters that acquire a taste and smell from the underground veins that feed their springs? Some of which acquire the attributes of iron, others those of sulphur, of alum, of salt, or some other such matter?

Gua: Yes, I have noticed all this; what do you make of it?

Ari: I would say that all our feelings are born in this manner from either pleasure or pain as from two great fountains; and that they draw qualities from one or the other which they save from the hour of their birth to that of their death; because of this, we shall not find any kind of feeling that does not in itself contain strains of pleasure or of pain. Thus, one who hates or fears feels some displeasure and pain mixed with his hate or fear, while another who hopes or desires also tastes some pleasure and some sweetness. Because the fear of infamy is one of those feelings that is connected to pain, it is not surprising that, at times, it should have been defined as one and, on other occasions, as the other. All the more so because both one and the other are of its same kind, even though fear is much closer to it than pain. And because pleasure and pain father the other feelings, these have to be at least of the same family as their parents; thus, when I define shame as fear I also mean to include pain in the definition for, as you know, in definitions, the broader embrace the more narrow kinds. For example, when I say man is an animal, I also mean that he is alive, and that he is body and substance. But, you will ask, why did the Philosopher once define shame as fear and, in another instance, as pain? If it were possible to second-guess the secrets of that extraordinary mind, I would say that in matters for orators he chose not to act as a philosopher, but chose to speak of them as an orator. I say so because he also did similar things by following more vulgar and more common opinions according to the subject he was treating. In addition, by using the name fear, he wanted to make it very clear that shame was an affect and thus he mentioned affects. However, on the book of customs, he defined shame as fear — which is its closest kind — to touch on its truer nature and, having touched it, to make it more truly legitimate, so that he into the family of virtues could adopt it.

As I was thinking to myself, I remembered another way in which shame could be said to be both fear and pain. It is very true that when evil is present it gives us pain, and that when it comes in our direction or overtakes us, it brings fear. Now when somebody commits a mistake in the sight of others, he does have infamy present though it is not close enough or ready enough to overtake him; however, a double feeling, a mixture of fear and pain, comes to life within him. Thus shame could be said to be fear of an expected evil, and also a pain with respect to the already occupant evil.

Cas: So far everything is clear.

Ari: If I am not mistaken, the other question is resolved just as easily by turning to those who, seeing their faults uncovered, run and hide as far as they can from public places or from gatherings of men. In my opinion, these men still fear infamy from a distance, and they experience fear with much thought and deliberation — fear stripped of all those accidents that accompany shame. May it please you that, in changing metaphors, I compare one of these men to one who, running from the authority of
the public law because of some misdeed, goes into voluntary exile and, although he may feel a stinging desire to see his beloved children, his wife and his country again, he dares not return for fear that he may lose his life there. Now, without a doubt, he feels fear, as does that evildoer who hears his prison door open and hears the frightening announcement of his imminent execution and, soon after, feels himself being put into chains to be conducted with fateful steps to his terrible appointment.

Now let us consider these two manners of fearing death and we shall see that one way is much more bitter than the other. The exiled man, for example, fears it from afar armed with boldness and confidence — in fact, he does not really fear because fear is an affect and an affect is a movement, but this man’s spirit does not move for this reason; in fact, it rests until it imagines the presence of a danger to which it might fall if it went where it desired. This fear of his — if we want to call it so — does not bring iciness with it, nor pallor. But then there is the other one who is suddenly and closely confronted by death with all her fierce attributes; he quickly loses his voice, recoils in horror, turns ice cold, trembles, and in fact almost dies before death. If we wanted to compare fear of infamy with this kind of fear, we would clearly see that they walk hand in hand.

And thus, let us consider one whose faults have been made public to all, and who has been sent on a shameful exile from the reign of honor — this man does indeed fear infamy as you said, but from afar and perhaps in a rather pleasant way, often filled with rejoicing and with pleasure. It is not any less true that he is inclined to blushing each time he is in the presence of other men, but when he is by himself, living strictly on his own, he does not blush and does not grow silent if not in his own conscience, the hell to which he is damned. But, as for the one who — while in the presence of friends, of honorable men, of relations, or of some noble assembly — sees the curtain suddenly dropped to expose his misdeeds, why, then, he blushes quick as lightning and feels a commotion all the way to the roots of his heart.

In short, all the first internal movements stirred up in us by a great and sudden apprehension have the power to perturb our heart and color our face as does shame; the second’s movements do not have this power, nor do those movements which are born little by little and which are often joined by counsel and human deliberation. And even if it happens that they touch the body — as do worry, hatred, envy and love — they do so over such a long period of time that man is not aware of it. It should not surprise you that men who are hiding from other men for fear of infamy do not blush and do not suffer from other mishaps, because this fear of theirs is not generated with impetus like that of the ashamed.

Gua: Thus from what I understand, it is not enough to say that shame is fear, but a sudden, unexpected, and inconsiderate fear of infamy or some other similar thing.

Ari: Perhaps the addition of such a difference will not be in excess, especially for external shame that is properly known both as blushing and as shame. It is true enough that this small particle must be added to the definition, so that it may express not an indivisible and momentary period, but a convenient length of time to encompass all those who feel ashamed of external shame?

Gua As for all these shames of ours, how many are there?
Ari: I think there are two shames, one of which it seems appropriate to term internal and the other external. I call internal shame that confusion and remorse of conscience that usually attack a soul guilty of any error even when hidden from the eyes of the world. This shame can be with us even in the deepest woods. If this is what we mean, then we could say that those men of whom you were just speaking also feel shame — namely those who run from the presence of other people. They can say along with the poet: "I feel shame with myself of myself." 28

Gua: Oh, if only God willed for everyone to feel shame of one's own self; for then one would have no cause to feel shame of others. And then, perhaps men would have no reason to feel shame. But what, do we not already have witnesses who are always with us even in the most secret places, in the most deserted and remote solitudes, as minders of our works? And let us exclude God, who has an excellent knowledge not just of human actions but also of human thoughts; do we not always have our selves with us? Who better than ourselves could know our defects? And knowing them, condemn them? And condemning them, amend them? Oh, if we could only arrive at this truth with our understanding, how solicitously we would stalk ourselves; how much more studiously we would observe our customs, more so, even, than do our enemies. And it is true that no one is so good a friend to oneself as one who can be one's own good enemy.

Ari: This is born from that ignorance which is the root of all other ignorance — that is, not knowing one's own self. And then there are many who, having hidden their defects from the eyes of others, believe themselves to be innocent and alone, not knowing that they have their own selves with themselves. And look at what they do then!

But, to go back to shame, I say that in addition to internal shame, there is external shame whose signs appear on our face, and which is inseparably united to a flash of fire. We began to speak of this shame the other day, and we have been speaking of it until now. And this alone, I intend to define as worthy of the name by which it is known in the common use of language — which should be followed, as it is the generator of words when it is accepted and approved by men.

Gua: And here I am tied up in the same difficulties. Ari: How so?

Gua: If blushing — and by consequence the movement of the spirits — is always accompanied by shame, then will this definition of shame not be lacking if it does include this condition?

Ari: Ah, but now I understand the poison of your doubts. You wanted to accept the material cause as the missing feet of the image of shame portrayed by me, and the doer as its missing hands — is this not true?

Gua: So I did.

Ari: But then you must excuse me, for until now I have spoken of shame in a moral sense. I have given its natural definition ignoring the natural one because the philosopher had perhaps never considered it, if not in an instance where he looked for the cause of blushing in the ashamed. But, in my opinion, if one were interested in a natural description along with the dialectical — that is, if one wanted to couple matter with form — then he might say this: shame is a rush of blood and spirits from the heart principally to the face, caused by nature in response to a sudden fear of infamy; 29 thus we have, in its entirety, the definition of the shame I called external, though this definition does not suit
the internal kind. If one took the trouble to define this last one, it would be enough to say that it was a fear of infamy, and this would be a definition common to both.

Cas: You would have it that those who feel shame on their own do not blush; in fact experience seems to show the contrary. For I know of some who remembering their errors have blushed on their own, just as they would have done in full sight and hearing of the world.

Gua: This is very true.

Ari: Do these men blush on their own for sins they have committed in the presence of others or for sins they have committed secretly while alone?

Cas: For both.

Ari: Blushing for past errors committed in the presence of others is a power of the imaginative virtue, which can work great miracles transporting, uniting and discerning all things. It can bring before me time past and to come, people, places, and errors committed long since and in faraway places, and it can bring anything before my eyes as though whatever has already happened were happening right now, and thus cause me to blush. The great Poet demonstrated the power of this imagination when he said: "I imagine them and I already feel them." The great Philosopher taught us the truth of this conclusion when he said that shame was a pain or perturbation born from those evils — past, present, or future — which bring infamy. We have to understand that these evils can move us if they are actually present or if our imagination presents them to us. For this reason, it happens that a man can blush on his own for something he has done, but this is only an internal blush. But it is harder to believe that another man might feel shame with an external blush because of a fault known only to himself. If this has happened to any man it is likely that it was caused by a firm belief that he was or may have been the perpetrator of some misdeed in the sight of others, since, as we said before, that which may be is just like that which is. Fortunate the man who comes to fear God, the excellent observer of our works, more than men; and who learns to know his self within himself, that is, reason, God's vicar, minister and our judge, the most venerable of all things; and who learns to fear it and to feel shame of his hidden, secret faults before it. I have more hope for this man than any other, for then no secret, dark, solitary or deserted place could ever invite or persuade him to a dirty, villainous deed or even to think about it. Perhaps our Petrarch was such a man, for he wrote:

Shame I had of me; which to the gentle heart
Suffices, and of another spur I had no part.

Not any less rare, I believe, are those who feel the fire of shame flame on their faces and eyes when they are far from other men; but, in fact, for the most part, I have always heard that solitude and darkness make man audacious and daring. Thus it has been noted that the blind — for whom it is always night — are most brazen. It is for this reason that some say Love should be represented as blind because it makes lovers brazen.

Cas: I know many of them who are bashful and who feel shame. As for myself, I believe that fear is a greater sign of love than boldness. But please tell me, why does the face become more inflamed than other parts?
Ari: There is an old proverb that says shame is in the eyes. Thus we see that honest women, children, and all those who feel shame, lower their eyes and look down to the ground. Some hold that this is due to an honest custom, others that the eyes grow heavy with the overabundance of spirits that have converged there. This rush of spirits, on the other hand, is due to their nature, which is hot, thin, and light, so, when released, they fly freely upwards. Furthermore, these parts are less dense than the others and so the spirits can find more open and free passage through them. In addition to the face, nature has especially constructed our eyes to act as mirrors of our hearts, so that we may see an image of our hearts reflected there and of its most secret affects, not to mention its more clear and distinct ones.

Cas: I think I have heard (or am I mistaken?) that quite a few men have left this life by cause of this release of spirits.

Ari: It is no surprise that you have heard this because it is true.

Cas: Are we to believe that shame causes such a release of spirits that it is possible to die from it?

Ari: If we were to philosophize about the causes of life and death we would see the truth of this, but then, perchance, we might stray too far from the subject at hand.

Gua: What does it matter to us? Is it not all part of the discussion?

Ari: What else can I answer you if not that I am ready to make your will my will?

Gua: It must be as Signor Castello wishes.

Cas: Quiet, he is withdrawing within himself to think of what he must say. Ari: It is believed that life is nothing more than the operation of the soul living in warmth.

Cas: Stop there, please. My dear Signor Ariosto, since you have agreed to undertake this discussion, you must be so kind as to extend it a bit further than the proposed theme and my original question require, so that I might hear at least once this subject in its entirety and sate my thirst for this truth.

Ari: This question that you propose is not any less cumbersome than beautiful. Nevertheless, to satisfy your wish, I will begin to speak about it, not exhaustively because the field is too large, but at least enough for you to become well acquainted with it. And I shall be as brief and slow as I can.

As I said, life is nothing more than the operation of the nourishing soul living in warmth; now it will be best for me to extend my discussion, and to speak of those things which I have read piecemeal here and there and which I have ruminated on, in part, by myself. To my best belief, there is only one natural heat within our body but because of some degrees and ways of speaking, it seems to be of two manners. I leave aside what is known as elemental heat which we find in all mixtures, even those void of a soul, and which also persists even in dead bodies; I speak of animal heat.

As I was saying, even though this heat is one, it seems to be of two manners — one being characteristic of each part of the living body for as long as it remains so, other being to all parts. The first heat is disseminated by nature with her own hand from the moment of creation of each animal; it is spread with uneven abundance in every small part of our body and it becomes fixed in its substance, as all that which comes with the seed and originates from it. Because of all this, it takes...
the name of innate and first-born. Whether it grows from temperament, or whether it is even in the nature of the stars, as some would have it, I do not care to call into question at the moment.

For my part, I hold more with the first than the second statement. But, unless this heat — which we could term cold and languid — is revived, it will remain in the body of the animal, powerless to operate those excellent operations that are required by the living. Thus it became necessary to put a more vivid and robust heat within the body to reinforce the first and to give it both perfection and strength, in order to operate the operations of life. Therefore, in her great wisdom, nature, the mother of all things, created a vase in the middle of the body to keep an eternal and almost holy fire that, spreading evenly from there, would bring life and vigor to all limbs. This vase was the heart that, like a live fountain, continuously spreads spirits though many ducts so as to bring vital heat, along with spirits, to all the parts of the living body.

The ancient storytellers perhaps already prefigured this in the tale of the celestial fire stolen by Prometheus and breathed in this mud of ours — something that led to the erroneous belief that the soul was made of fire. Now, this heat which is generated in the heart, distributed to all parts of the body and by them eagerly received, mixes with the native and implanted heat of those parts; the fusion in manner and form of both produces another heat which could be seen as two, since it is born from two different principles. This is not because both one and the other do not come, though in varying degrees, together with the seed and the soul, but because one has spread its roots throughout the body, while the other has gathered them and fixed them in the heart.

This form of heat, so composed and tempered, can be called either natural or vital, as one prefers; it is not our very soul, as some would have it, but its first instrument and closest minister. Here we must add that, for as long as this heat of which we speak is kept at a certain rate and at a suitable temperament, and for as long as it grows within certain natural terms, then our soul, and thus our life, rests within the body as though laying on a soft feather bed. The soul, like other forms, requires suitable preparation, what scholars call disposition, thus if the heat grows to excess in one direction or the other and if it moves past the prescribed measure so as to extinguish itself, then the soul becomes unable to sustain itself on that solution lacking in required beat, and it soon departs, just as a building might collapse because of faulty foundations. As we said, the heat forms the bond that ties and secures the soul to the body, and when this heat is extinguished, our life can die out, and this can happen not in one, but in several ways.

Cas: This is certainly as worthy a topic for discussion as any other.

Ari: The vital heat can die out for many reasons. As I see it, these can be narrowed down to the following: lack or overabundance of nourishment; excessive heat or cold; and too little or too much respiration. These are all the ways in which the animal heat be put out — but they are also the ways in which we can put out domestic fires. Even though many attempt to reduce the number of ways of putting out a fire to an even smaller number, I am satisfied with the ones I mentioned, and I believe that any manner of death can be traced back to them. But I realize that before I begin to color in my sketch, it will be necessary for me to do a bit of filling in — especially with respect to the subject of the food that nourishes this fire in us.

