

# PATHOS PHAULON: ARISTOTLE AND THE RHETORIC OF PHTHONOS

ED SANDERS

## 1. Introduction

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle notes a number of bad character traits, or *phaulotêtes* (singular *phaulotês*), indicative of a poorly developed character (or *êthos*). These *phaulotêtes* include spite, shamelessness and envy.<sup>1</sup> However Aristotle was interested in emotions, and their connection with character, long before he formally embedded them in his ethical theory. It is already clearly visible in his early treatise *The Art of Rhetoric*. In this chapter I explore this connection.

In *The Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle argues that an orator, in trying to persuade an audience, has three modes of persuasion available to him: logical argument (*logos*), the speaker's own character (*êthos*), and "putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind" (1.2.1356a1-4: ἐν τῷ τὸν ἀκροατὴν διαθεῖναι πῶς).<sup>2</sup> He elaborates: "[The orator persuades] through his hearers, when they are led to emotion by his speech" (1.2.1356a14-15: διὰ δὲ τῶν ἀκροατῶν, ὅταν εἰς πάθος ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου προαχθῶσιν). The third mode of persuasion is thus emotion (*pathos*),<sup>3</sup> which can legitimately be used as part of an orator's armoury of rhetorical weapons to influence his listeners.<sup>4</sup>

Aristotle discusses emotions in Book 2 of the *Rhetoric*, defining them as feelings that affect judgment and are accompanied by pain and pleasure (2.1.1378a19-21: ἔστι δὲ τὰ πάθη δι' ὅσα μεταβάλλοντες διαφέρουσι πρὸς τὰς κρίσεις οἷς ἔπεται λύπη καὶ

---

<sup>1</sup> *NE* 2.6.1107a9-11: ἔνια γὰρ εὐθύς ὠνόμασται συνειλημμένα μετὰ τῆς φαυλότητος, οἷον ἐπιχαιρεκακία ἀναίσχυντία φθόνος; others include incontinence and prodigality (*NE* 4.1.1119b31-32), and the generic "vice" (*kakia* – *NE* 7.6.1150a1-5).

<sup>2</sup> All references in this chapter are to Arist. *Rhet.* unless otherwise stated. All translations are my own, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>3</sup> Leighton 1996, 223-30 shows that, while Aristotle generally (e.g. *NE* 2.5.1105b21-23) includes both emotions and *epithymia* (appetite – e.g. hunger, thirst, sex drive) within *pathê*, in the *Rhetoric* he excludes *epithymia*. Leighton argues convincingly this is because Aristotle is only interested here in *pathê* that affect judgment (i.e. emotions), and appetites do not do so, or at least not cognitively – Viano 2003, 94 agrees; see also Grimaldi 1988, 14-5. Several other *pathê* mentioned at *NE* 2.5.1105b21-23 (confidence, joy, longing) are also not included in the *Rhetoric*, probably because Aristotle did not believe they affected judgment either. Aristotle himself notes in the *Rhetoric* that he has discussed the *pathê* that relate to persuasive argument (2.11.1388b29-30).

<sup>4</sup> *Rhet.* 1.2 appears to contradict 1.1, in which Aristotle said that "slander, pity, anger and such emotions of the soul have nothing to do with the facts, but are merely an appeal to the juror" (1.1.1354a16-18: διαβολὴ γὰρ καὶ ἔλεος καὶ ὀργὴ καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάθη τῆς ψυχῆς οὐ περὶ τοῦ πράγματός ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν δικαστὴν), and again "one should not lead the juror into anger, envy or pity – it is like warping a carpenter's rule" (1.1.1354a24-26: οὐ γὰρ δεῖ τὸν δικαστὴν διαστρέφειν εἰς ὀργὴν προάγοντας ἢ φθόνον ἢ ἔλεον· ὅμοιον γὰρ κἂν εἴ τις ᾧ μέλλει χρῆσθαι κανόνι, τοῦτον ποιήσῃ στρεβλόν.). Dow 2007 is persuasive on how to resolve this contraction; see also Fortenbaugh 1979, 147, Grimaldi 1980, 9-11, Wisse 1989, 17-20, Cooper 1994, 194-6, and Barnes 1995, 262. Whatever the tensions, it is clear from the rest of the *Rhetoric* that Aristotle *did* see a role for *pathos* in persuading an audience, so his comments in 1.1 need not detain us unduly.

ἡδονή).<sup>5</sup> This definition sees emotions as cognitive:<sup>6</sup> we perceive something (consciously or subconsciously, through any of our senses); that perception makes us feel something; and this feeling alters our judgment, which in turn can affect our actions.<sup>7</sup> In *Rhet.* 2.2-11, Aristotle analyses fifteen named (and several unnamed) emotions, stating the general psychological condition under which each arises, and who might feel each emotion, for whom, and in what circumstances. Of these emotions, *phthonos* (envy) is uniquely identified as bad (*phaulon*),<sup>8</sup> and in this Aristotle notes a truism of Greek culture.<sup>9</sup>

While there has been much recent scholarship on the *Rhetoric*,<sup>10</sup> excepting Grimaldi's commentary on Book 2 this has tended until recently to treat Aristotle's account of the emotions as a whole (or at best successively, with minimal commentary on each individual emotion). One notable exception is David Konstan's 'Aristotle on Anger and the Emotions: the Strategies of Status'.<sup>11</sup> Aristotle believed anger to be appropriate in certain situations, and only morally problematic in excess. This is axiomatic to his approach to the emotions, and explains why for him they are an acceptable tool in oratory. However *phthonos* (envy), because of its moral badness, creates issues for Aristotle's theory not pertinent to other emotions.

In this chapter I shall explore these. I start by showing how Aristotle argues in the *Rhetoric* that bad (*phaulos*) character is a crucial criterion for distinguishing *phthonos* within the group of emotions relating to others' good or bad fortune. This distinction survives the intellectual shift to the "doctrine of the mean" in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but there *phthonos* becomes a paradigm of badness (*kakos*) in which an ethically uneducated person feels excessively the otherwise acceptable emotion *nemesis* (indignation). I explain how Aristotle's ethical training can remove badness from one's character, showing that such training stops one feeling *phthonos* but still allows other (good) emotions pertaining to others' fortunes. Finally, returning to the *Rhetoric*, I demonstrate how *phthonos*' badness creates problems for the use to which Aristotle would like to put emotions in rhetoric – namely, affecting an audience's

---

<sup>5</sup> Frede 1996 discusses whether each emotion involves both pain and pleasure (pleasure in anticipating an action to alleviate pain), or just one or the other. She argues Aristotle tends towards the former view in *Rhet.* Book 1, and the latter in Book 2.

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle was the first scholar to highlight the role of cognition in emotion, an approach that has gained much currency in the last thirty years, decreasing emphasis on physiological explanations – see Konstan 2006, 7-27 for a discussion of modern approaches to the emotions.

<sup>7</sup> While Greeks had long understood the role of emotion in decision making, it was Aristotle who first presented it as a normal phenomenon, and not inherently problematic; c.f. Grimaldi 1988, 12.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, Aristotle says that pity and indignation are both good (2.9.1386b11-12: καὶ ἄμφω τὰ πάθη ἡθους χρηστοῦ), as is emulation, while *phthonos* is bad (2.11.1388a35-36: διὸ καὶ ἐπιεικὲς ἔστιν ὁ ζῆλος καὶ ἐπιεικῶν, τὸ δὲ φθονεῖν φαῦλον καὶ φαύλων). *Phthonos* covers the English emotion envy (a "bottom-up" feeling, against someone who has something we lack), but can also translate possessive jealousy (a "top-down" feeling, against someone who lacks something we have), malice, ill-will or grudging (LSJ) – c.f. Walcot 1978, 22; Cairns 2003, 239. Smith, Kim and Parrott 1988 suggest that in English, "envy" is rooted in some form of social comparison, while "jealousy" is broader and often linked to romantic situations. They associate jealousy with such affective states as suspiciousness, rejection, hurt, and fear of loss, while envy is associated with such feelings as longing, inferiority, self-awareness, and a motivation to improve.

<sup>9</sup> *Phthonos* is in fact such a damning character trait that, while it appears occasionally in high-minded moralising, regularly in accusation, and above all in denial (οὐ φθονῶ), it is almost never claimed for oneself – Eur. *Bacch.* 820, spoken by the crazed Pentheus, is a rare exception.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Grimaldi 1980 and 1988; Furley and Nehamas 1994; Garver 1994; Rorty 1996; Gross and Walzer 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Konstan 2003. More recently, Konstan 2006 examines in significant detail the philological phenomenology of most of the emotions treated in *Rhet.*, comparing them with literary use.

judgement – and I explore alternative uses an Aristotelian orator might make of the *Rhetoric*'s chapter on *phthonos*.