The natural heat depends on a thin, liquid substance called natural humour that is diffused (as we have already said of the first heat which is the same thing as the aforementioned) through all the
parts of the animated body since the time of its creation. This same heat feeds on this humour, since one is naturally meant to consume and the other to be consumed. Now this heat tries to keep itself alive by drawing sustenance from and upon the matter of this humour; therefore, we see that it shows not only great ingratitude towards this humour — as it devours and kills what gives it life — but it also shows great impiety against itself (oh miserable condition!) as, in its destruction of the subject it was born and will die with, this heat acts lethally against itself. But this radical humour which draws the animal from the seed would not be sufficient enough to spread itself throughout the growing boy; nor would it be sufficient enough to feed the heat that would rapidly consume it all; thus it was necessary that this humour — planted, as I said, by nature — be fed from time to time with another humid substance, so that it could be replenished as it was consumed. This is accomplished by the food which is ingested daily by all the animals and which is produced a humour very similar to the one which must be replenished. This new humour can be considered nourishing because of the nourishment from which it derives and because of its nourishing function. Now, from the mix of these two humours, the radical and the other I just discussed, comes a single humour of a single nature, just as we were saying about the two heats — one fixed and stable, the other flowing — from which comes a single heat.

Cas: If this time you do not fulfill your desire, Hercole, it will never be fulfilled again from what I see.

Ari: Let us go back to where we started.

As I was saying, the heat can die in us for lack of nourishment in two ways — one internal and natural, the other external and violent. The natural heat extinguishes itself in the first manner when (let us put it like this) the age of a man is already full and so the heat has already consumed all the substance of natural humour that had been prepared for its consumption. In the growing years, this humour is produced in greater quantity than is destroyed; in middle age, it is replenished at the rate at which it is consumed; but in the Fall years, much less of it is put away than is lost, and little by little it grows so thin that it is all consumed by the heat — and so the heat, lacking its nourishment dies like a lantern deprived of its oil. This death is strictly natural and therefore it is less bitter and painful than the others. As for death by lack of external nourishment, we can learn from those who are currently falling to the deadly arrows of hunger almost all over Italy; they lack sustenance to restore spirits to the heat and to lend humour to the parts grown cold and dry. And this is it, for the first way.

As for the contrary, this same heat can often be put out by an overabundance of nourishment, if it is badly digested or converted into excessive humour; this is like a small flame being oppressed by a great mass of wood. In addition to this, the heat can be won over (just as any thing can be by its opposite, and especially fire by water) by excessive cold received within the body through a poison or some other very cold food; or it can be fought against by external cold, as we see that many of those who walk through snowy Alps in frozen countries suffer from cold and even die from it. Similarly, the natural heat can be put out by excessive extraneous heat; for example, when a great unnatural fire takes hold of our bodies because of some poison, fever, or some other such thing, it quickly dries up all the humour that nature had intended as fuel for the natural heat over the course of a lifetime.

We sometimes see a great flame rapidly consume a bit of wax in the same manner; wax that had been meant to fuel the temperate fire of a lit chandelier for a certain period of time. Moreover, excessive external heat of the air can destroy our heat by calling out to it — as they are not dissimilar
— and drawing it out of the body; this wandering heat opens up new ways for the native heat by rarefying it, so that the latter abandons its paternal home and — dispersed and won — it resolves itself to nothing. I think that the fifth way in which natural heat is extinguished happens through the closure of the jaws or other similar openings which ventilate and recreate this heat, as it passes through the blood and arteries, with each inhalation and exhalation of fresh air. This so necessary that if it is denied whether by force or involuntarily — as it happened to Gaius Licinius, the Roman senator, to Hieronymus of Boccaccio and to many others — if, as I say, it is denied, then the enclosed spirits, unable to breathe freely (as can also be seen in a covered flame) quickly suffocate. Lastly, this heat of ours can die because of too much breathing, or more outpouring of spirits than necessary. This happens when the body is wounded in one of its parts and a great quantity of blood is shed from the wounds; together with the blood, out go the spirits; with the spirits, the heat; and with the heat, life. It is especially so when the wound is to the heart, the seat of life and the mine of all spirits. As they find an open window, they fly out following their light nature. This also happens for some other reasons; as for example when some great feeling of the soul expands even the heart, opening its gates and releasing the spirits so that they fly away. The vital heat can be extinguished in all these ways, consequently releasing the soul from the body.

Cas: But as we are speaking of heat, here is a gentle breeze come to refresh us so that we can follow our heated discussion more vigorously.

Ari: Here I want us to take notice that even though that this extinction is common to that mixed heat which we call natural, it nevertheless applies to that heat which is in the heart and which brings life to all parts of the body and without which there would be no life. If one feared the first reason as the principal cause of death, one could take consolation in the fact that it is impossible to die unless that vital fire which is in the heart is completely smothered; even if one tiny spark of it remained alive, though all other parts were frozen, the waning life could be reanimated, unless, that is, all humour were consumed.

Having said all this, it will be better to fold our sails and to return to the port where we started; as we have traveled far beyond what was necessary in order to make you happy. Then we shall say that among all the reasons that bring us death we find aligned many passions of our soul such as worry, fear and happiness. Generally, however, only those whose virtue is feeble or infirm by reason of age, sex, or nature are susceptible to this. We shall understand how this can happen if we note that every feeling — as I have said at another time — is born from and continually accompanied by pleasure or pain, and that the instruments of the soul move together with it. Thus it happens that those feelings which have some joy in them swell up the heart; by reason of this swelling up, there is a great outpouring of spirits led by nature to receive with joy those things which bring her pleasure. On the other hand, in the case of painful feelings, the heart contracts and calls the spirits back to itself; and they run to unite there so as to be able to resist with greater strength those displeasing and frightening things. Rather often it happens that the spirits' race to and from the heart is so furious that they bring about their own death; so it is in fear, where as they flee with the blood to the lake of the heart, they so readily crowd the entry passage that, sometimes, they close up the way for respiration and they extinguish themselves together with the heat of life. So some turn to stone or die for anguish, though not so readily as we read of Rutilius and Lepidus. The first gave up his troubled soul because of the rejection his brother suffered in his quest for the consulate; the other died for the pain of having been repudiated by his wife.
The number of those who leave this life warmed by excessive and unexpected happiness is even greater. This is so because the soul, spurred by an impatient joy, runs open-armed and without any restraint toward those things which please her, so as better to enjoy them; the soul is accompanied by a great flood of spirits and these, having left the heart in a great rush, diffuse themselves so that they are unable to return to their origin, leaving that place void of heat, and the body void of life. For this reason, that most beautiful and noble Greek woman known as Policrita came to her death: for having triumphed as liberator of her homeland; and so the tragic dramatist Sophocles and the comic Philippides came to theirs for the joy of triumphing over the other poets. And Diagora fell to the happiness he felt when, during the Olympic games, he saw his three sons earn three victorious crowns in one day; Chilon the philosopher died for the same reason; and many mothers ended their days because of the unexpected return of their sons. All this happens because of the consumption of spirits and heat.

And so, finally coming back to your question, I say that in this same manner the heart can be abandoned by its spirits because of feelings of shame; and their release might cause a man to die. So, they said, died Homer — simply for the shame of being unable to solve an enigma that some fishermen had proposed to him. The same is written of one Diodorus, a dialectician, who felt the shame of being unable to undo the knot of a deceiving argument. Thus it is possible to die from shame, and now the reason is clear to you. But, to tell the truth, I do not believe that one can come to grief as readily for shame as for happiness or fear. At any rate, we have to imagine that in order for one to die for these causes, the affect must be more than strong, while the spirits and the little soul that sustain this affect must be very weak.

Cas: And could you not give a reason as to why it less easy to die from shame than from fear?

Ari: Oh, but we could go on forever, on to where no one has gone before. Perhaps because in shame our nature does not move for its own good, but for the benefit of the reasoning virtue to whom honor and infamy are due, while, in fear and happiness, it often seems to do so for its own self, thus moving with greater impetus than for shame. Moreover, in happiness, nature performs a simple movement from the center to the circumference, whereas, as I mentioned the other day, in shame it performs two: one to the parts within, the other to those without. This is cause of a greater union and a smaller release of spirits.

Cas: Enough has been said about this. So now we have surpassed all the difficulties, have achieved a full depiction of shame, and we are finally able to observe it without the shadow of a doubt. Should I then not be accorded permission to love it at my will, Signor Guarino?

Gua: If this image were fully realized, then what you ask should be granted and not denied. But I still do not believe that it can be seen, as you said, without the shadow of a doubt.

Cas: And what is left for you to question? Alas, your mind is full of doubt today.

Gua: Listen to him; he reproaches me for doubting too much; he whose tongue is the mother of doubt.

Cas: Is it not already clear that anyone who fears infamy feels shame at least in some way?

Gua: Yes, sir. That is true. But the notion that one who feels also fears infamy is still rather obscure to me.
Cas: So then, please let this question came forward, for I see Signor Ariosto ready to defend himself and to grant me license to love this blessed shame at my will.

Gua: Does it seem to you, Signor Ariosto, as it seems to me that, that no one can fear those things that he does not know?

Ari: It must seem so, since knowledge enlightens appetence.

Gua: But can infants feel the shame of little nothings even when in their swaddles or cradles? What sense can they have of shame?

Ari: They have just enough of one to allow them to feel shame. Gua: And who teaches it to them?

Ari: That same teacher who teaches fire to fly upwards, earth to fall downwards and who teaches the birds to make their nest.

Gua: I finally understand you. You mean nature. But this is hard to believe in that, how can it be that nature teaches to despise those things which are not bad by nature but by law, such as infamy, for example? So there must be two shames. One natural and free from knowledge; and the other acquired, moved by reason and led by understanding.35

Ari: In fact it works like this. The first, which is detected in children, is a natural feeling moved by a dark knowledge -- dark indeed, and so all the more natural -- almost similar to disposition which is in heavy or light things to move downwards or upwards. But we still have to note that even, though the soul is born a simple infant, naked of all experience and knowledge it possesses seeds and hidden sparks which are commonly called natural instincts. Their duty is naturally to direct animals, and especially men, towards their perfection. This was so vividly declared by the Poet philosopher that I know of no better words than his to explain it.

But wherefrom doth progress the intellect?
Of what's first known, is not for man to see,
And of the first appetencies the affects,
Which are in you, like the skill of honey-making in the bee.36

And as follows:
Because of these aforementioned natural principles, the soul feels a certain taste of good or of evil and then she either grows glad or sad. And thus we note such effects that fill us with wonder not only in children, but also in newborn infants and mute animals. Therefore, it is not true that this shame of ours is born from being well acquainted with infamy, but from a certain zeal and innate desire of the soul to preserve as much as possible of that purity and candor in which it was born. And also, from the abhorrence it feels for those things that could stain its cleanliness. This comes just as naturally to the soul in its tender age, as it comes to a newborn baby to contort or curl up to escape the cold he feels, even though he does not know what cold is. A lamb naturally feels the same fear, as soon as it is born, for the cry of the wolf that has the strength to kill it, even though the lamb has never either heard it or known it. As far as I can tell, all this happens because nature implanted in us the seeds of being and of well-being. And it seems to me that this feeling of shame — which is after all an appetite to eschew infamy, or a desire for glory and honor — is not any different from those
other natural appetencies which are in man, such as those to be, to live, to see, to hear, to know, to live free, to surpass others, and other similar things. And man feels these though he may not know what life is, or honor, or infamy, or knowledge, or freedom, or victory, or nobility.

Cas: What a fortunate and fecund question that gave birth to so beautiful a discourse!

Gua: Quiet, oh poor listener. Do you not see that he wants to continue? Cas: Be quiet that I shall be quiet.

Ari: All I wanted to add was this: the same sense by whose notion infants feel shame is like a seed planted by nature in the land of our soul should it be cultivated by a good nurturer. Over the years, the natural virtue grows in us to become true and perfect shame that is guided by reason; and becomes a true virtue if it completes its growth. If we wish to look at another example, we can consider how a small seed sprouts first and then, little by little, it grows into a stalk which, having reached its full growth, in time will bear fruit.

Having done so, we shall see that the shame of children is like a seed which, having sprouted, becomes a small plant in the years of youth, and, at a mature age, it produces the ripe fruits of virtue. As you know, these fruits do not only grow from this root, but also from many others. In order to answer to Signor Alessandro more fully, I say that the trunk of a tree is different from its own root; and so, the first shame is different from the second.

And just as the seeds and the root require many circumstances which the trunk and branches do not require (while, on the contrary, the latter require many things which are not necessary to the former) so the shame that is in children has no need of that lucid knowledge which illuminates the shame already matured; and, in fact, the shame of children is happy enough with that dark knowledge which nature dictates to it. After all, it is not to be denied, as we already said, that in children there is some sort of natural sentiment for good, honest and laudable things. To simplify my discourse and to lead it back to its origin, I will say that the first shame is the starting point, and the second is the road to virtue.

Gua: All you said would be fine if infamy were a natural evil, but what gives me cause to doubt is that it seems to me evil by law.

Ari: I have once heard — not without great wonder — some lawyers wonder at how philosophers could open their mouths to speak about matters of honor and infamy, as though they were affirming that only they could speak about those things. I do not believe that you hold such views, but I believe that you believe as I do that infamy, as the laws consider it, is a sign or demonstration of that infamy which is true infamy. As examples of this we have hideous torture, public insults, the condemning of men to exile, and other similar shames and disgraces that are directly opposed to those public honors dispensed by the same laws upon worthy men. In times past these honors used to be sacrifices, celebrations, games, the recitals of praises either in prose or verses, and crowns; in our times they include sepulchers, statues, privileges, dignities and other similar testimonials and signs of honor.

Lawyers also dispute which things the law forbids to the wicked, and other such questions. But, in fact, I think that they understand little, or perhaps nothing, of the nature and the essence of honor and infamy. Be that as it may, perhaps you believe that what is wrong by law is also wrong by
nature? And what is so by nature is not also such by law? I know that you do not believe it, for if you did, you would be wrong. In my view, and perhaps in yours, the law is not very different from nature; in fact it is a living portrait or, rather, a daughter of hers that resembles her as much as it is possible for a daughter to resemble a mother. Law derives from nature; law derives from nature in the manner of all other proper human actions.

Our industrious mother very expertly lay the foundations of these actions in our soul; especially those of the law, since it had to serve a regulator of life and as a common bond for the human generation. And it may be an order to govern a city well. It may also be a determination — made by common agreement of men, or only by one population, or by the wiser and more prudent men, or by a sovereign Prince, or by another similar leader — to enforce good and honest things and to forbid all the contrary ones; to restrain men from evil through punishments or incentives and to direct them towards good; to preserve their civil well-being in peace and happiness; or to do other similar things.

It is not my intention to consider this any more carefully at this point, but I say that it always has its root fixed in nature, or even in the author of this nature — God, the great, immortal, first and greatest good from whom every good derives, especially the law of which we speak. It is because of this that all the first law-makers in the world either truthfully said that they had received the law from God — as in the case of Moses — or they pretended to have done so — as in the case of all the others. From God, then, it instills itself in our soul, which is nature; and then, through prudence and self-deliberation, it makes its way onto paper. Thus even the written law, or "civil" as man calls it, flows from the springs of nature like the natural law; and both one and the other from the divine law.

It is true that this law of ours loses its name as it flows away from its origin but this is like those waters which, having issued from the breast of a fount, flow into rivers which, over a long distance, change their name each time they change country. And truly, natural laws are like springs in that they are brief and universal precepts self-generated in the human heart. For example, that no one is to be harmed; that each must be given what is right; that one must not do unto others what one would not have done to oneself.

From these, then, are born like streams many particular precepts about particular things that then grow beyond all numbers. Thus we can conclude the laws that go against those of God and nature must be deemed evil because they are not their natural offspring; whilst we must deem excellent those that devolve from and follow them. Yet sometimes it is of no help that laws so made are intrinsically holy and good because, very often, it happens that their clear and limpid waters flowing from divine springs are polluted by some of their own ministers (let us exclude the good ones); this is either because these ministers do not know how to reduce them to their divine principles, or because in their greed and desire to earn a little gold, these men sometimes fail to quench the thirst of their flock and, instead, poison it most bitterly.

But what do I mean to say with all this? To go back to the point from which I was forcibly removed by the occasion and my justifiable outrage, I will say: of what is wrong and unjust by nature, and similarly what is good, right and honest by nature, both remain so under the law. For, in my opinion, the law does not have power to change naturally good things into bad ones, nor evil into good. After all, if a law decreed fire to be cold and for snow to be hot, it could not take heat from he first and
cold from the second; and so evil must always be evil, and good cannot oppose good, and neither can the honest go against the honest.

Cas: And yet, if I heard correctly, there are many laws that oppose other laws. Ari: Either they do so or they are made to do so. But the truth is that for a law to be legitimate and not tyrannical, it should not oppose another law, if not perhaps in appearance. And if one does oppose another, we could say that their opposition is like the concordant discordance of the elements in the harmonic union of the world and of the other bodies or like the temperate contrariness of the voice in a harmony. The same thing happens with the laws (to continue with my original metaphor) that we see in rivers. These are born of the same spring and sometimes branch off as they go on their way, one in this direction, and one in the other. Occasionally, because of the diversity of places and sites, they hide underground or resurface; sometimes they run toward one another, sometimes they move away and, having rounded each other, they unite once again; and once again they may divide until, finally, they head into the sea where they first had their origin. Thus the laws: though on the surface they may appear to be contrary, they are in fact not so. If one wanted studiously to trace their beginnings and their ends, one would find that they walk from good to good through different paths. However, to go back to our original intent, the truth is that what is good, or not good, by law is such by its own nature.

And so, if infamy is to be eschewed a wrongful thing by law, it is because nature makes it so. Thus, it is not surprising that children should naturally fear and abhor infamy; for, as you know, they carry within their immature breasts the seeds of honesty like the fire in a flint that sparks when touched by steel.

Gua: Will be it sufficient to say that if infamy, or any other thing, is wrong by law then it is also so by nature? I ask this because there are some things that, though indifferent by their own nature, can be either good or bad by law depending on the place, opinion or custom.

Ari: Perhaps, as you say, this universal proposition is not true. But, at any rate, there is good reason to believe that, as I told you, a work be judged in this fashion in matters of honor and infamy. Even though we note that there are various things which give birth to infamy in different places, it is nevertheless always the same and common to all. In France, there would be no shame for a woman to be kissed in public; while in Italy, the same woman (and she would be foolish to allow it) would make a spectacle of herself. But this does not change the fact that in that nation, as in all others, infamy lives, if not in this, in other acts. There was never a place, or a time, or a people that did not know honor or infamy of some kind. Though the causes that produce one kind or the other vary according to time and place, honor and infamy lived and continue to live everywhere — a sign that their foundations are natural and common to all mankind. Further, one cannot disagree that the desire for honor is natural just as the hate of infamy — which is its contrary — is undoubtedly natural.

Cas: What do you think, Signor Guarino, did we not gather a good harvest from those few seeds we sowed?

Gua: Very good indeed.

Cas: As for me, I am so pleased by it that I am not any less happy to question than to learn. Yet I am afraid to tire him too much; I doubt that by now he is not tired of discussing. And this doubt restrains from more doubting.
Gua: I fear the same.

Cas: See now how his liberality is harmful to us.

Ari: This abundance, my dear gentlemen, does not proceed from me but from your kind affection that you use to measure the endeavors of others. If I were only worthy enough to serve you as I wish, then you could truly call yourselves satisfied by me. As for that little I know, I offer it willingly, so that I may learn something from you.

Cas: If someone wants to be kind to me, then I cannot be unkind toward myself. And so, Signor Horatio, I pray you to relieve my mind of a little doubt. What error could an infant, a modest youth or simple maiden commit that would be so serious as to bring infamy? Infamy is too great a thing, a punishment fit only for those who commit grave excesses, perhaps it is even more bitter than death; whereas children feel shame for tiny defects and sometimes not real defects at all.

Ari: We can either accept infamy in its strictest sense, or we can simply say that it is what you described, that is, that it could be loosely taken to represent any form of rebuke or blame small though it may be. And this is what innocents fear. Furthermore, as it sometimes happens, there are those who fear truly terrible and horrifying things, and others who fear the mere images of these things, like children who are afraid of painted snakes. Thus many people do not fear infamy, but merely its image. This is because they do not see any difference between shadow and reality.

Cas: I understand and I am very pleased. But what will become of me today? Do I not deserve consolation enough as to be accorded, at least, the grace of loving shame? After all, it was your eloquence (you should remember, as it has not been a thousand years) that worked to show me shame's great beauty and which caused me to fall in love with it.

Ari: No, my dear sir, I do not want to offer you this consolation. I do not want to because I cannot.

Cas: It is hard to reconcile your speech to your laughter. Either one or the other deceives me.

Gua: Since he laughs we have much to hope for.

Cas: I do not know what to hope or despair for. But I do know that he is about to hear me sing great praises of shame; between yesterday and this morning I composed, as best I could, a brief oration and it is here next to my heart.

Ari: An oration? Why, for such a prize I shall follow the fashion of the day and I shall let myself be humiliated.

Cas: I am ready to read it if you promise to grant me what I ask.

Ari: You shall have anything you want. These flatteries have too much power against me. I am so hungry for the food you hold in your hands that I would follow you around the world.

Gua: And where would you think of leaving me?

Cas: I shall read it, though I am beginning to fear that I shall regret having accepted your entreaties. I begin.
It is truly a difficult and unmanageable thing to resist the impetus of human passions, but it is harder and almost impossible to resist the blandishments of love; for, the harder one opposes its powerful forces when one is transported by its divine furor, the more readily one receives its pardon. Where there is no other defender, he himself takes up the defense of those who follow his way — the ranks of which I hope to join presently. I know only too well that I cannot sing the praises of shame without reproof and blushing on her part and on my own. Because her modest ears will not tolerate hearing someone speaking thusly of her without offence. And I cannot say of her, if not just barely, that my praises will not result to her as anything but injurious. However, that sweet and warm desire to contemplate her beauty in my heart so compels my enamored mind that I cannot hold my tongue, and it speaks, though poorly and without much art, to pronounce what the mind has conceived within itself.

I trust in two things. Firstly, that Love will pardon the bold presumption of which, perchance, I might be accused; secondly, that I will not have to say so little in her praise that Love will consider me superfluous rather than modest in my praises of her.

Therefore, defend me Love. And you, beautiful and modest maiden, I pray you as you listened to me cloaked in invisibility to restrain your affect full of modesty for a while, and to favor and pardon my affect full of too much ardor, so that you may not suffer from hearing and I from speaking. Shame is much greater, more admirable, and more worthy of honor and commendation than some believe. This is because of her ancient and most noble origins derived from her most honorable parents, Honesty and Desire for Honor, the two seeds of the sky which produced her; but also because of the marvelous and praiseworthy works she has produced always and everywhere and that she continues to produce. Shame was born before time, as soon as her father and mother were born, when the world, having just emerged from the shapeless and horrible chaos, assumed that beautiful and sublime form that we now admire. Shame, I say, was then born in the company of the other beautiful creatures in Paradise, and she resided there until the highest and greatest divine providence chose to marry the soul to the body so as to give the world perfection by enriching it with intelligent creatures; but also so as not leave any part of that great and magnificent temple of God where He is not piously worshipped.

And thus the soul, a happy and eager bride, descended from the celestial provinces and, by divine providence, she came to her fateful union charged with a most precious dowry and accompanied by an honorable array of damsels. Shame was not the last among these; a girl of beautiful countenance whose duty was to decorate the bride's hair with her roses and her breasts with rubies: a handmaiden truly worthy of such a mistress. And certainly a mistress worthy of such a handmaiden; and, in any case, not any less worthy to be served than to serve. Oh holiest Shame, clear adornment of the soul — who could ever say how much splendor and beauty you contributed to her already beautiful nature? Certainly not I, for I cannot any more say it than imagine it.

Sometimes when I consider the beginnings and ends of your heroic, not to say divine, actions I wonder to myself if there is an end to your good works that seem infinite in number and magnitude. I feel not only great wonder, but also surprise (and why should I not feel surprised?) when I think to myself about that primeval and tender age when you came into the world to live in the woods with the innocent men; and how you then held the bridle of their appetencies without hesitation, so as to pull them back from their deceitful pleasures against their desires, to hold them back from every one
of their less than right and less than honest actions so that, because of you and you alone, that age took the name of golden, as well as the customs. 41

I move on with my thoughts and I see the world as a wandering youth who, having reached a more mature age, has withdrawn from the woods to a shelter, from open country to walled cities; I see law being born to act as a medicine for some of the natural infirmities of man; you did not disdain to make her your friend since she came, as you did, from the sky, in fact you became not only her friend but minister; all by yourself, and with great solicitude, you made sure that her commandments be followed by those now people without the vile threat of punishment. And so you ruled without a sword — how blessed you are — bringing peace and justice to those populations who were happy only because of you. But, finally, the world reached the years of its dissolute and bestial youth; and with the world grew its furor, its lustfulness of the loins, its cupidity for gold and for power — and all these opened the way for thefts, robberies, killings, dishonesty and every other villainous and depraved act.

And so, burning with great scorn, you were forced to flee this place, leaving the world empty of every good and to take refuge up there where you first originated. But your graces did not end there, for, though you took your leave of us, you did not take leave of your courtesy and goodness. You took cover up there, where every good begins and ends, and there you made your home with the single intention of enjoying celestial bliss until, finally, the Gods were moved to pity by the miserable slavery of man — a slavery in which he was kept by vice and ignorance — and so they sent you back down here in retinue to the virtues in order to free man and to make him happy.

Thus if I see the world just and innocent, it is because of the presence of shame, which keeps the soul in its pure and natural candor; but, if I see it sinking in the dregs of vice, it is only because she is exiled from the world. And, if once distanced from its maker, human nature becomes again worthy, through divine goodness and liberalty, to be freed from its tyrannical and harsh bondage, and if every other effort to lift it from such a high precipice and to restore it to its pristine freedom seems in vain, then there will be shame leading the virtues to us and carrying our happiness (it seems an exaggeration, but it is true) in her hands.

And truly, if anyone among the living does not recognize it, he must possess a thankless or stupid soul, for, if it is not her, who then restrains the soul from vice? And if vice becomes the tyrant of man, where do the virtues go? And if the virtues are not among us, how can we be happy? I shall say, moreover, that shame is capable on her own to give us all that other virtues combined can provide. If I have shame, how can I not be moderate and restrained in my pleasures? And, where the need, the person and the merit require it, how could I not be a generous distributor of the elusive goods of fortune? How could I deny to anyone what is rightfully owed to him? If shame left me, which good thing could remain with me? Which cowardly act, which injustice, which dishonesty will I be loathe to commit? And so, oh divine Shame, you are (I know you well) the root of each of our goods; you, oh beautiful and roseate dawn of the sun of virtue, illuminate with your lantern the darkness of our errors; you purge the fog of human defects; you warm up lazy and frozen thoughts; you bridle (upright and valiant men know if I speak the truth) excessive appetencies; you reawaken the magnanimous feelings dormant in us; you spur and push the mind on the road to glory. Now, since these things I just mentioned are truer than truth, how could we not esteem and praise Shame?
Oh Shame — and we would not honor and respect her? We would not love her? Perhaps she is not as beautiful as she is good — though she is certainly beautiful beyond compare, and though she can also make others beautiful. There is no color as beautiful to regard as that intense purple which she diffuses on the ivory of a modest face each time she comes to rest on it. And, if there were any doubt about her origin, these celestial colors could reassure us that she came from Paradise where she collected these hues. Now, those foolish, shameless men who dare to affirm that she is a shortcoming of ours, a defect, only because she is born from vice — a truly horrid and deformed monster, -- those men should consider these truths. I do not know if they are ignorant or evil when — proclaiming love for the honor of virtue and disgust for vice — they attempt to convince others of their opinion; so that shame will have to flee from the world again, and so that they will be able to realize more freely their perverse inopportune wishes.

Be it as it may, no one can truly say that shame is the daughter of vice simply because she appears to us in the midst of human errors, or because she shines in the darkness of defect; this would be like saying that the Moon and the Stars are daughters of the night and not of the sky only because they appear in the dark. It is true (I do not deny because I cannot lie) that we do not see it being born if not in the aftermath of a mistake — this is perhaps what has drawn those halfwits into error — yet this does not matter, nor does it spoil her goodness or her beauties. In fact, draped in that dark and rich mantle stitched with gold, she seems to acquire and not to lose greater loveliness and splendor; almost like a lightning bolt in the darkness of the night which is all the more lively, brilliant and beautiful, the greater the blackness against which it unfolds and flies. And, in truth, when I consider carefully your nature — oh, beautiful Shame — I clearly see that you are in fact lightning and light, most similar to that of Castor and Pollux, because after our ship has run the risk of wreckage in the tempestuous seas of our perturbed affects, you appear, announcing serenity, and rise over the mast of our self-recognition. And thus, with your light, you give us a sign of peace, of future tranquility, of well being yet to come. Oh blessed light, oh divine light!

If these are defects, I contradict myself. I confess to have erred in her defense; I readily allow that she is a shortcoming in men; but, if these are virtues and perfections, as they truly are, then I defend her with great reason — all the more so because she is so modest that she would not have the heart to offend or to accuse somebody else, even to defend herself. And, so I rightfully come to her defense while others mistakenly try to condemn her only because they do now know, or show not to know, that it is a universal condition of human things — and of the more rare and singular ones — that cloudy weather come before the calm; that adversity come before prosperity; that evil come before good. Perhaps this so that the imperfection of what comes before may commend and improve the goodness of what comes after.

So vice goes before shame for no other reason than to manifest her glory, her power and her worthiness. In fact, I would go almost as far as to say that customs were expressly the occasion for, and the subject of her victories; vice is her enemy though weak and infirm, who at first sign of her crimson standards turns to run in fright, but is most often overtaken by her only to die pierced by her arrows. So how are we to believe that she who exiles and takes the life from vice could be its friend, not to say its daughter? This would truly be a foolish and childish belief worthy of little consideration. But why should you concern yourself, oh maiden, if the ignorant do not have the correct opinion of you? Though well they should, for the great majority of men, especially the best and wisest among
them, honors and praises you highly and, since antiquity, it has deemed you so worthy as to dedicate temples, victims, and altars to your name.

Truly, good praises are those which come from good men. And they rightfully praise you; and rightly do they praise you, for it is because of you that they are praised. They offer you that praise which they receive from you, even though, as I know, praise is the last thing you desire. And this is the greatest among all of your praises, that you should shun praise. But it is useless for you to run from it, because I know that it is its way to follow he who most eschews it, and to eschew he who follows it most eagerly.