## 2. The placement of *phthonos* in the *Rhetoric*

### 2.1 Pain and pleasure at the fortunes of others

Aristotle generally treats the emotions in named pairs – anger and calmness, friendship and hate, etc. However, he treats as a group emotions (some unnamed) relating to the fortunes of others. In *Rhet.* 2.8 he begins with *eleos* (pity), which he describes as pain at someone's undeserved bad fortune (1385b13-14: ἔστω δὴ ἔλεος λύπη τις ἐπὶ φαινομένῳ κακῷ ... τοῦ ἀναξίου τυγχάνειν).<sup>12</sup> In 2.9, Aristotle discusses the relationship between pity and a number of other emotions. He begins by stating that *to nemesan* (indignation) lies most opposed to pity in being pain at someone's undeserved good fortune, both emotions being felt by someone of good character (1386b8-12: ἀντίκειται δὲ τῷ ἐλεεῖν μάλιστα μὲν ὁ καλοῦσι νεμεσᾶν· τῷ γὰρ λυπεῖσθαι ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀναξίαις κακοπραγίαις ἀντικείμενόν ἐστι τρόπον τινὰ καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἧθους τὸ λυπεῖσθαι ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀναξίαις εὐπραγίαις. καὶ ἄμφω τὰ πάθη ἧθους χρηστοῦ). *Phthonos* (envy) appears to be similarly opposed to pity, and perhaps even the same thing as indignation, but in fact it is a pain excited by the perceived good fortune, not of someone undeserving, but of those like us (2.9.1386b16-20: δόχειε δ' ἂν καὶ ὁ φθόνος τῷ ἐλεεῖν τὸν αὐτὸν ἀντικεῖσθαι τρόπον, ὡς συνέγγυς ὢν καὶ ταῦτόν τῷ νεμεσᾶν, ἔστι δ' ἕτερον· λύπη μὲν γὰρ παραχώδης καὶ ὁ φθόνος ἐστὶν καὶ ἐπὶ εὐπραγία, ἀλλ' οὐ τοῦ ἀναξίου ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἴσου καὶ ὁμοίου).<sup>13</sup> He goes on to say that these feelings will be accompanied by their opposite emotions (2.9.1386b25-26: φανερόν δ' ὅτι ἀκολουθήσει καὶ τὰ ἐναντία πάθη τούτοις),<sup>14</sup> which will be pleasurable or at least not painful (2.9.1386b27: ἡσθήσεται ἢ ἄλυπος ἔσται).<sup>15</sup> Finally, in 2.11, Aristotle discusses *zēlos* (emulation). This is, like envy, a pain at someone else's good fortune (2.11.1388a32-33: εἰ γὰρ ἐστὶν ζῆλος λύπη τις ἐπὶ φαινομένη παρουσία ἀγαθῶν ἐντίμῳ), though not because they have something, but because we do not: emulation (as Aristotle parenthetically explains) is a good emotion felt by good people, whereas envy is a bad emotion felt by bad people; emulation makes us act to acquire goods ourselves, envy to deprive someone else of them (2.11.1388a34-38: οὐχ ὅτι ἄλλω ἀλλ' ὅτι οὐχὶ καὶ αὐτῷ ἐστὶν (διὸ καὶ ἐπιεικὲς ἐστὶν ὁ ζῆλος καὶ ἐπιεικῶν, τὸ δὲ

---

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle goes on to say that we must believe we could suffer the same bad fortune in order to pity, though this aspect of pity is irrelevant here.

<sup>13</sup> Konstan 2006, 111-28 disagrees with Aristotle's rigid separation of *to nemesan* and *phthonos*, arguing that *nemesis* had largely died out by the Classical period, with *phthonos*, rarely used in the Archaic period, replacing it to imply retributive indignation (among its other meanings); Aristotle resurrected *nemesis* (or *to nemesan* as he calls it in the *Rhet.*) for his didactic purposes.

<sup>14</sup> Aristotle clarifies "accompanied", saying that the type of person who feels indignation is the same type of person who feels its opposite in a contrary situation (not that each individual episode of indignation will be accompanied by its opposite).

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle often finds his desire to schematise restrictive. Here, for instance, if something is opposite to painful, it should be pleasurable, but in some situations might not be. For instance, any good person will be pained by a criminal escaping justice, but one's response to a convicted murderer being hanged will depend partly on one's attitude to the death penalty. Aristotle is aware of this difficulty, and gets round it by saying that if one does not feel pleasure, one at least will not feel pain. A modern ethicist might disagree, arguing that such a situation tests one's opposition to the death penalty.

φθονεῖν φαῦλον καὶ φαύλων· ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν παρασκευάζει διὰ τὸν ζῆλον τυγχάνειν τῶν ἀγαθῶν, ὁ δὲ τὸν πλησίον μὴ ἔχειν διὰ τὸν φθόνον)).<sup>16</sup> The opposite of emulation is *kataphronêsis* (disdain) (2.11.1388b22-3: ἐναντίον γὰρ ζήλω καταφρόνησις ἐστὶ, καὶ τῷ ζηλοῦν τὸ καταφρονεῖν).<sup>17</sup>

This collection of emotions, and their relationship to each other, is on first reading rather bewildering. Aaron Ben-Ze'ev has proposed a categorisation based on two factors: whether the subject is better or worse off than the object; and whether the situation is deserved.<sup>18</sup> Ben-Ze'ev maps his reading of Aristotle as in Fig. 1.

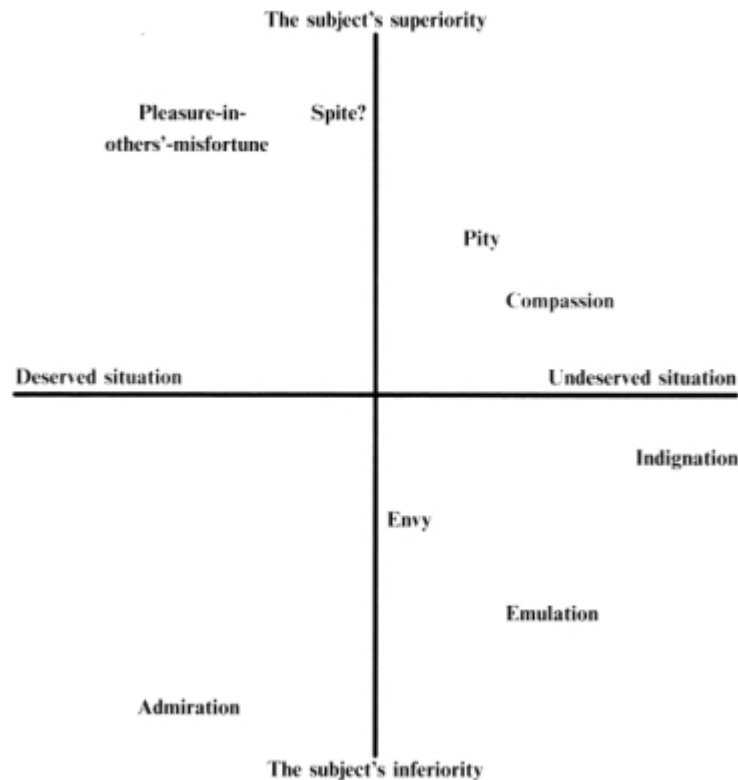


Fig. 1: Source: Ben-Ze'ev 2003, 104

As Ben-Ze'ev shows, pity is an emotion triggered by seeing someone *worse* off in an undeserved situation, while indignation, envy and emulation are all emotions

<sup>16</sup> I do not see why a bad person might not emulate another bad person (e.g. a mugger emulating a bank robber), but Aristotle does not seem to envisage this possibility. Perhaps his desire to schematise, to present emotions as either "good" or "bad", has led him to ignore such situations.

<sup>17</sup> *Kataphronêsis* is difficult to translate, as no English word does it full justice. Barnes 1984 uses "contempt", but this does not capture the self-satisfaction and desire to avoid similar misfortune implied by Aristotle. I believe "disdain" does so better, but these aspects should be borne in mind wherever "disdain" occurs below.

<sup>18</sup> Ben-Ze'ev 2003, 102-4. He notes that Aristotle likewise ignores other determinants of emotional response, such as culture (i.e. whether an emotion was acceptable and how intensely it was felt). I would add individual personality traits to the list: some people are more disposed to a particular emotional response than others – however we should note that Aristotle is interested in mass audiences, and while intensity of response might differ across an audience, one would expect some sort of normal distribution centred on the effect Aristotle predicts, with crowd mentality doing the rest.

triggered by seeing someone *better* off in an undeserved situation.<sup>19</sup> These emotions lie across an axis from, and so are opposed to (*antikeisthai*), pity. We cannot believe someone to be simultaneously better-off and worse-off than ourselves in relation to some desert, which is why Aristotle argues that if you envy or are indignant at someone, you cannot pity them.<sup>20</sup> Emotions in the top left quadrant are also directed at someone worse off than ourselves, like pity, but they differ in being felt in a *deserved* situation. They are also therefore opposed (*antikeisthai*) to pity, if in a different way to indignation, envy and emulation, and similarly cannot co-exist with it. Emotions in diagonally opposite quadrants are true contraries (*enantia*), opposed both in the subject-object relation and in the deservingness of the situation.<sup>21</sup> A painful emotion felt in an undeserved situation is indeed most directly contrary to a pleasurable emotion felt in a deserved situation, and again one cannot feel both sorts of emotion for the same person simultaneously. We can also note with Ben-Ze'ev that emotions on the left of the diagram are pleasurable, while those on the right are painful.<sup>22</sup>

Ben-Ze'ev's diagrammatic representation is very useful, but in a number of points it does not reflect Aristotle. First, it should not include either admiration or compassion: Ben-Ze'ev has been influenced by his own research as a philosopher into reading these without warrant in Aristotle's discussion.<sup>23</sup> Second, Ben-Ze'ev has ignored disdain, which clearly should be on the map somewhere, and probably (since it is *enantion* to emulation) in the top left quadrant. Third, Ben-Ze'ev has included spite, but *his* evidence for this emotion comes from the *Nicomachean Ethics* and, as I will show, these treatises cannot simply supplement each other. Finally, I believe he has misplaced some of his emotions, partly because his analysis does not take account of something crucial: character.

## 2.2 A three-way categorisation

To go back a stage, Aristotle discusses three emotions in the *Rhetoric* that are pains we (the subject) feel on perceiving that someone else (the object) has some good.

<sup>19</sup> Note it is the entire situation (including our lack of goods) that we perceive as undeserved, not necessarily the object's possession of goods – this allows emulation to appear in this quadrant, though (as I argue below) deservingness is still not that important to emulation.

<sup>20</sup> 2.9.1387a3-5; 2.9.1387b17-21; 2.10.1388a27-30. We could of course believe them better-off and worse-off for different deserts, e.g. I could envy someone's wealth but also pity them for having cancer. However at any instant one emotion or the other would predominate, depending on which thought was uppermost.

<sup>21</sup> Arist. *Categ.* 10 notes that there are four ways in which something can be opposed (*antikeisthai*): as relatives (*ta pros ti* – e.g. double and half); as contraries (*ta enantia* – e.g. good and bad; black and white); as privation and state (*sterêsis kai hexis* – e.g. blindness and sight); as affirmation and negation (*kataphasis kai apophasis* – e.g. he is sitting, and he is not sitting). *Meta.* 4.10.1018a25 notes that contraries are the most strongly opposed.

<sup>22</sup> Ben-Ze'ev 2003, 103.

<sup>23</sup> Ben-Ze'ev 2000 discusses a number of emotions felt at others' fortunes which do not occur in Aristotle, and his binary categorisation comes from this work and is imposed onto Aristotle. In general it works quite well. Ben-Ze'ev 2003, 113, however, believes Aristotle's discussion of kindness in 2.7 is the same as our compassion – Konstan 2006, 156-68 argues, in my view correctly, that the emotion Aristotle treats is not *kharis* (kindness), but *kharin ekhein* (gratitude) – but Aristotle does not relate this emotion to any of those in 2.8-11. Similarly, Aristotle's comments on admiration quoted by Ben-Ze'ev 2003, 118 are that we emulate those we admire (2.11.1388b20), which does not amount to another emotion, merely a descriptive verb applied to the emulator. Ben-Ze'ev goes on to argue "that admiration, rather than emulation, is the opposite of contempt" (118), and proceeds to put admiration in a different quadrant from emulation; none of this is justified by Aristotle's text.

These emotions are indignation, envy and emulation, and in a number of short passages Aristotle tells us how to distinguish them.<sup>24</sup> We feel indignation because the other person does not deserve the good (1386b10-11: τὸ λυπεῖσθαι ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀναξίαις εὐπραγίαις), but this is explicitly contrasted with envy, where it is not a concern (2.9.1386b18-20: λύπη μὲν γὰρ παραχώδης καὶ ὁ φθόνος ἐστὶν καὶ ἐπὶ εὐπραγία, ἀλλ’ οὐ τοῦ ἀναξίου ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἴσου καὶ ὁμοίου), nor is the other’s deservingness mentioned in connection with emulation. We feel emulation because we want the same good as someone else, though we have no desire to deprive them of theirs (2.11.1388a34-37: οὐχ ὅτι ἄλλω ἀλλ’ ὅτι οὐχὶ καὶ αὐτῷ ἔστιν ... ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν παρασκευάζει διὰ τὸν ζῆλον τυγχάνειν τῶν ἀγαθῶν), but in both indignation and envy our concern is with someone else owning the good, not with our own lack (2.9.1386b20-21: τὸ δὲ μὴ ὅτι αὐτῷ τι συμβήσεται ἕτερον, ἀλλὰ δι’ αὐτὸν τὸν πλησίον, ἅπανσι ὁμοίως δεῖ ὑπάρχειν; 2.11.1388a37-38: ὁ δὲ τὸν πλησίον μὴ ἔχειν διὰ τὸν φθόνον). Finally, Aristotle states it is bad to feel envy,<sup>25</sup> but good to feel emulation (2.11.1388a35-36: διὸ καὶ ἐπιεικὲς ἐστὶν ὁ ζῆλος καὶ ἐπιεικῶν, τὸ δὲ φθονεῖν φαῦλον καὶ φαύλων), and indignation is also associated with good character (2.9.1386b11-12: καὶ ἄμφω τὰ πάθη [*to eleein* and *to nemesan*] ἠθους χρηστοῦ; 2.9.1386b33-1387a1: καὶ ἔστιν τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἠθους ἅπαντα ταῦτα [*to nemesan* and others (see below)], τὰ δ’ ἐναντία τοῦ ἐναντίου ὁ γὰρ αὐτός ἐστιν ἐπιχειρέκακος καὶ φθονερός).<sup>26</sup> We can see, therefore, that Aristotle describes how these emotions differ from each other by reference to three, not two, factors: whether the subject’s character is good or bad; whether the object’s deservingness is important; and whether the good itself is specifically desired. Each factor shows one emotion differing markedly from the other two.<sup>27</sup>

Turning to pleasurable emotions at someone else’s bad fortune, Aristotle has provided one, disdain, and stated that it is the opposite of emulation (2.11.1388b22-23: ἐναντίον γὰρ ζήλω καταφρόνησις ἐστὶ, καὶ τῷ ζηλοῦν τὸ καταφρονεῖν): if we emulate those who have certain goods, we disdain those who do not; if we wish to copy someone in achieving something positive, we do not wish to copy them in achieving something negative (2.11.1388b23-26: ἀνάγκη δὲ τοὺς οὕτως ἔχοντας ὥστε ζηλῶσαι τινὰς ἢ ζηλοῦσθαι καταφρονητικούς εἶναι τούτων τε καὶ ἐπὶ

<sup>24</sup> He characterises each emotion according to who feels it, when, and against whom (2.1.1378a23-26); but this is not how he distinguishes one emotion from another.

<sup>25</sup> It is perhaps odd that Aristotle does not mention envy’s badness in the chapter he nominally devotes to that emotion (2.10). However, its badness is irrelevant to the “Who feels it? When? Against whom?” questions that are the main focus of each chapter; the point most logically belongs where he compares one emotion with another. He has already told us at 2.9.1386b33-1387a1 that the *phthoneros* (and the *epikhairekakos*) is of a contrary character to the *khrestos* who feels indignation (and various other emotions), so it would be unnecessary to repeat it until he compares *phthonos* with another emotion, which he does not do till 2.11.1388a34-38 (after which follow a number of situations inspiring *zēlos* that contrast directly with individual situations inspiring *phthonos* – see note 49 below). In the *NE* too, envy is one of only a handful of bad emotions, along with spite and shamelessness (*NE* 2.6.1107a9-11). These remarks are all consistent, so we should not take the absence of a statement of envy’s badness in 2.10 as problematic.

<sup>26</sup> Grimaldi 1988, 56 cites Vahlen, J., *Beiträge zu Aristoteles’ Poetik*. Berlin 1914, 266-8, on “the similarity, if not the identity, in the *Poetics* of ἐπιεικής, χρηστος (sic), σπουδαῖος to denote the morally good”. Bonitz 1870, 813b37-8 notes that *epieikēs* and *khrestos* are opposite to *phaulos*.

<sup>27</sup> We should note that Aristotle is not overly interested in mixed motives here, but presumably one can feel both indignation and emulation simultaneously, if one both wants what someone else has and thinks the other person shouldn’t have it. However, since one cannot be both morally good and morally bad, for Aristotle feeling envy precludes feeling either of the other two emotions as well (though see note 16 above).

τούτοις ὅσοι τὰ ἐναντία κακὰ ἔχουσι τῶν ἀγαθῶν τῶν ζηλωτῶν).<sup>28</sup> Just as in emulation we feel a pain at not having the same goods as someone else, so in disdain we feel pleasure that we are not suffering such evils ourselves, what Grimaldi calls “the pleasure which comes with self-satisfaction”.<sup>29</sup>

The opposites of indignation and envy are more complicated, not least because it is not immediately clear whether there are two feelings or one. Having compared indignation with envy (see above), Aristotle goes on to talk about the opposite emotions accompanying the ones to which he has just referred, and I quote the passage in full for clarity:

φανερὸν δ' ὅτι ἀκολουθήσει καὶ τὰ ἐναντία πάθη τούτοις· ὁ μὲν γὰρ λυπούμενος ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀναξίως κακοπραγοῦσιν ἠσθήσεται ἢ ἄλυπος ἔσται ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐναντίως κακοπραγοῦσιν, οἷον τοὺς πατραλοίας καὶ μαιφόνους, ὅταν τύχῃσι τιμωρίας, οὐδεὶς ἂν λυπηθεῖ χρηστός· δεῖ γὰρ χαίρειν ἐπὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις, ὡς δ' αὐτῶς καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς εὖ πράττουσι κατ' ἀξίαν· ἄμφω γὰρ δίκαια, καὶ ποιεῖ χαίρειν τὸν ἐπιεικῆ· ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἐλπίζειν ὑπάρξει ἂν ἄπερ τῷ ὁμοίῳ, καὶ αὐτῷ. καὶ ἔστιν τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἠθους ἅπαντα ταῦτα, τὰ δ' ἐναντία τοῦ ἐναντίου· ὁ γὰρ αὐτός ἐστιν ἐπιχαιρέκακος καὶ φθονερός· ἐφ' ᾧ γὰρ τις λυπεῖται γιγνομένῳ καὶ ὑπάρχοντι, ἀναγκαῖον τοῦτον ἐπὶ τῇ στερήσει καὶ τῇ φθορᾷ τῇ τούτου χαίρειν· (2.9.1386b25-1387a3).