Despite all this, there will still be those who will speak in reproof to say that you are fear — a name that retains an element of imperfection and vileness. Oh, but they are deceived. Surely this is not any lesser a foolishness than the first, for what is fear, pray tell? Is it not fear of infamy that is of the foulest, most abominable monster in the world? Oh, if only all other fears were such as this. Holy and just fear of infamy, which, in the manner of the Partii, fights as it flees only to win.

Oh, brave fear, triumphant fear, which should more rightly be called zeal of honor and honesty, in whose name is hidden, like a small seed, the greatest virtue. What do you say here, you forgetful ones widowed of your minds? That shame is a fear? Perhaps that she is an icy and pallid fear. Is she not completely made of fire? A fire whose heat, more that any other, kindles the strengths within us as well as our daring? If not this virile, magnanimous and fighting fear, what makes us intrepid in the greatest dangers? What awakens our valor? What moves our strength? What spurs us to glory? Tell me, if you know, what inspires us to do good? What pulls us back from vileness? What arms us and breathes valor in us against our enemies? In short what brings us victory? What if not the desire for honor and the fear of infamy, in one word, shame?

It is to be believed, and reasonably so, that if an army of lovers and beloved could be gathered, it would be so strong and powerful that it would win even against the whole world, and it would never be won for as long as the fighters refrained — because of shame — from committing a villainous or cowardly act. This is because the lovers and beloved would feel more ashamed in the presence of each other to abandon their commissions, to throw down their arms or to commit some similar misdeed, than they would feel before any other person in the world; and they would gladly suffer the loss of their life, without hesitation, rather than leave the side of their loved one. Now, if love can accomplish all by virtue of shame, what will be able to accomplish by virtue of herself?

Truly, we have to imagine that there is no power on earth that could put up resistance against a small team of men who have armed their hearts with shame; for if they did, if would not only be a loss for lovers but a loss for love. It would not be the first time that he who wins all was won and tamed by shame. He himself would offer proof of what I say. This great tamer of the world and winner of winners would relate not only of the many times his burning arrows extinguish themselves in her fire, but also of the many times that, as soon as he caught sight of her, presumed to fight on his own against her arguments. He would speak of the palms of victory she has taken from his hand; of the many times he was led, heavily chained with his weapons broken, before the chariot of that beautiful victor in miserable pomp. And even if he wanted to deny all this — and I do not think he would be so brazen — I would call to witness, if nature permitted, Penelope, Lucretia and a thousand others from
that array. But the facts speak for themselves and do not need my testimonials or those of others. And especially because so many would be called to speak that their testimonials would seem to outlast eternity.

Thus, for the moment, it will not be my intent to produce the examples that fill all the pronouncements of wise men and all the memories. And if one wanted to consult these on his own, he would then see all the good result and praiseworthy endeavors of which she was the cause. He will see that she is the illuminator of the mind, the giver of every virtue, the friend of the heart, the generator of good customs, the mother of good advice, the teacher of innocence, the comrade of chastity and of propriety — in short (though we must pay our regards to shame), the source of courteous, praiseworthy and graceful manners, the spring whence flows among us all that is clear and kind.

But why do I allow myself to be transported by my desire, and to diminish her greatness with my scant praise? I know that her praises are sung even in silence, and that it silence is as much a proof of virtue in one who gives praise as the ability to speak well. And thus it is best that I dare to be silent and that, instead of praising her much less than I should, I honor her at least as much as I can and bow to her. Oh most noble citizen of the sky, holy shame. Well do I know that you only choose to inhabit candid and sincere minds, eschewing the filthy souls, but if ever you listen to the prayers of the faithful, I pray you as humbly as I can: come to rest in this soul of mine -- no, not mine, for nothing belongs to you more than what belongs to me.

Come, then, to sit in my breast, which I open and dedicate to you as your eternal temple, and, even though until now it has been the temple of impure affects, I have no doubt that, if my proposal met with your divine favor, it would cleanse itself so as to become a lodge worthy of you. Come, oh beautiful dawn, come for I am wounded by love and languish; and already my heart, lit with a most chaste fire, waits for you filled with desire and with the strong hope that your glow will illuminate all that is dark there and fill it with light. See, I do not ask you for gold, or silver, or beauty, or honor, or contentment, or happiness — but, gathering all these things in one request, I ask for you only. Come then, oh my darling, come and embrace me so tightly that, for the rest of my years, no dire circumstance will tear us apart; for, if you remain with me, I shall not have to fear any harm or damage from vice, though he may attack me from all sides. I am sure that your shield will break as many arrows as the fire of the appetite and the enchanted fountain of pleasure can temper. Come then and bring with you all the virtue that I never saw without you, as I never saw you take one step without them. Come all: I open the doors of my heart so that you make take possession of it and make it your eternal residence. I pledge by my faith and by my oath to serve you forever with all my might.

Ari: Who will be able to say now that Love does not teach eloquence? My dear Signor...

Castello, what do I hear? Is it you or not? I can hardly believe that you have advanced so in the art of oratory.

Cas: I am not made of stone so I had to benefit from the close acquaintance and continued dealings with our great Patrician, with a few other teachers of mine, and even with the both of you — mouths that continually produce teachings directed to my ears.
Ari: If, on this occasion, you have not earned the love and grace of shame, who could ever presume to earn it again?

Cas: I was just debating to myself who has become more indebted to the other: Castello to shame, or shame to him. He brought her honor and great praise, and she has produced in him a marvelous eloquence.

Ari: I do not know about these debts of theirs, but I do know that since he has made her so beautiful, he deserves to have her as a beloved but not as a bride.

Cas: I do not understand your enigma.

Ari: Please do not consider me inconstant. I did not deny you the privilege of loving her, but the condition, if I had simply denied to let you love and esteem shame, I would have been not only inconstant but also profane and an enemy of truth and of myself. I praise everything, and I approve of everything you said except for your wanting to be indissolubly tied to her and to be only released by death, as you have stated. All the difficulty rests on this point. If we remove this condition, nothing could be said more excellent. The other day I said, if you want to recollect my words, that shame must not take such a strong hold on the human heart that it could not easily be eradicated. Do you know why? Because she is not, as we said, absolutely good but conditionally so, that is, not in every age but only in youth.

Not all things are required by all. Food, medicine, and all the rules of life are not equally suited to all, and in fact a thing that may benefit one may hurt another. So we have hellebore, which is poison to man but food to quails; and so we have shame, excellent to the young but terrible and deadly to the mature man. Each thing has its season, Signor Castello, and in its season is good and beautiful. Oh what a pleasure it is, in spring, to see the wheat as green grass in the fields; how the sight fills our eyes, our heart, with joy and hope. But change the laws of nature so as to allow wheat to remain green year-round; where would our hopes go? How should we sustain ourselves? But here is the time when the earth begins to feel more warmth in the loving rays of the sun; the verdure grows and the spears of wheat come unsheathed little by little, soon to turn golden; in the meanwhile the wheat ripens and it is harvested with great celebrations; then it is stored and used to sustain life. And that grass which gave us such pleasure with its greenness and hope has already grown dry; it has become straw and, disregarded by men, it is used as food for animals, and they also use it in a more abject way.

The same goes for shame; to be cherished in the early years, but to be discarded at the time of maturity and of virtuous harvest. Shame is beautiful in its season, that is, in youth; but it would be too ugly and displeasing on the face of a mature man, as it wants to be colored with virile majesty rather than soft shame. The good Romans understood this. They used to dress their noble youths in a crimson robe known as *toga praetexta*; at the age of seventeen however, this robe was shed in favor of the *toga virile* to show that, though honest, shame was fitting only in youth and that, after that age, one should not live childishy but manfully. This is what I meant when I said one should have her as a beloved but not as a wife.

Cas: I understand. And even as you spoke these last few words of yours, I seem to recognize myself as a less constant lover. Now the reason of your forbiddance — that until now you had left unresolved
— becomes clear to me. Because I want you to know, Signor Alessandro, that until you reached this point, this was the only thing we disagreed about. But how fortunate are the errors committed in this fashion. I would fall into such errors even ten times a day if I could profit from them as much as I have profited from this one.

Yet, even though your words have laid to rest one doubt in my mind, they have revived a thousand others. If I am not mistaken, I have tapped a rich vein at which I may partially satisfy my thirst for knowledge. It may be that this conclusion of yours may hold some truth, but I cannot see it by myself. In fact, if, as we said, shame is the mother of such good results, it seems to me that it should suit one age as well as another; inasmuch as everyone always needs to acquire virtue or to conserve the acquired.

Ari: The other day we were saying that shame is like the dawn; dawn only appears in the morning, not throughout the entire day, and it is greatly admired by all mortals, is this not so? But if you were to see the whole day composed of dawn, without the appearance of any other light, would you not say that the world was the lesser for it? I leave you to imagine the same moderation with respect to shame and to this brief day that is our life.

What would it be like to see the sun of virtue always on the eastern horizon, always to be waiting for it rise and never to see it born before it dies? So this dawn should not be seen to appear in the hours of the afternoon, or in the early evening, if it is to be appreciated, but it should be seen in the orient, at the beginning of the day. Furthermore (do not grow annoyed at all the similes for similitude is the mother of clarity which then produces understanding) shame is like a medicine that purges the unhealthy souls. It is tolerable to require medicine occasionally, but to do nothing else in life other than to take medicine — I shall leave it for you to judge what a pleasure it is. I think it would be foolish to desire to be in the company of shame for the duration of one's life; To wish to be in the company of shame for the duration of one's life would be to wish continual poor health. I avoid medicine not because it would not be good if I were ill, but because, at the present it is not needed by my body and it would not be sweet to my palate.

Cas: And thus, for the same reason, it should never be wished for, because for as long as it remains a medicine, it will always concern infirmity.

Ari: If from his entrance into this miserable life man could progress to his exit by keeping himself free of faults, then there would be no need of shame or any such medicine to heal the soul. In human terms, however, such a thing would be an exhausting, not to say impossible, task in many respects; first of all because vice is in a sense the sustenance of virtue. Health would almost not be health — or, at least, it would not be appreciated — if our bodies could not naturally grow infirm. And so it is with the virtues of the soul: if it were not possible to sin, there would either be no virtue or, if there were only virtue, it would remain unknown, and, if it were known, it would not be appreciated or deemed worthy of any prize. And, in fact, it would be forced virtue rather than free and voluntary. We could say along with Dante, the phoenix of the poets:

And so, if your free will were to be torn
Out from you, there would be no joy to find
In justice, and no cause for evil to mourn.45
In addition, human nature was made so as to be able to bend to good and evil for the greater perfection of the world, which had to be filled with all kinds of goods. I shall speak of the first, middle, and last goods like a beginning, a middle and an end. The first goods are those that always remain on top; the last, those that always stay under; between the two, it was necessary to place the middle ones, so that they could became similar to the first and sovereign goods, or to the last and lesser goods according to their talent but also so that they could connect the two extremes. This was all the more necessary inasmuch as the first would not be the first if there were no last and no middle. Nor would the last be last if those others were not there. From all this I conclude that man was placed in the middle to make this divine temperament the last of the supreme and first of the lesser goods — an animal neither celestial nor earthly, but free to turn in the direction he most liked and to become what he wanted. Although man was endowed with this faculty to bend towards evil, we must not believe that this power to bend towards good and, as you know, he has free — will, a real, reverent, and divine virtue:

The greatest gift that God for his largesse
Gave in creating, the one he prizes
Most, and most conforms to his goodness
Was the freedom that he gave to our will;

that cannot in any way be forced or stopped. Thus, for all these reasons, I say that, by necessity, man possesses, within his soul, this imperfect condition to be able to sin. On the other hand, we must add that mud of which we are dressed and which weighs down on our wings and pulls us downwards. This is especially so in our early years, when it is heavier, and our senses are greener and more alive than ever, the blood boils and our rowdy affects rule.

Therefore at this age, man is almost necessarily infirm, although, understand, in good health. For this reason, since infirmity is presupposed, shame becomes desirable as a medicine. And thus shame becomes good — as we have said many times — not absolutely, but only to check our human imperfection, which, in a way, is just as inevitable in youth as it is pardonable. But in a man of age and good judgment in whom reason reigns, and whose affects are tamed and reduced from rebellion to obedience; in a man who has acquired prudence through experience and virtuous habits through prudence — in such a man, I say, there can be no room for shame, because in him there must be no vice or defect of any sort. As you must have already heard, “in his mother’s womb, a man lives the life of plants.” Then the power of the senses grows in him and, through its operation, he lives as an animal. Lastly, the virtue that perceives comes to shine over these two. Now, once born, man lives according to this same order through which he acquired these powers. And so it seems that at first without understanding he only accepts the operations of feeding, then lives guided by his senses, and lastly is escorted by the intellect. But I should like to use the great poet’s words to explain why a man in his early years runs after the senses. Listen:

She comes from the hand of him who loves her before
She is, in the manner of a child at play
Who now laughs, now cries, and who knows nothing more,
The simple soul, than to return to that which key
Gives joy, and that, sprung from her maker’s joy,
When she first experiences some fleeting and
Small good, enraptured, she runs to this new toy.  

Cas: Divine, as all that he produces.

Ari: What do you say, then? Does it not seem to you that this age is infirm and likely to commit mistakes?

Cas: You speak the truth.

Ari: And since it is infirm, is it not to be pardoned if it falls on the road of errors that is so lubricious? Ask
Signor Alessandro, for I know that he will side with me on this point, and he will say:

In youthful mistakes there is less shame.

Gua: I have no doubt of this, especially when one blushes, because, to one who has fallen, feeling shame
is a sign of recognition and of a good desire to regain sanity — and, at that age, wanting to grow sane
before the illness can set in is already a sign of sanity.

Ari: You should add that it is essential for one who feels shame also to feel the bite of shame's tooth and
the bitter sting of the thorns of repentance. And you know that a man who has repented is almost
innocent or, at any rate, worthy of pardon. So it was said.

And as I said, that diffused tint sometimes
Does enable a man to receive his pardon.

Diogenes, a man most sanely mad, understood all this. Having noticed the blush on the face of a boy
he had seen emerge from a less than honest place, he said: be in good spirits, son, because that is
the color of virtue.

Cas: But in fact what you have just said suits what I proposed. Blushing can make anyone worthy of
pardon, thus it is the color of virtue equally in all.

Ari: Do you think he meant a virtue already born? You would be mistaken if you believed this. He meant a
virtue yet to be born, and would not have spoken so to a mature man, for whom none of
the aforementioned things are true. This is because, unlike youths, men do not live under [the sign of]
Moon or Venus, but under Mercury, Jupiter, Mars or Saturn. I mean to say that they do not live
according to the senses any more and that, within them, the youthful ardors are already extinct — in
short, they do not have cause to commit a mistake and, if they do commit a mistake, they do not
have cause to be pardoned, especially virtuous men. This universal conclusion, being true, makes
feeling ashamed unbefitting to mature men, especially well-to-do men. The source of shame, sin,
does not befit them because it cannot coexist with virtue; and so its product, shame, befits them
even less.