And clearly the opposite emotions will accompany these ones (*toutois*). For whoever is pained by someone suffering bad fortune undeservedly, will be pleased or at least not pained by those who suffer bad fortune oppositely [i.e. deservedly]. For instance, no good person (*khrestos*) would be pained at parricides or murderers being punished; one must rejoice at such things, just as at people having good fortune deservedly. For both things are just, and make the good person (*epieike*) rejoice, since he must expect the same thing to happen to him as to someone like him. And all these emotions are felt by the same character (*ethous*); and contrary feelings are felt by the contrary character: for the same person is spiteful (*epikhairkakos*) and envious (*phthoneros*), as someone pained by something's existence or genesis will necessarily rejoice at its absence or destruction.

Where Aristotle says “And clearly the opposite emotions will accompany these ones”, he initially appears to be talking about indignation and envy, the emotions he has been contrasting in the immediately preceding paragraph. In fact, in the following sentence, Aristotle talks about being pained by undeserved *misfortune*, which is not indignation but pity. *Toutois* therefore refers to all the emotions so far discussed, pity as well as indignation and envy, and Aristotle deals with these three emotions one after another.<sup>30</sup>

First, Aristotle says that the man pained by undeserved misfortune (i.e. the person who feels pity), already identified with the person who feels indignation, will also feel joy at deserved *misfortune* (2.9.1386b26-28 and 30) and deserved *good* fortune

---

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle goes on to say that we can also feel *kataphronêsis* for those with good fortune, when it does not come with the right sort of goods (2.11.1388b26-28: διὸ πολλάκις καταφρονοῦσιν τῶν εὐτυχοῦντων, ὅταν ἄνευ τῶν ἐντίμων ἀγαθῶν ὑπάρχη αὐτοῖς ἡ τύχη) – equivalent, in the modern world, to our contemptuous feeling for those we know will squander their lottery winnings, or for the *nouveaux riches* who buy vulgar status symbols.

<sup>29</sup> Grimaldi 1988, 179.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* 155.

(2.9.1386b30-31).<sup>31</sup> We therefore have four emotions: pity; indignation; pleasure at deserved misfortune (a sort of satisfaction at someone getting their “come-uppance”); and pleasure at deserved good fortune (for which I shall use Ben-Ze’ev’s ‘happy for’).<sup>32</sup> All these emotions will be felt by people of the same – i.e. *epieikes* (2.9.1386b32) or *êthous khrêstou* (2.9.1386b11-12) – character, people who can diagnose others’ deserts correctly and feel appropriate pain or joy. Aristotle goes on to state that contrary feelings will be felt by the contrary – i.e. *phaulos* – character: that the *phthoneros* (the envious man) is also *epikhairekakos* (spiteful). Aristotle says later that this joy is roused similarly to envy (2.10.1388a24-27: δῆλον δὲ καὶ ἐφ’ οἷς χαίρουσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι καὶ ἐπὶ τίσι καὶ πῶς ἔχοντες ὡς γὰρ ἔχοντες λυποῦνται, οὕτως ἔχοντες ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐναντίοις ῥοθήσονται), which must mean: by the misfortunes of equals, rather than the deserving. This is appropriate, as someone morally bad will be unable to diagnose deserts correctly. He will feel envy and spite whether the object deserves it or not.<sup>33</sup>

Ben-Ze’ev’s diagram would therefore be more in tune with Aristotle’s thinking if it looked something like Fig. 2. There are three pleasurable emotions – pleasure at deserved misfortune, spite and disdain – respectively opposite to indignation, envy and emulation. Pity also has an opposite: ‘happy for’. Each pair of emotions is aroused in the same individual in directly contrary circumstances, which is why each emotion is linked to its direct opposite.

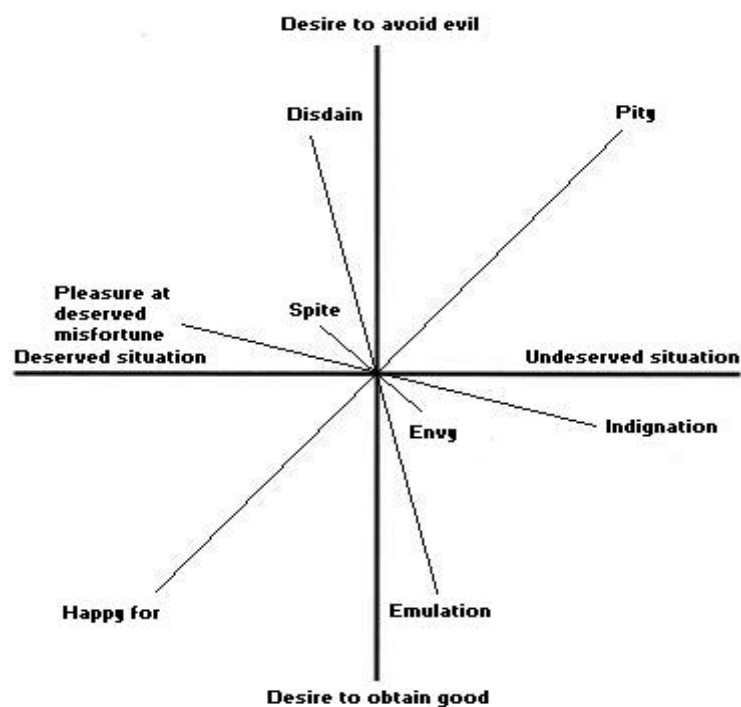


Fig. 2: Revised diagram of emotions relating to others’ fortunes

<sup>31</sup> Cf. 2.9.1387b16-18; see Cooper 1996, 242, who draws attention to this unnamed good contrary to indignation.

<sup>32</sup> Ben-Ze’ev 2003, 118.

<sup>33</sup> Aristotle has devoted almost the entirety of one chapter to each painful emotion, with no more than a few lines for each contrary pleasurable emotion (c.f. Ben-Ze’ev 2003, 103), a scanty treatment similarly applied to shamelessness (2.6.1385a14-15) and ingratitude (2.7.1385b7-10).



I would mention three qualifications to this diagram. First, I am following Ben-Ze'ev in excluding a character axis (coming out from / going into the page), though for clarity rather than oversight – it is this that makes envy and spite appear close to the centre, since (bad) character is the only significant factor in these emotions. Second, emotions will not always be felt to the same degree, so a response will be somewhere along a line rather than at a fixed point. Finally, the exact emotional response will vary between individuals and in different situations, so each emotion could perhaps best be represented by a teardrop centred on the origin, the line being an average response. While this representation is therefore not quite perfect, I believe its extra clarity makes up for these minor imperfections, so long as they are borne in mind. The diagram is perhaps overly schematising, but no more than Aristotle's thought in the *Rhetoric*.<sup>34</sup>

### 3. *The placement of phthonos in the Ethics*

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle appears to argue that there are only two types of character (*êthos*): good (*epieikes* or *khrestos*) and bad (*phaulon*). The former can feel a number of emotions related to others' fortunes (pity and 'happy for', indignation and 'pleasure at deserved misfortune', emulation and disdain); the latter only envy and spite, depending whether the fortune is bad or good. Good people cannot feel envy and spite at all; bad people can feel nothing else. If this were true, an orator's audience could consist only of people whose characters were either good or bad. People whose characters were somewhere in the middle, or who were sometimes good and sometimes bad, would not be envisaged. Anticipating slightly the *Ethics*, where Aristotle argues that to be morally virtuous requires an ethical education, this would imply that those without such moral virtue (i.e. virtually everyone) are bad.<sup>35</sup> Is Aristotle really arguing that the vast majority of his orator's audience will be morally bad individuals, capable of feeling only envy and spite? It seems inherently unlikely. If nothing else, why would Aristotle then devote 186 lines to good people (66 lines to pity, 82 to indignation and 38 to emulation) and only 44 to bad (envy)?<sup>36</sup> Indeed, if the vast majority of the audience could only feel envy and spite, why even bother teaching an orator about pity and indignation? Such an interpretation would place Aristotle at odds with oratorical practice, where appeals to an audience's pity and indignation (or righteous anger) are commonplace.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See notes 15, 16 and 27 above.

<sup>35</sup> We should note that there are two ways in which the terms good (*epieikês* or *khrestos*) and bad (*phaulos*) can be used: morally and socially. For an Archaic aristocrat such as Theognis, the two senses are identical, "the good" being synonymous with aristocracy and "the base" with commoners. In democratic Athens, with its strong demotic ideology, the two become separated, so Euripides can talk about an honest poor man (*phaulon khreston*), contrasted with a bad cleverer one (*kakon sophôteron*) – *Ion* 834-5. While Aristotle's aristocratic audience in his *Ethics* lectures might well think of themselves as both socially and morally good, for Aristotle himself these two senses are not identical; though it should be noted that to become morally good (through studying ethics), social "goodness" (i.e. wealth and leisure) would be a pre-requisite – Hutchinson 1995, 203; Nussbaum 1994, 55-6. It is possible Aristotle adopts a lower standard of "goodness" for the mass audience his orator (in the *Rhetoric*) will address, but there is no reason to suppose this is necessarily so.

<sup>36</sup> Lines as per the Oxford Classical Text.

<sup>37</sup> Carey 1996, 402-5 discusses righteous anger and pity, among other emotions roused; Dover 1974, 195-6 notes that orators often attempted to rouse a jury's pity, sometimes by bringing their children into court; Allen 2003, 80-6 argues that juries were roused to controlled righteous anger (*orgê*), in an amount appropriate to the crime, an emotion Aristotle separates off as *nemesan*; Webb 1997, 120-5

However, the Greek words *phaulos*, *epieikês* and *chrêstos* are much more flexible, and have a broader application both socially and morally (see note 35 above), than the English words “bad” and “good”, and in both interpretations (social and moral) moving from one to the other is possible. We should instead perhaps translate these words, in this context, as “characteristic of moral goodness” and “characteristic of moral badness”, which is suggestive of a continuum.<sup>38</sup> Aristotle does not believe most people are uniformly bad or uniformly good but somewhere in the middle.<sup>39</sup> Most people’s characters have been partially educated, partially encouraged towards moral goodness (I discuss how in section 4.2 below). Much of the time people will not feel emotions that are either *phaulon* or *epieikes*. There will be instances where they feel one or the other, but with no reliability, and it is the orator’s job to try to tug them towards one end of the spectrum or the other, to try to awake an indignant or envious emotional response by appealing to their moral education or lack of it.

Aristotle (unlike the Stoics) does not believe that emotions are inimical to reason, and should therefore be eliminated as far as possible.<sup>40</sup> In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he argues that a proper measure of emotion is the morally desirable response, and he calls that proper measure the mean (*mesotês*); he goes so far as to define virtue in relation to feeling appropriate emotion.<sup>41</sup> However, one might not feel the proper amount of emotion: one might feel an excess or a deficiency (both are opposed to the mean and to each other), and both these extremes are vices (*NE* 2.6.1107a2-3: μεσότης δὲ δύο κακιῶν, τῆς μὲν καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δὲ κατ’ ἔλλειψιν; 2.8.1108b11-12: τριῶν δὲ διαθέσεων οὐσῶν, δύο μὲν κακιῶν, τῆς μὲν καθ’ ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δὲ κατ’ ἔλλειψιν, μιᾶς δ’ ἀρετῆς τῆς μεσότητος, πᾶσαι πάσαις ἀντίκεινταιί πως). For example: feeling a lack of fear when proper (the mean) is bravery, a virtue; feeling a lack of fear even when one should feel fear (the excessive vice) is rashness; feeling fear too often (the defective vice) is cowardice (*NE* 3.7.1115b11-1116a9). Aristotle argues (*NE* 2.6.1106a25-1106b3) that the location of the mean will vary, not just from situation to situation, but from person to person. For instance, if eating two measures of food would be too little for all and ten too much, the right amount (the mean) will not necessarily be six measures: this would be too little for a champion athlete, but too much for a beginner. Thus six measures might be an excess, a deficiency, or a mean. Means are therefore relative to us, not to the object. It is for this reason that a proper emotional response might be part-way along a line in Fig. 2, rather than at the line’s end.

In the *Eudemian Ethics*, *nemesis* is a mean, and covers four emotions: pain at undeserved good or bad fortune (indignation and pity), and pleasure at deserved good or bad fortune (‘happy for’ and ‘pleasure at deserved misfortune’).<sup>42</sup> The excessive vice is *phthonos*, which is described as a pain felt at deserved good fortune (envy); the defective vice is unnamed, but is felt by the *epikhairekakos*, and is a joy at undeserved

---

shows that Roman oratory likewise attempted to arouse *miser cordia* (pity) and *indignatio* (indignation).

<sup>38</sup> As these formulations are clumsy in English, I shall continue using the designations “bad” and “good”, but the broader interpretation should be borne in mind.

<sup>39</sup> Broadie 1991, 102.

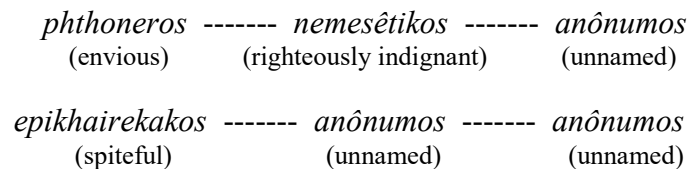
<sup>40</sup> Nussbaum 1994, 9-10, 41-2; Gill 2003, 29; Knuuttila 2004, 6.

<sup>41</sup> As Nussbaum 1996, 316-7 points out, this means that even a correct action is not virtuous unless it has been motivated by morally appropriate emotions.

<sup>42</sup> While this definition is idiosyncratic (to say the least), these are the same four emotions that Aristotle treats together at *Rhet.* 2.9.1386b25-33 where he argues they are all the product of the same good character, so there is at least some logic here. One of the four emotions (pain at undeserved good fortune) is the same as *to nemesan* in the *Rhet.* (and *nemesis* in the *NE*).

misfortune (spite) (*EE* 3.7.1233b19-25: ὁ μὲν φθόνος τὸ λυπεῖσθαι ἐπὶ τοῖς κατ' ἀξίαν εὖ πράττουσιν ἐστίν, τὸ δὲ τοῦ ἐπιχαιρεκάκου πάθος ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀνώνημον, ἀλλ' ὁ ἔχων δῆλος, ἐπὶ τὸ χαίρειν ταῖς παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν κακοπραγίαις. μέσος δὲ τούτων ὁ νεμεσητικός, καὶ ὁ ἐκάλουν οἱ ἀρχαῖοι τὴν νέμεσιν, τὸ λυπεῖσθαι μὲν ἐπὶ ταῖς παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν κακοπραγίαις καὶ εὐπραγίαις, χαίρειν δ' ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀξίαις).

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *nemesis* is again the mean, and thus a morally acceptable emotion, providing it is felt only when the object's good fortune is undeserved (righteous indignation, the *to nemesan* of the *Rhetoric*; the other three good emotions are dropped from the definition). *Phthonos* is once again identified with an excess of indignation, feeling pain even when good fortune is deserved (envy); and this time the defective vice, being so far short of pain that one feels joy (presumably at undeserved bad fortune), is named as *epikhairekakia* (spite) (*NE* 2.7.1108b1-5: νέμεσις δὲ μεσότης φθόνου καὶ ἐπιχαιρεκακίας, εἰσὶ δὲ περὶ λύπην καὶ ἡδονὴν τὰς ἐπὶ τοῖς συμβαίνουσι τοῖς πέλας γινομένας· ὁ μὲν γὰρ νεμεσητικός λυπεῖται ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀναξίως εὖ πράττουσιν, ὁ δὲ φθονερός ὑπερβάλλων τοῦτον ἐπὶ πᾶσι λυπεῖται, ὁ δ' ἐπιχαιρέκακος τοσοῦτον ἐλλείπει τοῦ λυπεῖσθαι ὥστε καὶ χαίρειν).<sup>43</sup> In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle seems to have replaced four emotions identified in the *Rhetoric* with only three, having lost 'pleasure at deserved misfortune', the second virtuous emotion. However, let us look closer. In suggesting that, in moving from indignation to envy, one moves from virtue to vice and ceases to concern oneself with desert, Aristotle is paralleling what he said in the *Rhetoric*, albeit in the language of his newly developed doctrine of the mean.<sup>44</sup> It is by no means so obvious why spite should be the defective vice: one would expect the defect to be an inability to be indignant even when appropriate.<sup>45</sup> Michael Mills notes that the triad envy – indignation – spite is the only one in the *Ethics* in which there are two excesses, and he has suggested that really there ought to be two triads, corresponding respectively to pain at good fortune and joy at bad fortune, as in Fig. 3.



**Fig. 3: Source: Mills 1985, 10**

The virtuous mean in each triad is the ability to diagnose desert correctly and feel an appropriate amount of pain or pleasure at it, while the excess in each triad is the lack of this ability coupled with feeling pain or pleasure indiscriminately. Ignoring the deficient extremes, which are merely a lack of feeling, we can see in Fig. 4 that this formulation gives four emotions that are the envy, indignation, spite, and 'pleasure at deserved misfortune' (PaDM) of the *Rhetoric*:

<sup>43</sup> Envy and spite are not equivalent to other emotions treated in the ethical works, as they are not means that can be morally good in some measure, but are always vicious (*NE* 2.6.1107a9-12) – Mills 1985, 10; Broadie 1991, 102; Garver 2000, 66.

<sup>44</sup> I believe the development of this doctrine (and hence the composition of the ethical works) must postdate the *Rhetoric*, as Aristotle is very unlikely to have avoided all mention of it in the *Rhetoric* if that were a later work. See Irwin (1996) 161-2 for a different view.