Cas: Your reasons seem quite clear; but not clear enough for me not to remain in doubt. A man, virtuous
or not, is always a man, and, placed as he was in this valley of error, he is by his nature always prone
to err — as is also clear from what you said. Thus if he is always a con and always prone to err, how
will it possible for him not to feel shame always and everywhere?
Ari: Man is absolutely not perfect, but with respect to another man or to his own self thinks, “When was a man different from what I am?” Moreover, he is perfect with respect to his being and to his place of being. And this last is a place of imperfection, if we are to believe the first fathers of knowledge who said that there was no good thing on earth, that all irreproachable things were in heaven, and that all earthly things were reproachable. Thus man is perfect with respect to his place. So we can say that a peasant is rich with respect to other peasants, though there is no doubt that he is in fact poor, and it would be unseemly for him to do many things that are meant for the poorest of the place. Similarly, it is unseemly for the virtuous to blush as youths do because, compared to them, he can be considered to be rich in goodness. It is nevertheless true that shame would be less unseemly to him than if he fell into error (because, in truth, man is most often found in a state of continence and of battle, rather than in perfect and peaceful virtue) and, instead of feeling shame for his fault, he brazenly and obstinately persisted in his mistake.

I tell you that should a man incur some error, and being obliged to feel shame, his shame should be manly and magnanimous, and not childish; it should be internal rather than apparent; and his fear should be in way of giving rather than running away. In just the same manner that a mature man should not dance, sing, or dress as a young boy, he should feel shame differently. Unfortunately, the contrary often happens, as there are men who blush and are ashamed of their shame, the more they should know that this does not befit them. I think that the heart of the matter rests in this: there is no sort of shame that befits the virtuous, for, as soon as he sins, he is no longer virtuous.

Cas: I do not remember well what you said the other day. Was it that shame one can feel of good things — especially if they have some semblance of evil — as others may misjudge or actions?

Ari: It is true that I said this.

Cas: Yet, if infamy rests not only on those things which are improperly done, also on those whose propriety is suspect, then even the virtuous will not be safe from the arrows of infamy. And, if their works can be seen to cast some shadows of evil, they will not be free of shame.

Ari: You could not have found a more appropriate term for it than "shadows." To fear shadows is a childish, womanly thing, a not a manly thing that speaks of the male. There would be no wonder were a child to feel fear at the image of a serpent; but if we saw this in a mature man, what Heraclitus could restrain the laughter? The honesty of youths and women is proper, its flower so tender and delicate that it could be damaged by the slightest breath of noxious air; and thus it is more praiseworthy than not for them occasionally to feel shame of shadows, not to speak of insulting things. And so we can move on with our argument and say: if they do so for the least things, what will they do for the greater? Then we can add: what they now eschew because of shame, they will come to eschew in the future by reasons of habit and choice.

I still hold that, even in these individuals, shame should maintain some proportion; I do not intend for it to be a fear of the most vague and silly shadows — this is so that they will not incur in the vice of excess and ultimately shame which is directly opposed to brazenness. A wise, well-to-do man should strive to keep his eyes on the right and honest path in the course of all his endeavors; and when the goodness of his work (which he should attempt to make as goodness of his world) becomes known, he should not concern himself with shadows, as it would be unbecoming to see him behaving childishly in his shame.
Cas: You speak most rightly; yet not all shadows are vague and, in fact, there are some that have such clarity and such similarity to the truth, that they dim truth itself. One who has zeal of honor should fear these shadows. And, besides, couldn’t a virtuous man fall prey to such a fear because of the calumnies of others? That is, could he not incur in some error — without knowing or wanting to do so — which, when noticed, might cause him to feel shame?

Ari: Answering your last question first I say that things done without knowledge are neither worthy of praise nor of scorn. And from this the saying was born that

There is no sin where there is no desire.

This is because we make the decisions responsible for our good or bad actions. And this, among other things, was shown to us by that famous wise man when he said

... and this first desire,
Worthy of praise and reproof does not appear.
So that to this every other thing
Be attracted, virtue is innate so as
To counsel, and to open the door for assent.
This is the principle, which then provides the cause,
For you to deserve, according to your deeds,
Whether good or bad, that love welcomes and guards.51

And so it is that God, and all the laws, look to the intention and not the action when rewarding or punishing man. Knowing all this, the prudent man will not feel shame but displeasure at errors born from an ignorance of particular circumstances, as this ignorance makes our actions involuntary and worthy of pardon. I shall need to take more care in answering your other question because there are two separate aspects to consider.

First you wanted to know if a virtuous man has to fear infamy born from the lies spread against him; then you wanted to know if he has to fear that infamy which may be born on its own from the opinion of the world by cause of some reasonably shadowy operation of its own. Having to answer this, I say along with that poet that

False honor brings joys,
And lying infamy brings fear to others,

and it is a very true thing that any man, if alive, is greatly troubled by the spoiling of his reputation, whomever he may be. And, as this is only right, it is reasonable that anyone who hears himself unjustly accused should attempt, through arguments of words and facts, to shrug off the calumnies that were thrown at him in a manner suitable to his condition. And, if through some misfortune, this did not happen to him, he should not fear any infamy, because it is one’s own conscience that causes him to feel shame. If this conscience knows itself to be pure — especially in a solid and responsible man — it will not let him blush for an error he did not commit.

Further I know conscience does assure
Good company, which is enjoyed by man
Under the hauberk of feeling itself pure.52
This man should fear infamy all the less as he should know that slanderers are evil men whose false sayings are a form of praise (listen to what I say) not disparaging to the good. Just as dogs do not bark at those who are known in the house but only at strangers, so evildoers do not bark at the likes of them, but only at those who are outside their league or at those who are different from them. And this difference is born of the fact that they are enemies of virtues while good men are its friends. From this difference comes hatred and from hatred comes the spreading of untruths. Thus, being different from and unloved by evildoers is cause for great praise and glory, as is being struck by their blows. And, in fact, their praise and glory is as suspicious as these evil men are, and it is to be avoided as they are. For my part, I judge that there is as much praise to be won in being scorned by the scorned as there is in being praised by the praised. From all this, we can conclude that a virtuous man must not feel any shame of unjust calumnies.

Cas: But if the evil of these men were not so evident, and if the world believed them more than is right — would this not give cause to fear?

Ari: If a man works only to achieve an ambitious vainglory, then he will no doubt be bothered by not achieving his end. But this man has lost the fruit of virtue. Thus he behaves well not simply to behave well, but also to satisfy his vanity — unless, of course, he was in his youth, an age of imperfect virtue, when ambition is a spur to goad man on his way to what is good and honest. But the virtuous man works for the sake of virtue — as he should, since virtue is so precious that, unable to find anything like itself or nobler than itself, it turns only to itself and is unhappy with anything else. And if he does so, he will achieve his principal end in working for virtue, and thus he will care little about the opinions of others. So, in the end, having used every possible argument due to him to prove his guiltlessness, he will remit his cause in the hands of innocence in the hope that it will reveal the truth, whatever it may be, and that it will exalt him where others wanted to humiliate him. As it happened to a Fabius, to an African and to many other men of undoubted fame — and the calumnies thrown at them, digested by time, were transformed into glory.

Cas: These are beautiful things to say, but difficult, I think, and unmanageable to accomplish.

Ari: And why? Are you so bloodless that you would not have the heart to suffer these whisperings with generosity?

Cas: I think not.

Ari: These are great occasions to exercise the virtue of magnanimity. Cas: Or to lose it.

Ari: I say to exercise it, by opposing those blows with the shield of sufferance — a shield given to us by Mother Nature to arm us against these as well as all the other evils that can attack us. See how your Socrates endures Aristophanes with tranquil soul; how he despises Anytus, Meletus and all the Athenians, so that he does not even want to defend himself. But, if by chance, you did not want to defend him with a sword thus to go among the Philosophical Family; there would be a place for you among the brave men of arms who were magnanimous sufferers of false accusations. In truth it seems to me that he can do nothing else, every man of good judgment and valor must eventually take heart and say to himself: "You know, most holy virtue — what is my life and what is my innocence; you see what unjust I suffer to follow your holy trace. It is up to you to reward me for these damages and to do so that I am not accused beyond reason. Tear the veil away from those
eyes blinded by envy and ignorance so that the truth may appear naked and open, and so that the
world may judge rightfully. But if this is not possible, I shall be ready to suffer the damages of this
earthly noise — which, in the end, is nothing but a vague and unsteady breath of wind — and also,
where necessary, to give up my blood and my life. All of this so that I may be allowed to have you in
my possession as my single, dearest, most precious treasure." I have spent too much time with these.
Let us progress to others.

Cas: What you have said perhaps concerns those things which man has already done, isn't it true? And not
those that he is about to do? For, if he were about to do something that could bring him infamy,
would you not want him to refrain from it?

Ari: I would want it, or not want it, according to the condition of the men in question. Since you have
started me on his discussion you will hear my opinion. We were debating whether men should fear
the reprimands and infamy which may result from some of their actions which, good though they
may be, may nonetheless seem not good to others and thus generate suspicion in the eyes of the
world. Is this not the question?

Cas: Yes, it is.

Ari: In that case, it seems to me that we ought to distinguish the works, the workers, their ends, and,
lastly, those by whom they are all to be judged. In general, I resolve to say that the wise and well-to-
do man always prefers to like himself, rather than to be liked by the multitude. However, before
beginning any task, all men of good judgment should, in a mature manner, consider the principle, the
end, and the circumstances, as well as their own condition and that of those who approve of them.
As for the beginning (see how these questions of yours lead me astray from the road of shame), as
for the beginning of an endeavor, I say, one should not only look out for any evil, but also for
anything which may possibly give off a smell or suspicion of evil; and one should do one's best not to
let public opinion run in the wrong direction — both for the preservation of one's own reputation
and also for the examples offered to others. If the accomplished man has performed his good works
with this wise advice in mind, and the ignorant populace still does not understand the goodness of
his actions, then this wise man should not concern himself unduly — for one should not live to please
the little people. In spite of all this, praise is sought and desired by he best and wisest of men; by
those, in fact, who are most worthy of praise, and not by the common plebeians whose honors must
not be held in high account, and their infamies even less. Our wise Petrarch spoke wisely:

... whilst if after the populace you chase,
    And pursue its blind and harsh opinion,
    You can never be happy with your place.53

Let man like himself, then; let him be liked by high-ranking men — and let this be enough for him. Let
him not be ashamed, but let him laugh of plebeian laughter, with the confidence that he will turn
their laughter to admiration and stupor. If the roots of infamy are false, they easily die. And often we
have seen people who, in the recognition of their error and in their repentance for unjust actions
towards a valorous man, have covered him with the greatest honors. Thus a man armed with virtue
must not fear this sort of infamy and must not be ashamed of it. And this is meant universally for
every kind of virtuous man. But, you will say, what if this suspicion progressed from the populace to
men of note and esteem? I think that here it is necessary to consider closely what I was saying

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earlier. That is, we must consider if the work in question was already performed or is still to be done; if the man lives a solitary, retired life or a public one; if he lives only for himself or also for others; if he is a young person just beginning to walk the road of virtue or an experienced man; or even if he is a person still green in age and virtue, or already mature. If a man lives only for himself and for his virtue, and not for his city then — whether young or old, whether his work is done or to be done just as long as it is good — then he must not fear infamy born from the mistaken opinions of others; but he must run without delay down the right path, come what may. This is especially true if he has enough age and experience to be confident in his own judgment, and if he is assured of the innocence and rectitude of his work. Because, in the end, doing good works comes from within ourselves, and it becomes a good that the entire world could not take from us, whereas doing good work so that others ay hear of it and praise us is not so. We shall take great pleasure in the first, for it belongs to us, and we shall not take too much displeasure in the second, even though it does not belong to us completely. If a man lives a public life, that is, if he is involved in the public business of the city, then his work will take another route.

These are the men who can truly be called citizens, and not all those who live within the same circle of walls. The virtue of these good citizens — let us mention all this in passing — is perhaps not the same as that of other well-to-do man, if not princes and other universals, but it is different in particular circumstances and in its ends, whether more or less common; especially since that kind of republic which could equalize the virtues of all its citizens is more desirable than practicable. Thus, if the man provided with goodness lives a public life, whether he is new to it or not; and if he is the originator of a work already done so that, though good, it may displease others — then this man will not be able not to feel annoyance at the suspicion and not to fear reproof, even without blushing, which may result from an erroneous opinion. This is for three reasons; because it can block his way of exercising virtue; because it can halt his progress on the ladder of honors and ranks that he wants to climb; and finally because it is not a safe thing to oppose his single inexperienced pronouncement against many others. Those who are in these circles must fear more or less according to their reputation and to the degree to which it is rooted and established. And this is enough advice for the young.

Cas: And if the work were still to be done, would you not advice him to persevere?

Ari: Yes, indeed. I had forgotten. Let us move to those men who are held in high regard because of their age, judgment, the greatness of their works, and who are venerable because of their authority. Of these men, I strongly affirm that, because they surpass all others in excellence, because they are such that they do not have to submit to the law since they are the law, because they must not follow any example but set it for others — because of all this, I say that they must not submit to the opinion of others, but that they must set in motion those things which they judge and profitable to themselves and to the republic. They should do this without looking about, though others may talk about it; he should be like that worthy doctor who, with piteous cruelty, does not cease to employ irons, fire or any other kind of medicine that he sees fit for the health of the patient despite the cries of the infirm and the murmurings of those present. The magnanimous man does not live slavishly to somebody else's talent; in fact, he should act according to his own judgment not only without blushing but also without care as long as he remains right and honest. And, if he had cause to fear some vain imagining or some false accusation, he should first take counsel with Pythagoras — he who was the most sapient because he neither called himself wise nor wanted others to call him so — and he will hear
one such oracle: "When you have reached the mountains, do not look back." That is, when you have reached the summit of virtue do not be concerned with what others say about you, but remain firm in your undertaking. Just as the sun hides itself in its own light, and it does not want to be seen by others in its great splendor without hurting the eye which regards it — so the works of illustrious men sometimes, in their light, do not allow themselves to be known by weak and infirm eyes; thus they are called obscure in the same way that the rays of the sun may be deemed invisible and unpleasant by a bat.

Cas: This concerns the judgment of the plebeians, not of the noblemen. Ari: The same also happens to many noblemen who hold themselves in greater account than others do. But the judgment of these men should not impede other men of excellent virtue from acting freely. Even among the great there is error and disagreement — and the same thing may appear good to the eyes of some and bad to the eyes of others. The sun appears different to Heraclitus and Ptolomeus. One estimates it to be a foot long, and the other a little less than a hundred and sixty times greater than the earth. Pythagoras sees it as a god, Anaxagoras as a burning hot iron. Yet all were greatly esteemed wise men. For this reason, when he knows he is acting well, a man of great worth must be satisfied to be pleased with himself if he cannot please others if, for nothing else, by reason of magnanimity. In that to a great soul, everything else is small, and small things give birth to public despise. And, like a solid rock against the pounding of the waves, a man with a great heart must have everything for nothing — for nothing the outrages of fortune, for nothing the injuries and murmurings of men — taking more interest in truth than in the false and corrupt opinions of others.

For though he may try to be liked by good and judicious men, and though he is supreme in goodness and knowledge, it should be enough for him to like himself; in fact, he should take glory for these inopportune rumors which always attack the most deserving. Indeed, only one who is scorned by men may rest in peace. This magnanimous scorn, combined with valor and constancy, teaches men not to feel shame, but to act and to speak on each occasion with pride, to rise above the ignorance of the populace, the envy of other citizens, the ingratitude of the country, and every other fierce circumstance that may befall them, just as they taught Cato, Pericles, and Phocion and many other magnanimous men. But we should consider one thing carefully; namely, that we do not come to believe ourselves to be greater than we are. And, indeed, it seems that many eagerly allow themselves to be transported by this error. In last analysis, we have those whom we call halfway exercised — to whom it would be enough to say that they should take a middle road between the experienced and the inexperienced.