<sup>45</sup> Grimaldi 1988, 152.

envy ----- indignation ----- apathy  
 spite ----- PaDM ----- apathy

**Fig. 4: The “corrected” triads**

As Mills points out, Aristotle has tried to show how his “doctrine of the mean” covers rivalrous emotions but, perhaps led astray by so many unnamed emotions, he has mistakenly included one triad too few.<sup>46</sup>

In the *Rhetoric* envy and spite were depicted as emotions that afflict bad people in certain situations. In the *Ethics* they have become paradigms of badness: uncontrolled, excessive feelings by the ethically uneducated of emotions that an ethically aware person would feel more judiciously, and which in that judiciousness would be perfectly acceptable.

#### 4. *Who does, and does not, feel phthonos?*

##### 4.1 *Who feels envy, and when?*

Aristotle says that we feel envy for “those like ourselves” (2.10.1387b23-4: ἐστὶν ὁ φθόνος λύπη τις ἐπὶ εὐπραγία φαινομένη τῶν εἰρημένων ἀγαθῶν περὶ τοὺς ὁμοίους).<sup>47</sup> People will feel envy towards those who are or appear similar to them in birth, relationship, age, disposition, distinction, or wealth (2.10.1387b25-7: φθονήσουσι μὲν γὰρ οἱ τοιοῦτοι οἷς εἰσὶ τινες ὅμοιοι ἢ φαίνονται ὁμοίους δὲ λέγω κατὰ γένος, κατὰ συγγένειαν, καθ’ ἡλικίας, κατὰ ἔξεις, κατὰ δόξαν, κατὰ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα), and near them in time, place, age and reputation (2.10.1388a6: τοῖς γὰρ ἐγγύς καὶ χρόνῳ καὶ τόπῳ καὶ ἡλικίᾳ καὶ δόξῃ φθονοῦσιν). Additionally people feel envy for kin (e.g. sibling rivalry) and anyone else they are in rivalry with, which will include people who are contemporaries, who live near them, who are not too far above or below them, and who compete for the same things both in sport and in love – and presumably occupation: he quotes the famous line from Hesiod that “potter envies potter” (2.10.1388a7-17).<sup>48</sup>

People will feel envy when they fall a little short of having all the good things in life (2.10.1387b26). People who do great deeds and have good fortune can also feel *phthonos* (possessive jealousy – see note 8 above), as they think others will try to take something away from them – this includes those honoured for a distinction, especially wisdom or happiness (29-30). Ambitious people are more envious than unambitious ones (though this implies the unambitious can be envious too), as are those with a reputation for wisdom, who are ambitious as regards wisdom (possessive jealousy again). In general, anyone wishing to be distinguished in anything can be envious (or

<sup>46</sup> Mills 1985, 10; see also Urmson 1980, 166-7; Konstan 2006, 115.

<sup>47</sup> Referred to as τοῦ ἴσου καὶ ὁμοίου (“equal and similar”) at 2.9.1386b19-20. The εἰρημένων ἀγαθῶν (“goods already spoken about”) are given at 1.5.1360b18-22: good birth, plenty of friends, good friends, wealth, good children, plenty of children, a happy old age, bodily excellences (such as health, beauty, strength, height, athletic prowess), fame, honour, good luck, and virtue. Aristotle says all these things are the product of good fortune, and as such incite envy (1.5.1362a5-6: ὅλως δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐστὶν ἀπὸ τύχης ἐφ’ οἷς ἐστὶν ὁ φθόνος).

<sup>48</sup> Hes. *W&D* 25: καὶ κεραμεὺς κεραμεῖ κοτέει καὶ τέκτωνι τέκτων, καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῶ φθονεῖ καὶ ἀοιδὸς ἀοιδῶ. (“Potter grudges potter and carpenter, carpenter; beggar envies beggar and bard, bard.”)

jealous) in regard to that thing (31-33). The small-minded (*mikropsykhoi*) are also envious, because everything seems great to them (34). People envy those whose possessions or successes they feel to be a reproach to them (1388a18-21). Those who have lost something, or who never had it, envy those that do have it, as do those who have not got it yet; this includes youth, so older men envy younger, and money, so those who have spent much envy those who have spent little (1388a21-24).<sup>49</sup>

In reading the above, it can seem as if almost anyone can envy nearly anyone else for just about anything at all. However, some situations exclude envy, even in the *Rhetoric*. People who are not equal or similar in any of the ways listed will not feel envy for each other. Even being dissimilar in only one respect can preclude envy: e.g. people who live a century apart, or at opposite ends of the Mediterranean, or those far above or below us (2.10.1388a9-12). But for a more detailed analysis of those who will not feel envy, one must look to the *Ethics*, and in particular Aristotle's discussion of virtue and ethical education.

#### 4.2 *The elimination of a phaulotês*

We have already seen that morally good people cannot feel envy, but how does one become morally good? Aristotle believes the human soul is divided into an alogical half and a logical half (*NE* 1.13.1102a26-32). The alogical half is the passionate, desiderative part of the soul, the seat of the emotions and bodily desires. However, since emotions are cognitive (i.e. they involve judgment), it is possible for them to be controlled by the logical half of the soul: the alogical half of the soul is (potentially) subordinate to the logical half.<sup>50</sup> Ethics involves training both halves of the soul. As Sarah Broadie notes: "human virtue, when achieved, is precisely an excellence of reason and feeling in partnership."<sup>51</sup> Training of the logical half of the soul aims at practical wisdom (*phronêsis*) (*NE* 6.5.1140b25-29). Training of the alogical half aims at moral excellence (*arête êthikê*), which is brought about by the character (*êthos*) developing the habit (*ethos*) of acting in a certain way (*NE* 2.1.1103a14-17).<sup>52</sup> One cannot truly have either moral excellence or practical wisdom without both being present (*NE* 6.13.1144b30-32).

In order to eliminate envy and spite, one must habituate the alogical half of the soul, which feels emotions based on its training, only to feel pain or pleasure at someone's perceived good or bad fortune when it ought to be felt. This habituation is brought about by many influences: e.g. parental upbringing, the influence of society's norms and laws, the scrutiny of peers. By habituation one builds up a kind of mental database of situations in which one has been taught that indignation is a proper response, or that someone has "got their comeuppance" deservedly. When someone so trained perceives an instance of good or bad fortune, his cognitive response will recognise this fortune and say "deserved" or "not deserved" correctly, causing him to feel (or not) pain or pleasure accordingly. This ability is moral excellence, and is the

---

<sup>49</sup> There are some instructive contrasts with *zêlos*. While the small-minded (*mikropsykhoi*) and the old are prone to *phthonos* (2.10.1387b, 2.10.1388a21), the high-minded (*megalopsykhoi*) and the young will feel emulation (2.11.1388a38-b3). Both *phthonos* (2.10.1387b26) and *zêlos* (2.11.1388b3-7) can be felt for those who fall short of having all the goods in note 47 above; however the one must be felt by bad people, and the other by good.

<sup>50</sup> Fortenbaugh 2002, 23-7.

<sup>51</sup> Broadie 1991, 64.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.* 72; see also Kosman 1980. Aristotle notes the close similarity in the Greek words (*NE* 2.1.1103a17-18); LSJ confirms *êthos* is a lengthened form of *ethos*.

training that a well brought up child might have, or an adult man before starting on a course of ethics.<sup>53</sup>

William Fortenbaugh believes that perfecting the alogical part of the soul is sufficient: since deliberation is not necessary for every individual virtuous response (sometimes there isn't sufficient time), practical wisdom is not necessary for a virtuous response to be guaranteed.<sup>54</sup> Richard Sorabji rightly disagrees (see also *NE* 6.13.1144b30-32), but in my view goes too far in the other direction, arguing that deliberation (by the logical half of the soul) is required to find the mean in every instance of ethical emotional response.<sup>55</sup> Fortenbaugh focuses too much on habituation, Sorabji too much on deliberation;<sup>56</sup> the truth is somewhere between the two. Aristotle makes plain that excellence is built through habituation: “we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts” (*NE* 2.1.1103b1-2: οὕτω δὴ καὶ τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντες δίκαιοι γινόμεθα, τὰ δὲ σώφρονα σώφρονες, τὰ δ' ἀνδρεῖα ἀνδρεῖοι).<sup>57</sup> A good upbringing should habituate one to be properly indignant but avoid envy, to feel proper pleasure at others' misfortunes but avoid spite. However, while someone with a good upbringing might hit on the morally correct response repeatedly, there is no guarantee that they will hit on it invariably, since for that to happen they must have true knowledge of where the mean lies, and that requires practical wisdom and deliberation.

The man who has perfected both his moral excellence and his practical wisdom is *megalopsykhos* – the virtue is *megalopsykhia*<sup>58</sup> – and such a man will not be able to feel envy. Christopher Gill has argued that the *megalopsykhos* should not feel any of the rivalrous emotions covered by chapters 2.9-11, since he has a goodly measure of all appropriate goods and knows what he does not have is unimportant.<sup>59</sup> However, while this might preclude emulation and disdain, and his virtue stops him feeling envy and spite, I see no reason why the *megalopsykhos* might not feel indignation or ‘pleasure at deserved misfortune’. Indeed, if he were unable to feel these, he would be practising the defective vice.

One other context Gill identifies as precluding rivalrous emotions is (perfect) friendship: a friend will only compete with his friend in virtue, and will willingly lose all his possessions, and his life itself if need be, for his friend's sake.<sup>60</sup> However, Gill does not show why a friend will not emulate his friend, and indeed Aristotle states that we will wish someone to be our friend if we want them to emulate but not envy us (2.4.1381b21-23: ὑφ' ὧν ζηλοῦσθαι βούλονται καὶ μὴ φθονεῖσθαι, τούτους ἢ φιλοῦσιν ἢ βούλονται φίλοι εἶναι).

---

<sup>53</sup> Smith 1996, 60 notes that, for Aristotle, education in habit must come before education in reason.

<sup>54</sup> Fortenbaugh 2002, 73-5.

<sup>55</sup> Sorabji 1980, 211.

<sup>56</sup> Smith 1996 argues that Fortenbaugh takes a Humean approach, pitting himself against the “intellectualists”, each side stressing either character or intellect has priority in “determining good moral ends” (58).

<sup>57</sup> Trans. Barnes 1984, 1743.

<sup>58</sup> *Megalopsykhos* is normally translated “magnanimous” (Barnes 1984 uses “properly proud”), while *megalopsykhia* is “magnanimity”. In note 49 above I translated it “high-minded”, to highlight the comparison with “small-minded” (*mikropsykhos*).

<sup>59</sup> Gill 2003, 36-7.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid*; this might suggest a “zero sum” element to rivalry, which I do not believe Aristotle intends.

## 5. Envy and the Aristotelian orator

### 5.1 Can an orator rouse his audience's envy?

Those with sufficient virtue never to feel envy (*megalopsykhoi* and perfect friends) are clearly few and far between, and accordingly the vast majority of an orator's listeners will be susceptible to envy. However, the morally bad nature of *phthonos* raises problems that do not apply to other emotions.

Emotion arousal is useful as an oratorical tool because emotions, by application of pain or pleasure through rational argument, affect judgment. In an insightful article, Stephen Leighton has discussed exactly how judgment can be affected by emotion:<sup>61</sup> it will either be as the consequence of emotion, or as a constituent of emotion. Judgement alteration as a *consequence* of emotion can come about in four ways. The first is by allowing our reason to be overruled (e.g. if we pity someone, we let them off for a crime we know they have committed). Secondly, if we can be brought to favour or disfavour someone, we will be better or worse disposed towards giving them the benefit of the doubt when the situation is ambiguous. Thirdly, through perception: for instance, our strong support for one of two tennis players will affect whether we judge a ball she hit to be in or out. The final way is through strong emotion causing us to give more attention to an issue. Alteration of judgment as a *constituent* of emotion is more complex. It is not that one emotion rules out another, rather that the “emotions are complexes involving judgments, each complex excluding certain other emotion complexes, their judgments, and certain other judgments as well.”<sup>62</sup> Aristotle gives one, and only one, effect of envy: he says that if an orator can put the jury into an envious state of mind, then his opponent will not be able to win pity from them (see note 20 above). In Leighton's words: “It is not that envy brings about a change of judgments such that one does not show or feel pity; rather, to be moved to envy involves being moved to a particular set of judgments that excludes those of pity.”<sup>63</sup>

But can an Aristotelian orator make use of this? Another of the three modes of persuasion is character (*êthos*): an orator must make his argument in a way that makes him appear worthy of trust, and it is good men that we trust; a good man's character is demonstrated by what he says, and it is pretty much the most effective means of persuasion available to him (1.2.1356a4-13: διὰ μὲν οὖν τοῦ ἠθους, ὅταν οὕτω λεχθῆ ὁ λόγος ὥστε ἀξιόπιστον ποιῆσαι τὸν λέγοντα· τοῖς γὰρ ἐπεικέσει πιστεύομεν μᾶλλον καὶ θᾶπτον.... δεῖ δὲ καὶ τοῦτο συμβαίνειν διὰ τοῦ λόγου... σχεδὸν ὡς εἰπεῖν κυριωτάτην ἔχει πίστιν τὸ ἠθος). However, since envy is a bad (*phaulon*) emotion, if an orator presents himself as envious of his opponent in trying to rouse similar envy in his audience, he will show his own character to be base. If his character is “pretty much the most effective means of persuasion” available to him, using envy is not worth that sacrifice. Second, he cannot present himself as *not* envious, but still explicitly attempt to rouse envy in his audience: they will either believe he shares that envy, or that he does not and is merely spinning sophisms. Worse, by appearing to impute bad character to his audience, he may alienate them. A third, and more complex, possibility is that the orator might seek to rouse envy in the audience while seeming not to. However, I do not believe this is possible either. First, the audience might spot it, which leads to the problems already mentioned. A

<sup>61</sup> The remainder of the paragraph summarises Leighton 1996, 206-17.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.* 210.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*

more serious objection is that, although rhetoric (like dialectic) is a skill that can be used to argue anything, an Aristotelian student must pursue a life of moral excellence and practical wisdom, and politics is an extension of this ethical life;<sup>64</sup> accordingly an Aristotelian orator must not use unethical arguments, even if they might be rhetorically effective.<sup>65</sup> A fourth explanation also fails: Aristotle cannot be instructing his orator how to deal with envy if it is used against him,<sup>66</sup> because he does not tell him how to counter envy, only that envy can be used to counter pity (2.10.1388a27-30).<sup>67</sup> There are therefore problems with any use the orator might wish to make of envy within the purposes of chapter 2.1 – i.e. arousing it in an audience to affect their judgement.

So what use can an Aristotelian orator make of the chapter on envy? Well, first, this chapter has didactic purpose: if there were no discussion of what envy is and how it differs from indignation and emulation, how could an Aristotelian orator avoid straying from these acceptable emotions to envy? This, I believe, is why Aristotle devotes so much space to telling his orator exactly how one distinguishes these emotions from each other, and why he makes such a point of saying how acceptable and worthy indignation and emulation are, when envy is so immoral. If envy did not exist, Aristotle would have had to invent it.

## 5.2 *Envy in an orator's opponent*

However, there is something more an Aristotelian student might extract from the *Rhetoric*. There is a second type of rhetorical use for the emotions, more acceptable for envy than manipulating an audience, and this is to explain one's opponent's motivation (1.10.1369a15-19).<sup>68</sup> Prosecutors must consider all the motives that can affect defendants, and how many apply to their opponent, while defendants must consider how many do not apply to them (1.10.1368b30-32).

Aristotle argues (1.10.1368b33-1369a6) that all of a person's actions are caused either by the person himself (*di' autous*), or something external to him. The latter comprises things done out of chance or necessity (which itself subdivides into compulsion and nature); the former out of habit or desire (*orexin*). Desire subdivides into rational desire, or will (*boulêsis*), and irrational desire, which further subdivides into appetite (*epithymia*) and anger (*orgê*).<sup>69</sup> In fitting the emotions into these, it would seem that at least all pleasurable emotions are subsumed within appetite:

---

<sup>64</sup> Schofield 2006.

<sup>65</sup> Hesk 2000, 219 says Aristotle believes that rhetoric without moral purpose is merely sophistry. Garver 1994, 8 argues that for Aristotle, rhetoric is an "integration of thought and character in an art of practical reason", and Fortenbaugh 1991, 97-8 notes that the alliance of excellences of thought and of character, assimilated respectively to the rational and irrational halves of the soul, is what makes someone virtuous (*NE* 1.13.1103a3-10; 2.1.1103a14-15; 6.1.1138b35-1139a1). It should be noted that this argument does not rely on support from within the *Rhetoric*. The balance of scholarly opinion is that the *Rhetoric* itself does contain injunctions to behave ethically: Irwin 1996 argues that 1.1.1355a29ff should be read in this way; Grimaldi 1972, 19-21 agrees; see also Halliwell 1994; however Engberg-Pedersen 1996 for an alternative view.

<sup>66</sup> Irwin 1996, 144: Aristotle (1355a29ff) believes an orator needs to be able to recognise illegitimate arguments when their opponent uses them against him, even if he should not use them himself.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. 2.9.1387a3-5 and 2.9.1387b17-21, where he makes a similar comment about indignation.

<sup>68</sup> It should be noted that Aristotle does not say *phthonos* should be used in this way (let alone *only* in this way). Striker 1996, 288 notes that the idea of emotions being motivational is Platonic.

<sup>69</sup> Leighton 1996, 222-3 notes that in *DA* 414b2, *Motu* 700b22, and *EE* 1223a25-27, this subdivision of desire is *thymos*, or spirit, a name less likely, in the context of the subsequent discussion, to cause confusion with *orgê* as the emotion discussed in *Rhet.* 2.2.



appetite is a desire for pleasure (1.11.1370a18: ἡ γὰρ ἐπιθυμία τοῦ ἡδέος ἐστὶν ὄρεξις). For painful emotions, it is helpful if we recall that anger (*orgê*) is a pain accompanied by a desire for revenge, and that revenge brings pleasure (2.2.1378a30-1878b2). In fact in general, painful emotions are accompanied by a desire to escape from pain, and that desire will be pleasant (1.10.1369b26-28): hatred is attended by a desire to harm,<sup>70</sup> pity by a desire to aid, envy by a desire to bring low, emulation by a desire to succeed. Thus pleasant feelings are aroused by a desire to act in certain ways, and painful feelings by a desire to act in other ways.<sup>71</sup>

This then is the second use an Aristotelian orator can make of the emotions, and, if the first use is ruled out of court, the only use he can make of envy: he can show that his opponent is motivated by it. Either the defendant committed whatever action he committed out of envy in the past, or the prosecutor is prosecuting the defendant out of envy now. We have seen that Aristotle compels the speaker and the audience to remain untainted by the badness of *phthonos*. If the opponent can be shown to be motivated by it, he will therefore be the most evil person in the court. The speaker should win his case by default.