Here I want to take a step back and say that, although those of good will want to have some safeguard of their fame and of the satisfaction of others, they should divide all things to be done in three categories — that is, those things which are absolutely good by their nature, those things which are absolutely evil, and those things which are indifferent. I do not think that they will never for any reason be induced to do those things that, by nature, are simply (as they say) evil, whatever may happen to them. Occasionally, they might abstain from those good things that might lead to scandal. And because there is a great difference between omitting and committing, they may then act towards indifferent things as their prudence advises, according to the time, the place, the people and the circumstances. But would you like for me to tie the beginning of the discussion to its end? I conclude that nothing is less befitting than shame to a man virtuous in name and deeds, because, in
his virtue, he cannot perform any acts deserving scorn. And this is why he should not fear lying and vain infamy.

Cas: My ears have drunk the water of your most eloquent argument with great avidity and pleasure. But to what end? It is as if I had drunk the salty waters of the sea, for I feel my thirst grow stronger in me.

Gua: Dear me, what kind of hydropic thirst do you suffer from today?

Cas: It is such that you or Signor Horatio could cure it if you wanted. Don’t you know what a thing is the desire to know? Indeed, you should pitifully offer me to drink rather than reprimand me for this sweet infirmity for which nature is more to blame than I am.

Gua: Has he not already shown you how and why blushing does not befit the virtuous?

Cas: Since you take Ariosto’s part, take a little time to answer what I will ask you, and then you will see if this is as clear as you imagine. Tell me, is it not an accepted pronouncement that, within a species, a perfect form contains within itself, and embraces, the imperfect form of the same species, especially when the second is subordinate to the first?

Gua: It seems so.

Cas: Isn’t shame half a virtue and imperfect? Gua: This also seems true.

Cas: Then let us draw this conclusion. A virtuous man has the most, thus he has the least; he has perfect virtue, thus he has, or should have, shame that is diminished virtue.

Gua: Have you finished your say? Cas: I have.

Gua: Now I ask you to answer me, that way we shall be even. Is five not contained in ten?

Cas: It is.

Gua: If it is contained in ten, why is ten not known as five? Simply because, you will say, we should not name according to the parts, but according to the whole, to the last form; and, in this case, the last form is the number ten, and not five which, in fact, is absorbed and in a certain sense destroyed by the greater number so that it almost loses its being, it is stripped of its name and does not perform the office of five as it has been engulfed by ten.

Cas: All this is true.

Gua: Now tell me, if you took five from this ten, would you not be left with another five?

Cas: Without a doubt.

Gua: But then, does it not seem to you that the remaining five should come to life again, and should regain its name, nature and function? That is, if the numbers had the faculty to work those great and marvelous things imagined by the Pythagoreans?

Cas: It would be so.
Gua: Now, reconcile all we have said about numbers (because the forms are in fact numbers) to shame with respect to perfect virtue, and you will see that it will not make sense. Because shame, as a small number, is hidden in the greater number; and let us say this number were denary (a full and perfect number containing within itself the perfections of all the others) then in this true image of virtue, shame would appear to lose its form, its name and the power it once had. It is true that this form retains enough life that if, for any reason, a five — that is, the form of accomplished virtue — were taken from a virtuous man, the other five (let us call this shame) would remain in its first and proper being with its name and function. And so, if a well-to-do man fell into some error, you would see him pull himself out with shame, and not lie there with brazen perseverance. Shame would produce in him that effect that the art of swimming produces in the swimmer; this art does not prevent the swimmer from getting wet but from drowning. Thus, if I am not mistaken, you can now understand in what manner the perfect contains the imperfect.

All this can be said of shame if we want to accept as true that supposition you made; that is, that shame is of the same species as virtue. Because it would not take a great effort to deny that shame is enclosed in he same circle as the virtues, as we can affirm with greater truth and certainty that shame is the road to virtue rather than virtue itself. We must add that this is true because nature is also the name that leads to the acquisition of a form or of a nature. This way, once it is taken, intersects and leads away from, but does not mix with one's work. And shame vanishes in much the same way — having led us to the possession of virtue, it does not in any way mix with it.

Cas: If you could defend your Plato as well as you solved my question you would be a brilliant man. But why should you not know how to do it? Today my mind wavers in a sea. As you know, in the work of that divine Philosopher we read Jupiter ordered Mercury to deliver two great gifts from heaven to men. The two gifts, righteousness and shame, were to be ornaments for their life, but they were also given so that, in the manner of adamantine chains, they might tie them tightly together in peace. If I remember correctly, he ordered that these two virtues be distributed to all men without exception, as he considered impossible that any city might last for long where men fail to partake justly in justice and shame. In this we clearly see that, by decree of that superhuman intelligence, every sex, age and human condition should live adorned with shame. In fact, I remember further that, at the same time, Jupiter had Mercury cry out a public proclamation. Anyone found naked of these two virtues should be considered a public plague and be punished with the most severe tortures. Here is the knot from which I do not see how you will be able to free yourself.

Gua: I am already free. General commands are not be followed by all ages. For example, it is necessary that every newborn suckle milk, and similarly that the hair of every old man grow grey — but one only in infancy, and the other only in old age. Therefore, the fact that shame is given to everybody does not mean that to feel shame is always befitting. Still, be it as you wish,
restrain the horses of our appetencies, and that, by spurring them with the whip of magnanimity, it pushes towards the sky at a quick gait. Though this same shame is befitting to all free souls, it seems to be what the philosophers particularly indicated for sons to feel towards their fathers, for wives towards their husbands, for subjects towards their lords — and in the end it is nothing more than a kind of modest reverence through which they eagerly dispose themselves to the other’s will and to eschew with solicitude those things which are not befitting to their state. I remember having read about this same shame that it taught sons not to wash with their fathers, and sons-in-law with their fathers in law.

Cas: Please, hear this — not feeling shame is common both to the good and evil, but feeling shame is only for the good. Thus a well-to-do man should wish with more intensity for what is only his own, rather than for that which he shares with the evil.

Gua: Subtle argument, though brief. In the good, not feeling shame means perfection, in the depraved it is an incorrigible defect; in the good, feeling shame is a sin indeed, but an amendable one.

Cas: I said that in jest. But, in fact, I realize more and more that he who goes fishing for doubt often catches the truth, which he then uses to feed his mind. Thus it must be true that shame should only inhabit the breast of youths and women.

Gua: In my opinion and by Ariosto’s pronouncement, as well as by agreement of all wise men, it is just so. And, in fact, if we consider carefully, we see that this is not without great reason, for where the danger is greatest, the need for a guard is greatest. And the danger is greatest where there is the greatest weakness; and — as you have heard — a youth and a woman are dangerously weak because of his age and of her sex.

Ari: And well he spoke who said that a woman’s shame was the fortress where her beauty and honesty were kept.

Gua: And Aristotle’s daughter, being a daughter worthy of such a father, demonstrated how becoming shame was to women. When asked which was the most beautiful of all colors, she answered: “That which shame paints on the cheeks of a honest and virtuous woman.” And truly let us believe that shame is the key that opens and closes the treasure [coffer] of feminine modesty. Whenever a woman chooses to take off the robe of shame, her fate is sealed because, once her appetite finds the bit of remorse is loosened, she has free rein to run after every dirty and foul-smelling dishonesty. And know that once she has lost her shame, she will never be able to find her way home again. It is a wonderful thing we see nature operate in keeping feminine shame — perhaps she does so in honor of herself, for she is also female; and perhaps, because of the similarity they share with her, she ordered that the bodies of drowned men float up face down, while those of women are seen to go face up.

Cas: Up to now we have spoken of the age and gender that require shame, and I have greatly enjoyed it. But what are we to believe of the species? That it is only common to man?

Gua: But then you doubt that it is not his own?
Cas: I only say this because it seems to me that the wise men of antiquity, intending to show us an ashamed man according to their custom, depicted a deer without horns lying low in the bushes, as they imagined that the deer was hiding for the shame of being seen without his natural ornament.

Gua: Or perhaps for the fear of seeing himself disarmed?

Cas: This could also be. But I told you what I read and it does not conflict with experience itself, as we sometimes see very clear signs of shame and other similar affects in the dumb animals.

Gua: And which animal have you ever seen blushing?

Cas: Blushing, no -- for that cannot be seen, but one can clearly see some feel shame when they engage one another in a race or in about [o nel corso, o nel collo], and especially when, fighting for love, they lose in the presence of their beloved, for then we see live shame sculpted on their foreheads.

Gua: You have certainly learned this doctrine in the school of some poet.

Cas: I know that you do not hold poets in such low esteem, that you would not have faith in them for matters even more important than this, for then you would not esteem your own self very highly. But, in truth, tell me are the unreasoning animals provided not only with fear and joy, but also with the noble affects? Affects in which they rival, if not surpass, man himself? And if we see in them cupidity for victory, a desire for glory and supremacy over others, magnanimity of heart, clemency and a thousand other such affects, why should we deny them shame?

Gua: If beasts have an intellect, as others would have it, then the issue would be settled in your favor. But I usually cannot listen to these things without laughing. Although I do not deny that some similar passions take place within brute animals, I do affirm two things: the first is that nature does not transfer all the affects of men to the beasts; the second is that those we have in common with them are not of a similar reason to ours. To prove this point I could give you not a few reasons — but let this one be worth all the others: just as the vegetal virtue is not the same in plants as it is in animals, so the soul that feels is not the same in beasts as it is men and, consequently, the affects proceeding from one and the other are not of the same make.

Cas: What is this that you say?

Gua: What I say is the truth. Because even though the operations of these virtues appear the same in all things, their nature is in fact not entirely the same. Let us leave aside the fact that the sensitive soul in animals is a specific form (as we call it) and that in men it is a virtue grafted on a superior form; and let us also leave aside a thousand other reasons, because I do not want to spend much time on this consideration. Let us say only that, the vegetal one of the plants is not suited to receive within itself the sensitive faculty as it is in the animals; and that the sense of the animal is not ready to receive the intellect, not to be made participant in the beautiful light of reason; nor to let itself be corrected by reason's commands; nor to make itself partially reasonable as it happens in man, or as it can happen. Therefore, in addition to the other differences, to have or not to have this power or this powerlessness is the reason that they are not at all of the same composition. Somebody will say that even though the inferior virtues in these inferior subjects do not receive the superior ones, they still have the power to receive them. To this I could answer that, since nature is not excessive in anything, it would never give them power that could not be put into act.
This truth notwithstanding, we can surely affirm that human affects are different from animal affects, and moreover that we men are privileged with some special ones denied to animals. These last one are in fact guided by reason more than the others and among them we have mercy, just disdain, and all the other affects concerning honor — all of which are ignored by the sensitive nature. We occasionally seem to recognize signs of very noble affects — as you have most excellently said — and also of religion, prudence, strength, justice, magnanimity, and other similar virtues; but be advised that they are images of our affects and shadows of our virtues that nature imprinted in their souls. Perhaps she did so because just as man was made to share in some divine virtues (despite infinite differences) because he had to serve as a subject to his God, so the animals were made to share (but at great disadvantage) in many human gifts and virtues because they had to serve man. Among these, there may also be that image of shame that you recognize in them, and other such things.

Cas: So that since there are some men who sometimes act like beasts, there also had to be beasts who sometimes act like men; is this not true?

Gua: Only too true.

Cas: But enough laughter. Please tell me, gentlemen, since shame belongs only to human nature, can we say that it survives death, or that it only lives with the living? I am moved to say this because in reading Dante, the divine poet, it seems to me that when he went to see the spectacle of Hell, he saw the shadows of the dead feel shame in many places, as when he said:

And the sinner, having heard, did not deny
But lifted toward me both face and soul
And then colored himself with saddest shame.57

Gua: And in many other places he also shows that, in the kingdom of death, not little respect is paid to honor and infamy, and thus we hear Count Guido di Montefeltro prayed to name himself for fame:

And now I do beseech yourself to name,
Do not be harder than some already were,
If in the world you want to keep your fame.58

And he answers that he will reveal his name in the hope that it will not became known that he is in Hell:

But since from this abyss no one ever
Returned, if what I hear is true, then
Without fear of infamy I answer.59

Ari: And similarly Antaeus hastily accepts to carry Dante and his teacher to the depths of the well of traitors, having been flattered by the promises of fame which were made to him:

He can provide that which here you covet,60

And later,

Still in the world they can offer you fame.61
Cas: And when Messer Pietro dalle Vigne heard these words spoken to him:

But tell him who you were; so that instead
Of any amend, he may refresh your fame
Back in the world, where's given to be led;

he felt such pleasure that, forgetting the pain caused his torn twig, he was moved to say: "With your sweet words you ensnare me; that I cannot stay quiet." And he concluded his say by praying:

If one of you back to the world should be restored,
Comfort my memory, which still lies low
From those blows struck to her with envy's sword.

Gua: He wanted to ensnare Bocca with the same flatteries but, from what he said, he wished for the contrary.

Ari: And where do you leave Count Ugolino? Who flattered with the same snare, answering:

But if my words can ever be the seedling,
Which will fruit infamy to this traitor whom
I gnaw, you'll then see me speak whilst weeping.

Cas: You both continue to tie this knot tighter rather than to untie it.

Ari: I was waiting for Guarino's answer, but his silence commands me to speak and so I say that it is possible that shame lives among the dead. It is true enough that, according to the philosopher, the dead are hardly touched by good, evil, and especially honor and infamy given to them by posterity; so that they can be compared to those who live without knowing or feeling the good or evil owed to them. Indeed, the evil of the dead can be unfavorably compared to the evil and cruel things represented in tragedies, as opposed to the true evils already regretted and suffered; it is the same difference as that between truth and dream. Yet by looking through a better crystal, the eyes of the theologians were able to learn further about the state of our soul after it is released from our body. And that divine poet based himself on their opinion.

I think that, according to the truth of these philosophers, two things can be said. The first is that the nature of the damned remains whole and, with it, all the natural gifts as long as they do not oppose the condition of the damned, as does free-will which remains dumb and tied as for its ability to turn itself towards good. The second thing is that the damned suffer not only essential punishments but also some accidental ones.

Now, I define as essential punishments the principal ones, such as the privation of our blessed sight, the torments of the penal fire and the worm of conscience — which is born from the putrefaction of one's sins and which lives inside one eternally, not only to turn one toward good, as it does for all of us pilgrims of the world, but also to gnaw continuously at the sinning soul. By accidental punishments, I mean the lesser ones, such as shame, confusion, memory of lost goods, and other such things.

From those two suppositions, we can derive these two conclusions. From what we said earlier we can first draw this consequence: that since nature remains with us after death, all the natural
powers, the intellect and the will also remain together with the natural appetencies, such as the appetite for good, for being, for knowing and even a natural inclination toward virtue impeded and tied up, however, by this stubborn and corrupt virtue — and thus we are left with other similar desire and instincts. Among these appetencies survives that desire for honor that nature planted in our soul at the beginning, as it is not loathsome to the nature of the damned. And, because this root remains alive, it is no wonder that honor is cherished in the world of the dead while infamy is abhorred. And by honor I mean true or false honor because, after all, one who is thirsty neither minds or distinguishes between clear and turbid water, as long as he can drink.