## 6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that *phthonos* is not just one of many emotions similarly treated by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*, but in fact stands apart from the others because of its badness. Building on work by Ben-Ze'ev, I have proposed a *schema* for understanding how Aristotle systematises the family of emotions relating to the fortunes of others. In that *schema*, it is explicitly badness that distinguishes *phthonos* from *zêlos*, and a consequence of the badness (being unable to diagnose people's just deserts) that distinguishes *phthonos* from *to nemesan*. In the *Ethics*, Aristotle continues to distinguish bad *phthonos* from good *nemesis* (as he calls it there), but now *phthonos* is not a different emotion to *nemesis*, but the same emotion when felt in excess by the ethically uneducated. Following a brief look at the situations that arouse *phthonos*, I have shown how, through habituating the alogical half of the soul to feel only appropriate indignation and through teaching the logical half of the soul practical wisdom as to justified deserts, one might aspire to be *megalopsykhos*, when one is no longer susceptible to feeling *phthonos* (i.e. excessive *nemesis*). Returning to the *Rhetoric*, I have shown how the badness of *phthonos* renders it unsuitable in every way for direct use in persuading an audience, Aristotle's stated aim – though it can be used to explain an opponent's motivation. An orator can also use the chapter to distinguish *phthonos* clearly from *nemesis* and *zêlos*, thus determining to what extent he can use the latter two emotions to persuade an audience, without damaging his own character and so forfeiting his case.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Strictly, Aristotle says that hatred, unlike anger, is not painful (2.4.1382a12-13); see Cooper 1996, 247-9 and Leighton 1996, 232-3, n.14 for discussion of this point.

<sup>71</sup> Viano 2003 also locates pleasures within the *epithymia* and anger within the *thymos*; she argues that the *thymos* is probably also the seat of the competitive emotions. Elster 1999, 60-1 has some interesting comments on emotions and action tendencies in Aristotle.

<sup>72</sup> I should like to thank Ineke Sluiter and Ralph Rosen for the opportunity to participate in the Penn-Leiden conference, and in this volume. I should also like to thank Malcolm Schofield, Bob Sharples, Chris Carey, Jamie Dow, and the anonymous readers for this volume, for their detailed comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

## Bibliography

- Allen, D. S., 'Angry Bees, Wasps, and Jurors: the Symbolic Politics of  $\sigma\sigma\sigma\sigma$  in Athens', in S. Braund and G. W. Most (eds.), *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen*. Cambridge 2003, 76-98.
- Barnes, J. (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle: the Revised Oxford Translation* (2 Vols). Princeton 1984.
- Barnes, J. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*. Cambridge 1995.
- Ben-Ze'ev, A., *The Subtlety of Emotions*. Cambridge, MA and London 2000.
- Ben-Ze'ev, A., 'Aristotle on Emotions towards the Fortune of Others', in D. Konstan and N. K. Rutter (eds.), *Envy, Spite and Jealousy: the Rivalrous Emotions in Ancient Greece*. Edinburgh 2003, 99-121.
- Bonitz, H., *Index Aristotelicus*. Berlin 1870.
- Broadie, S., *Ethics with Aristotle*. New York and Oxford 1991.
- Cairns, D. L., 'The Politics of Envy: Envy and Equality in Ancient Greece' in D. Konstan and N. K. Rutter (eds.), *Envy, Spite and Jealousy: the Rivalrous Emotions in Ancient Greece*. Edinburgh 2003, 235-52.
- Carey, C., 'Rhetorical Means of Persuasion', in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1996, 399-415.
- Cooper, J. M., 'Ethical-Political Theory in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*', in D. J. Furley and A. Nehamas (eds.), *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*. Princeton 1994, 193-210.
- Cooper, J. M., 'An Aristotelian Theory of the Emotions', in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1996, 238-57.
- Dover, K. J., *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle*. Indianapolis and Cambridge 1974.
- Dow, J., 'A Supposed Contradiction about Emotion-Arousal in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*', *Phronesis* 52 (2007), 382-402.
- Elster, J., *Alchemies of the Mind: Rationality and the Emotions*. Cambridge 1999.
- Engberg-Pedersen, T., 'Is there an Ethical Dimension to Aristotelian Rhetoric?', in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1996, 116-41.
- Fortenbaugh, W. W., 'Aristotle's *Rhetoric* on Emotions', in J. Barnes, M. Schofield and R. Sorabji (eds.), *Articles on Aristotle. 4, Psychology and Aesthetics*. London 1979, 133-53.
- Fortenbaugh, W. W., 'Aristotle's Distinction between Moral Virtue and Practical Wisdom', in J. P. Anton and A. Preus (eds.), *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy IV: Aristotle's Ethics*. Albany 1991, 97-106.
- Fortenbaugh, W. W., *Aristotle on Emotion*. London 2002, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., orig. 1975.
- Frede, D., 'Mixed Feelings in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*', in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1996, 258-85.
- Furley, D. J. and Nehamas, A. (eds.), *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*. Princeton 1994.
- Garver, E., *Aristotle's Rhetoric: an Art of Character*. Chicago and London 1994.
- Garver, E., 'The Contemporary Irrelevance of Aristotle's Practical Reason', in A. G. Gross and A. E. Walzer (eds.), *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Carbondale and Edwardsville 2000, 57-73.
- Gill, C., 'Is Rivalry a Virtue or a Vice?', in D. Konstan and N. K. Rutter (eds.), *Envy, Spite and Jealousy: the Rivalrous Emotions in Ancient Greece*. Edinburgh 2003, 29-51.

- Grimaldi, W. M. A., 'Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle's Rhetoric', *Hermes* 25 (1972).
- Grimaldi, W. M. A., *Aristotle, Rhetoric I: a Commentary*. New York 1980.
- Grimaldi, W. M. A., *Aristotle, Rhetoric II: a Commentary*. New York 1988.
- Gross, A. G. and Walzer, A. E. (eds.), *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Carbondale and Edwardsville 2000.
- Halliwell, S., 'Popular Morality, Philosophical Ethics, and the *Rhetoric*', in D. J. Furley and A. Nehamas (eds.), *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*. Princeton 1994, 211-30.
- Hesk, J., *Deception and Democracy in Classical Athens*. Cambridge 2000.
- Hutchinson, D. S., 'Ethics', in J. Barnes (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*. Cambridge 1995, 195-232.
- Irwin, T. H., 'Ethics in the *Rhetoric* and in the *Ethics*', in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1996, 142-74.
- Knuuttila, S., *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*. Oxford 2004.
- Konstan, D., 'Aristotle on Anger and the Emotions: the Strategies of Status', in S. Braund and G. W. Most (eds.), *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen*. Cambridge 2003, 99-120.
- Konstan, D., *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*. Toronto, Buffalo and London 2006.
- Kosman, L. A., 'Being Properly Affected: Virtues and Feelings in Aristotle's Ethics', in Rorty, A. O. (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1980, 103-16.
- Leighton, S. R., 'Aristotle and the Emotions', in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1996, 206-37.
- Mills, M. J., '*Phthonos* and its Related *Pathê* in Plato and Aristotle', *Phronesis* 30 (1985), 1-12.
- Nussbaum, M. C., *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton 1994.
- Nussbaum, M. C., 'Aristotle on Emotions and Rational Persuasion', in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1996, 303-23.
- Rorty, A. O. (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1996.
- Schofield, M., 'Aristotle's Political Ethics', in R. Kraut (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Malden, MA and Oxford 2006, 305-23.
- Smith, A. D., 'Character and Intellect in Aristotle's Ethics', *Phronesis* 41 (1996), 56-74.
- Smith, R. H., Kim, S. H. and Parrott, W. G., 'Envy and Jealousy: Semantic Problems and Experiential Distinctions', in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 14 (1988), 401-9.
- Sorabji, R., 'Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue', in Rorty, A. O. (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1980, 201-19.
- Striker, G., 'Emotions in Context: Aristotle's Treatment of the Passions in the *Rhetoric* and his Moral Psychology', in A. O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1996, 286-302.
- Urmson, J. O., 'Aristotle's Doctrine of the Mean', in Rorty, A. O. (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1980, 157-70.

- Viano, C., 'Competitive Emotions and *Thumos* in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*', in D. Konstan and N. K. Rutter (eds.), *Envy, Spite and Jealousy: the Rivalrous Emotions in Ancient Greece*. Edinburgh 2003, 85-97.
- Walcot, P., *Envy and the Greeks: a Study of Human Behaviour*. Warminster 1978.
- Webb, R., 'Imagination and the Arousal of the Emotions in Greco-Roman Rhetoric', in S. M. Braund and C. Gill (eds.), *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*. Cambridge 1997, 112-27.
- Wisse, J., *Ethos and Pathos from Aristotle to Cicero*. Amsterdam 1989.