Perhaps (allow me to say this), because divine justice is accompanied by mercy even in hell, it punishes man much less harshly than he deserves, and it allows some small consolation to the damned for some small good morally performed by them. I shall not call it a consolation, for there is no consolation to the eternal crying, but a shadow of consolation and of the taste that they have for their honored name. It allows them this, as it allows them their being, which they naturally love and which it could easily take from them and with great reason. Now, if they desire honor, it follows that they should hate its contrary and that they should be punished with infamy and shame — all the more because when a man sins, he wounds with two prongs. With the first, he injures his maker by going against his divine precepts; with the second, he injures the world by erring against the human laws, which are the laws of natural honesty, of the good and civil customs.

And so the conscience, which is the instrument of divine vengeance, turns against the damned, also armed with two prongs. As it considers the offense against God greater than the other I described in my second supposition, it fiercely punishes the sinner with internal remorse. With regard to the offense against the world, it prods him bitterly with infamy and with shame — which are accidental punishments but which, in company with others, increase the sinner's torment. To confirm all this, we have to note that on the great day of universal judgment of the world — as I hear — all sins, hidden though they may be, will be sculpted on the forehead of the damned — this will be for no reason other than to cause them to feel shame and to make them wish that they were buried under mountains. From this it follows that, since our divine knowledge does not do anything in vain, it would not prepare a certain punishment for a subject who was not ready and deserving to receive it. Thus the damned has a sense of shame and infamy because a punishment of infamy and shame has been prepared for him. There are two other sorts of dead. Some are in paradise, the others are there where they can purge themselves and make their souls beautiful. Among the blessed there is no defect and no shame. So that when the same king of poets was about to be taken to heaven, he said:

And she to me, I want you to cast
   Aside all fear and shame, so that you will
   No longer speak as one who dreams at last. 65

We shall speak of their desire for honor on another occasion, when we shall need to speak of honor. In their desire for honor and in their shame, the souls of purgatory are wed to the damned. The same Poet illustrates this fact in many instances, and especially when he wrote:

Reproaching their own selves as you have heard
   And make the burning hotter with their shame. 66
Nonetheless, this shame is not as great because it is in the company of repentance; and these two shames are also different because one is finite, the other eternal.

Cas: And so, from the time they leave the sight of other men, the shame of the damned will have no end?

Ari: They will feel shame for as long as they remain within sight of the blessed — and this, I believe, will be forever. Because if they did not remain before the good, they would never feel shame among themselves, since they are all stained with the same tar. And in fact you will see that the Poet does not have them feel shame among themselves, but only when they are in the presence of the living, who can be assumed to be good, and whose good and bad opinion they hold in esteem. And even we do the same, for we do not feel shame in the presence of those who are like us, but we do in front of those who are unlike us.

Cas: I just remembered that I have read this in the writings of the Philosopher. In fact he lists all those before whom we feel shame. But he employs such little order, that it is difficult to keep it straight in one's mind. It is almost as though he did not remember that he was the father of order and method. 67

Ari: As I told you the other time, when he wants to teach the art of the orator, he speaks in the manner of an orator rather than of a philosopher. Nevertheless, it would not be too arduous a task to divide and examine his teaching, and also to add a few things.

Cas: As Signor Ariosto could do if he wanted.

Ari: And why not? I shall want to for as long as it will please you. But here allow me a little time to think, please.

Cas: It is a thing worthy of thought.

Ari: Let us say this, then, if you will, and help me where I fall short. Men feel shame of those by whom they wish to be held in high consideration. To distinguish my thoughts more clearly, I shall say that they usually wish for this in two ways: either for themselves or accidentally. For our own selves we all wish to be held to high account by those we most esteem and by whom we also want to be esteemed. Accidentally, we love to be held in good opinion by our adversaries. Let us come to those whom we hold in great consideration because of their own selves, and by whom we should also like to be esteemed. These men are either such by their nature or by our choice — or because of both. We naturally esteem our relations because nature has trained us to do so, in their presence we are in the habit of feeling shame for any villainous or filthy thing.

It seems that our fellow citizens can stand in the same array as our relations because, though they are not tied to us by a knot of consanguinity, they are tied to us by a bond of friendship — an almost natural, in fact, even wholly natural bond, if it is true (as it is most true) that cities have been instituted and kept by nature. Because of this, all citizens — who are the sons of the same country — are tied together by a certain brotherhood and natural relationship. This know is tied with many threads — that is, with the desire for natural company, with their communal living under the same laws, in the same offices and magistracies, with the same customs and language, under the same sky and within the circle of walls, as well as other similar things. For this reason, it happens that one will feel more shame of one of his fellow citizens than he would of a thousand foreigners. In addition to
relations and fellow citizens, there are men of greatness and regard, and first among them are the Princes; by this I mean especially those who are Princes not only in name but also in deeds. And in their trail come all men who are respected because of their clear worth and virtue. All these men I call admirable by nature, because it is a natural property of virtue to attract souls to love, to revere and to marvel at itself with more strength than a magnet attracts iron. Everybody knows that men feel shame of every little thing in front of a Prince and the cause for this effect is none other that the high degree in which they are placed; it inspires us to feel esteem for them and, when we esteem a person, we feel the desire growing in us for that person to feel the same esteem for us. This desire generates in us a fear to commit mistakes, and this fear is such that often it forces us to commit mistakes that we would not commit if we did not make such a strong effort. It happens that men may feel shame though they have committed no fault, and in fact, they often feel it before they do it for their fear of doing it. For this reason, we have seen the heat of shame dry up the most plentiful fountains of eloquence, as we can see by turning to Demosthenes, Theophrastus and many others who, having to speak in such situations become more mute than fish. We can easily feel shame of all men of worth — such as old, prudent and learned men — of scientists, and in short of all those who shine for some honorable and excellent condition, especially if we feel some particular attention or reverence towards them. Thus when the greatest poet recognized Virgil, whom he honored above all, from the depths of his error, he said:

Are you that spring which spills so large a flow  
Of words, tell me, are you that Virgil?  
I answered him with shame upon my brow.  

We feel all the more ashamed of these individuals when they are all alone in their virtue; when they are not polluted by our particular sins and in fact they are their sworn enemies; or when they are hard and unremitting in their pardon or harsh rebukers of other people’s sins. By choice, then, we greatly esteem the good opinion of friends both equal to us and superior to us, such as our patrons. Because we eagerly love to please and serve both the ones and the others, we inevitably feel the stimuli of shame each time we sin in their sight. Thus that great Poet who said:

But shame then proffered me her threats, she who  
Makes a servant strong before his good lord.

By nature and by choice, we hold in great reverence the women we love. I say by nature, because we recognize in them a perfection and excellence which compel us to love them with a natural force. I say by choice because we elect and consent to serve them rather than other women, and even rather than our own selves; and in fact we serve them much more readily than we command others and with much greater delectation than they take in commanding us. This servitude of ours, and this desire to be liked by them, sometimes make us so ashamed in their presence that we blush more than we do for our faults. As he wrote for such a case:

I lowered my eyes to the clear waters of a spring,  
But seeing myself there, I stepped onto the grass,  
The shame upon my brow inflicted such a sting.

But this shame and this desire not to displease them weaken our daring to ask them those things, though honest, which we most desire. In addition, this fear of committing a mistake often leads us to
commit even greater mistakes, so that, if in some matters, lovers have shown themselves to be gentle, educated and gracious men, in the presence of their loved ones, you will mostly see them overcome by fear and shame; you will see them forgetful, ill-mannered and displeasing; you will see them unable to stay or go or even to put two words together — as you have read in that sonnet from the flower of lyrical poets: "Because I have regarded you in lying, and in a thousand other places, and in as many people." 

Now let us remember those whose good opinion we esteem by accident. As I was telling you a little earlier, these are our adversaries. I say that we consider their opinion only by accident, because we feel no real esteem for them. Nevertheless we wish that they feel it for us or, at least, that they do not despise us. And so, in their hands, our scorn is a weapon against ourselves, whereas the esteem they feel for us is on our side and fights against them by robbing them of the daring to harm us. These people of whom I speak are either our enemies by law or not. I call adversaries by law all those who follow a religion different from ours. Adversaries not by law are either common or particular. We call common those who studiously observe the defects of all men without difference, and they come in two kinds — some are driven to note the faults of others by perversity of nature (these are the slanderers); some others are driven by pleasure, and these are the mockers who amuse themselves and laugh at the expense of other people's faults. The particular adversaries, who also come in two kinds, follow these. There are some who become our enemies, full of rage and hatred, because of some injury; and there are others who became our adversaries because of none of these things, but simply because of pure emulation. Now to go back to the first — there is no doubt that Christians ought to feel shame of their ill-mannered behavior in the presence of Turks and Jews and, likewise, they feel shame of us, especially about those things which relate to the observance of the laws of each. And so it was said of us:

And if an evil wish should launch an attack,  
Behave like men, and not like mindless sheep,  
Give not the Jew among you a cause to mock. 

We also feel shame when we commit a mistake in the presence of those men who bite by nature — that is, those who are continually sinking their teeth in the customs and fame of others — because we know that as they tear up good deeds, they will not forgive our sins. We also feel shame of those who, amusing though they may be, take pleasure in other people's errors and report them with glee. It also hurts us to commit any mistake in the presence of our enemies, and for this we burn up with the hottest shame. Reason demands this, since they are always ready and vigilant, and because they observe all the actions of our life with great solicitude. And, when they discover any little taint of error, they make it public with a great show of scorn and reproof, exaggerating it beyond all proportion. As a result of this, we can derive great use from our enemies — or, at least, those of us who know how — because they can teach us to live in an irreproachable manner. Lastly, we feel shame of our faults before those who compete against us in our studies or for the same honors, and especially if they are equal to us in age, circumstance, and if they hail from the same city. At the moment, this is as much as I can think in answer to your question. If it pleases you, it also pleases me.

Cas: Oh happy me, if all my wants were so fully realized as this one was. But now I should like to try to see if I can remember all your analysis. Men feel shame of those individuals whose opinion they hold in high account. These individuals are such by themselves or by accident. Those who are so by
themselves become what they are either by nature, by choice, or for both reasons. By nature, we love to be held in high account by relatives, by fellow citizens, by all excellent men who are worthy and virtuous, by Princes, by educated and masterful men, by the old, by the prudent, by men of science, and others of this sort — and all the more, or all the less, depending on whether they are more severe or more human. By choice and by nature, we love to be held in high account by the women we love. By accident we esteem our adversaries who are such either by law or not by law — and these are either common or particular. The common one are made so by ill will or by a pleasurable disposition of nature; the particular ones are either our enemies because of hatred and injury, or because they are our emulators in a competition for studies or honors, and especially when there is conformity of age and condition. Wasn’t your division like this?

Ari: Yes, it was.

Cas: Could the same sort of thing be done for shame so as to distinguish and discriminate among its various species? And, after this, to do the same for those who feel shame, not excluding those things of which he feels shame?

Ari: And who forbids it? But must Signor Alessandro always be a listener and never say anything? Make Signor Castello happy. Do you perhaps want to dine with him, and not pay him for your dinner?

Gua: Do you want me to pay before I taste? Where is this done? I do want to speak but only to relieve you — as you seem tired of discussing — and for no other reason.

Cas: And so go ahead.

Gua: Shame, according to Signor Ariosto, is either natural or acquired. The acquired is either internal or external, and I would like to add that we could find all these to be excessive, lacking, or moderately sufficient. Natural shame is found in children and it follows nature and not discourse. The acquired one (that I shall call so for a lack of a term) occurs in mature men and it follows reason. The internal shame occurs without any visible bodily manifestation. The external always occurs in conjunction with blushing. The shortcoming with any kind of shame is brazenness. The natural one can either be mediocre (a shame of shameful things) — or excessive — that is, a shame of things which are not blameworthy. The acquired one, which is also external, is either mediocre or excessive. It is mediocre at the time, at the place, for the cause, in the company and in the amount that a man must feel shame; it is excessive when we feel shame at the wrong time, or of little things. It is true that to feel shame in the right measure is more typical of the acquired than of the natural, whilst, on the contrary, to feel too much is more typical of he natural than the acquired.

Cas: To feel shame in excess is thus just as inappropriate as being too brazen. Gua: It is both inappropriate and damaging. It is inappropriate both because it departs from the middle, and because it makes men effeminate, stupid and not graceful enough in their communication with others, like those who blush at every pleasant word. This is truly a sign of goodness, but a weak and ineffectual goodness much more suited to one who wants to live in a solitary retreat rather than in a city among honest assemblies of men. Further, it is damaging. First of all, because the ones so ashamed are always the target of other people's jokes and witticisms, and also because this untimely shame often makes them unable to refuse anything that is asked by anyone, even though it may cause them damage — occasionally, this shameful respect goes so far that, having consumed all of a man's resources, it
reduces him to poverty. This type of shame also makes men unable to ask for those things, however honest, that they require. For this reason, Homer said that shame was not good for the poor and the needy.

Cas: But when it is necessary to take a fall towards one of these two extremes, will it not be better to fall towards excessive shame than towards brazenness?

Gua: No, if we consider its utility. Yes, if we consider its honesty; because this is one of those extremes which are more similar to the medium, and thus to virtue, than to their opposite — such as prodigality is to liberality, and audacity to strength. In addition it is more likely to temper itself and to reduce itself to the medium and to virtue than its contrary, although the latter decreases with time, while the former increases.

Cas: So now, how shall we distinguish among the people capable of feeling shame?

Gua: Like this. Only man can be ruled by this passion, whether living or dead for, among the dead, the damned and the expiating also feel shame. Among the living, men and women blush, both young and mature. Women do so more easily than men and receive praise for it; the young feel shame more than the old and receive less reproof. As for the cause of shame, we can say that it is an evil that can bring disgrace and that it can be in the past, present or future. These evil deeds are either committed by our own selves or by people closely connected to us. These people are either connected to us by nature, as relatives and neighbors, with whom we can include fellow citizens (as Signor Ariosto explained so well); or they are connected by will, such as friends, masters, servants and any others who are respected by us or who depend from us in any manner — for example, the subjects of a Prince, the soldiers of a captain, the champions of a padrino, the disciples of a teacher as well as our comrades, those we counsel and other similar individuals, all these being people whose mistakes very often give us cause to feel shame.

Cas: How is the culpability of one transferred to another?

Gua: Through the strength of that bond which nature or our will — or both — used to tie many things together to make one. Do you perhaps believe that all the things which seem numerous to our eyes are in fact numerous?

Cas: Being very coarse and clumsy, I believed so. Gua: You are mistaken. All things are one.

Cas: And here are Parmenides and Melissus risen from the grave.

Gua: Would you really believe that I would be so foolishly mean what others want us to believe that they meant? Do you not know that there is no contradiction in one thing being many and many, one? And that, in fact, all the things of this world are so made? With the exception of the first indivisible unity, which are the most simple, most complex, and the most unimaginable ones? But do not keep me in these arguments that would require more time and consideration. Do you see the sun begin to turn yellow and to run swiftly towards the occident? If you look at it, you will see that it signaling me to keep silent about all these things, and also not say what I could about the unity of the world caused by the order of its parts and by its dependence from a single beginning and a single end according to which all things live; nor will I speak of its being, goodness, beauty, eternity, in short, of all its glory which penetrates through and illuminates the entire universe, more here, less there, so that a ray of
its unity shines through the whole world, more in one region (as we said) and less in another. The setting sun demands that I keep silent about all these things for now; nor does it allow me to tell you nature’s sole purpose is to conserve the unity of things that goes hand in hand with its kinds and more with its species, especially until this same unity reaches its strength more than elsewhere. Keep quiet about all these things that, discussed at length, would fade as they grow more distant.

By will of the sun, I shall and many others like them will show the unity of men. He does allow me enough time, however, to say at least this: just as many fires and many waters are in fact only one fire and only one water divided into many fires and many waters, so many men are not many men, but only one man divided into many.

And so humanity is born, that affect full of love that man feels, or should feel, towards his fellow men. It is true that within the species there are different degrees of unity, as there are within the different parts of the world through which it extends and reveals itself more or less directly. Thus we see it more directly in nations of people rather than in the universality of mankind, and we discover its manifestations more in particular populations than in nations. And it shows itself and its power most incomparably among relations because, among them, this unity is so tightened by the hands of nature that they can without any question be said to be the same thing. This is not enough. Our will — which is a divine virtue and, in this aspect, an emulator of nature — also pleases itself to reduce this ample unity of the species to a tighter and more singular unit; and it does so through the intervention of Love and friendship. Sometimes this happens so felicitously so as to surpass the imitated nature and so friends, like lovers, are neither two nor one, but one in two and two in one. Further, it happens that this blessed unity is often tied by both nature and will, so that one pulls at one end, and the other at the other, and they form a knot known as a marital knot. This is the source of a unity that is unique and indivisible above all others mortal unities, because it grants that the two so united truly become one as much as possible. And thus it was said: "And two will be in one flesh."

Among all these kinds of unity, both general and particular that exist among men, there are those which transfer guilt and shame from one to the other — in the manner that the pain from a wounded hand passes to the arm, and from the arm to the humerus, and sometimes even further on because of the union and connection among them. Thus you see the father feel shame of the son; the son, of the father; the brother, of the sister; the husband, of the wife; and, even more wondrously, the citizen, of his fellow citizens. As it happens to the flower of poets when, turning to his country, he says: inflammation. And so the pain of one’s mistakes passes to one’s father, brother or husband, but not the wound or the redness, unless, through their consent or negligence, these people were the cause of the error. You will say: "But you have said that relations and friends feel shame of those who are attached to them." It is true, I did say it. But by shame I did not exactly mean shame, but displeasure and pain. Sometimes it is permissible to transfer names thus, especially if things have a resemblance and kinship to one another — as do the fear of our infamy and the pain of the infamy of one who is loved by us or related to us.

Cas: Yet, if truth be told, we often see people blush for these very reasons. Gua: This I will easily allow. But I tell you that, in this case, those who blush are predisposed to feeling shame for their faults by reasons of their age, of their sex, or of their timid and bashful nature, even when they are alone. As for those who are not disposed to feeling shame for their own faults, they do not feel shame for others. These are well-to-do and valorous men who, as I said, feel pained by this, and not ashamed because they have been taught by their prudence, and they know just how far and with what
strength the arrows of other men's infamy can hit. They know that the fog of others cannot obscure the sun of their works and, finally, they know that one harvests honor and infamy in one's own field. But look what appeared here:

There among the thieves I found five of your Citizens, and of this I feel great shame.\textsuperscript{73}

And the friend feels shame for the faults of his friend. And this we see in Homer, when Gryphon feels shame of Martanus's cowardice;

Gryphon remains; he feels himself tainted
   By his comrade's contempt, and made ugly.
   He would have stood in a burning blaze,
   Rather than finding himself in that place.
   The fire in his breast flames up to his face,
   As though that shame were no one else's but his.\textsuperscript{74}

The same happens to all the others of whom we have spoken.

Cas: But if one can feel shame for the faults of others, then the shame felt by a virtuous man for the errors of his relations and friends goes against your decree, doesn't it?

Gua: What I said is true, that one becomes a participant in another person's error through consent or closeness. Nevertheless, I want you to know that, in the end, honor and infamy belong to those who are responsible for them; and if infamy passes over to others, it becomes weaker and diminished in the passage, so that it has only enough strength to leave pain but not shame. Let us not abandon the metaphor of the wounded hand, as it will demonstrate the truth of what I am saying. The hand is wounded, and with the wound there is pain and redness; in the arm, which is connected to the hand, there is only pain, but no wound. But look: a gentle couple comes in our direction.

Cas: Oh, yes. By my faith, let us go towards them; our dinner cannot be without them.

Ari: Our discussion comes to a fortunate ending with the arrival of such gracious gentlefolk that we shall be allowed to say: There is who will cause our loves to grow.

The End
1. The dialogue emphasizes local color, and stresses familiar landmarks and personages in Alfonso II’s Ferrara. The three interlocutors were well known in courtly and literary circles. Hercole Castello, younger and less scholarly than Ariosto and Guarino, provides a suitable foil for their erudition, and his recent infatuation with a local (d’intorno) woman becomes the vehicle for the ensuing discussion of the emotions.

2. Ferrara and all the countryside surrounding it are absolutely flat. The Montagnuola was an artificial hill constructed in the 1460s by order of Borso d’Este. Located along the walls near the southeast corner of the city, it became a favorite destination for walking, sightseeing, and finding a breath of air. It appears as a landmark in the early printed maps of Ferrara.

3. “...luogo piu opportune io non saprei imaginare.” Its appropriateness derives not only from the agreeableness of the site, but also from two other aspects of its character. The elevation is apposite for what is clearly shaping up as a discussion of philosophical matters, and its rural, wooded character recommends it as well, because it affords both seclusion and the sort of setting in which the ancients pursued their discussions of moral philosophy. Guarino has already (correctly) been accused of “Platonizing,” a tendency that will become more pronounced in what follows.

4. Ariosto is making an important distinction here, by defining shame in physiological terms, and stressing its character as an involuntary internal response rather than a judgment by others. We would call this the difference between shame and guilt.

5. Guarino’s description here includes both the Montagnuola and the views of the city and surrounding countryside. This idyllic landscape, though not recognizable as Ferrara and its surroundings, may be regarded as somewhat idealized, or even hyperbolic. The 1490 additions to Ferrara did indeed include a series of wide, straight avenues, but from their current vantage point, Guarino and his friends would have had a better view of the narrow, winding streets of the medieval quarter. To a modern eye, at least, the hill does not seem as lofty as the passage suggests.

6. Castello’s allegory would seem to refer to God the Father. At least, such a reading would make sense if the “Cavalier de’ cavalieri” and the “Donna delle donne” were Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary, transposed into courtly terms. There may be some calculated ambiguity implying an analogy between these divine presences and the Duke and Duchess.

7. A similar view of talk about the metaphysical realm is that of Montaigne, Essays, tr. M.A. Screech (New York, 1993), Book III, no 11 (“Of Experience”).

8. The precise purpose of this bit of stage business is not clear. Had the group actually gone to the loggia of the palace, they would have had a long walk, and ended up in a rather public place right in the middle of the city. Perhaps the proposed destination is meant simply to reinforce their identity as insiders at court. In any case, they manage to find a place to sit somewhere near the top of the hill. Nowadays one would be quite unlikely to see the hills to the west of Padua from anywhere in Ferrara, but the air was certainly much clearer in the sixteenth century.

9. This statement and Castello’s response refer to Petrarch, who, though born in Arezzo, was associated with Padua and the nearby village of Arquà, in the Euganean Hills, where he spent his last years. The very presence of these speakers on the Montagnuola may in fact constitute a Petrarchean conceit, for Petrarch’s famous letter to Fra Dionigio di Borgo San Sepolcro describing his (fictitious) ascent of Mt. Ventoux in 1343 provided an authoritative early instance of the climb as a search for wisdom.

10. Pocaterra uses the word temenza, which is best rendered in English as timorousness or (more often) fear. Ira, for which “ire” is an acceptable cognate, is nevertheless translated throughout as “anger,” which conforms better to everyday speech.

11. Aristotle, presumably.
12. The Corso della Giovecca is the principal boulevard that divides the medieval section of Ferrara from the fifteenth-century addition. It runs from the Este castle in the center of the city to the eastern gate. The identity of “quel nostro amico” cannot be established.
13. The reference to an edificio di diamante would have meant something quite specific to readers familiar with the architecture of Renaissance Ferrara. A palace faced with some 10,000 diamond-cut stones, known as the Pallazzo dei Diamanti, was built by the Este around 1500, and has since been one of the city’s most prominent landmarks. Today it houses the National Museum for Ferrara and its region.
14. That sozzo amore is not identified specifically, but given the Platonic tenor of the argument, it may be assumed to refer to sex (or in Renaissance terms, physical love without an uplifting spiritual dimension). Preachers and other moralists had been telling people for centuries that such behavior was lust, unworthy of the name of love, and a cause for both shame and guilt.
15. While eyeglasses were not uncommon by the late sixteenth century, and apparently were used for both myopia and presbyopia, this reference to sunglasses is highly unusual, if not unique. Yet the passage implies that the use of tinted glasses was widespread, an observation perhaps logical for a physician of that era.
16. During the period Pocaterra wrote this work, a chronic tension seems to have existed between political and intellectual circles at the court of Ferrara. Like Annibale Romei, a Ferrarese writer of dialogues during the previous decade, Castello gives voice to this difference in cultural styles, which has been identified and analyzed in W. L. Gundersheimer, Trickery, Gender, and Power: the Discorsi of Annibale Romei, in Urban Life in the Renaissance, ed. S. Zimmerman and R.F.E. Weissman (Newark, DE, 1989) p121-41. (Italian version in Schifanoia II (1986), 9-21.
17. Plutarch, Moralia 246, The Bravery of Women, 5.
19. The source for this myth is Pausanias, Description of Greece, 3.20.10-11.
20. Horace, Odes, 3.5.
21. Ariosto invokes the doctrine of poetic license, which holds that the truths of poetry are allusive and metaphorical, allowing the poet certain doctrinal liberties unavailable to philosophers and other scholars. This notion was a commonplace of Renaissance poetics.
22. This conforms precisely to theories about shame that have recently won wide acceptance among psychologists and psychiatrists. Darwin alluded to the “confusion of mind” that shame produces; more recently, Nathanson has posited that shame induces a “cognitive shock, a period during which we are unable to think clearly or plot effective action.” Here he echoed Pocaterra’s position that shame does not result in immediate action.
23. Herodotus; Xenophon?
24. The observation that shame is present from early childhood seems original to Pocaterra. He appears to have observed both blushing and the covering of the face or gaze aversion in infants. It is only in recent years that observers like Tomkins and Nathanson have arrived at similar views.
25. This observation elaborates Ariosto’s previous comments that the typical symptoms of shame are involuntary.
26. What Ariosto seems to be saying in this complex and somewhat prolix passage is that his colleagues should easily be able to notice in their own bodies various and almost imperceptible changes they neither initiate nor control.
27. Hesiod, Works and Days, etc. Boccaccio.
28. Petrarch, Rime I, II.
29. This sentence embodies the core of Pocaterra’s critique of Aristotle, namely, the absence of a physiological basis for his definition of shame. Pocaterra (if Ariosto personifies his views) sees the diagnostic signs of shame as crucial to its existence, which is why the semiotics of shame – the observable behavior of ashamed people – attracts such detailed attention here.
30. Inferno, XXIII: 2.
32. This seems to describe a heart attack or stroke, brought on by some emotional upheaval or trauma. It is interesting that the notion of the enlargement of the heart is consistent with modern medical findings in cases of congestive heart failure.

33. Pocaterra’s metaphors for the heart represent it as a vase and as a lake, but not as a pump. He also uses the terms “blood” and “spirits” more or less interchangeably, as if the physical substance carried with it an invisible charge or force. Nevertheless, it is clear that he understands the centrality of the heart to the continuation of life, and the heart’s role in providing to the rest of the body an amount of heat sufficient to maintain life.

34. Livy.

35. The idea that shame is a natural, innate affect observable in infancy may be original to Pocaterra. For Dante, with whom Pocaterra often agrees, shame appears in adolescence to protect people (especially girls) from sin (Convivium IV, xxiii, 4). Pocaterra’s intuitions have recently received independent confirmation in the empirical studies of Silvan Tomkins and others.

36. Dante, Purgatorio XVIII, 55ff.

37. The distinction here is between natural and learned shame. Pocaterra understood as well as modern anthropologists and psychologists that cultural conditioning shapes the way affects are modulated and expressed or repressed. To make this point, he uses agricultural metaphors designed to emphasize the role of nurture in regulating nature.

38. Cf. Montaigne

39. See above on the role of praise in producing shame.

40. For the earliest classical personification of shame, see Hesiod, Works and Days, 11.


42. Francesco Patrizzi (1529-1597) was the most prominent philosopher in late sixteenth century Ferrara. His literary career spanned four decades, and included philosophical dialogues, a book on military theory, speculative and historical works on metaphysics and cosmology, and an elaborate dialogue on love that was not published until the twentieth century.

43. The view echoed by Pocaterra throughout, that shame is most appropriate in adolescents and women, originates in Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics IV: 15). In Convivium IV, xix, 8-9, Dante accepts Aristotle’s opinion, which is based on the view that adult men should be sufficiently virtuous to avoid any occasion of shame.

44. Castello’s unqualified love of shame begins to give way to Ariosto’s explanation that shame is a relative, not an absolute virtue; and that, as an affect, its appropriateness is conditional to the time, place and circumstances, including the age and gender of the subject.

45. Purgatorio XVI, 70-2.


47. Purgatorio XVI: 85.

48. Petrarch, Rime 207, 13

49. Purgatorio V: 20

50. Petrarch, Rime 1, 4.

51. Purgatorio XVIII: 60

52. Inferno XXVI: 115-17

53. Trionfo Della Morte II, 31

54. Guarino functions here as the voice for traditional misogynistic stereotypes. These he conveys with a semiotic charge that seems far to exceed the emotive language used to describe male forms of evil. Clearly the Aristotelian dictum that shame is good in youth but not in maturity is not intended to apply to women. The metaphors of chastity indicate that this is an ongoing battle, in which the dangerous instabilities of women’s nature can only be constrained by a lifetime of shame.
55. This bit of lore is untrue, and interestingly, it elicits no further comment from the speakers. Why such a notion might have been current is a worthwhile question. It will be recalled that shame, for Renaissance writers, was conveyed by the eyes. That, together with notions of sexual shame (pudore, pudeur) may account for this entirely spurious distinction.

56. Pliny.

57. Inferno XXIV: 30.

58. Inferno XXVII: 57.

59. Inferno XXVII: 64.

60. Inferno XXI: 125.

61. Inferno XXI: 127.


63. Inferno XIII: 76.

64. Inferno XXXIII: 7.


67. This is almost certainly a reference to the passage on shame in Aristotle’s Rhetoric II: 6, a somewhat breathless and jumbled passage in which the various sorts of persons before whom one is and is not ashamed are listed.

68. Inferno I: 79

69. Inferno XVII: 89-90

70. Purgatorio XXX: 76

71. Petrarch, Rime, XLIX, 11. 1-4:

    Perch’io t’abbia guardato di menzogna
    A mio podere et onorato assai,
    Ingrata lingua, gia pero no m’hai
    Renduto onor, ma fatto ira e vergogna;
    (Although I always kept you from lying
    As best as I could, and honored you enough,
    Ungrateful tongue, I never got any honor from you,
    Nothing but anger and shame.)

72. Paradiso V, 79

73. Inferno XXVI: 4

74. The phrase “our own Homer,” il nostro Homero, refers not to the Greek epic poet, but to Ludovico Ariosto, the great epic poet of Ferrara, and great uncle of Orazio Ariosto. The quoted passage is from Orlando Furioso XVII, 91.
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