

ARISTOTLE ON ANGER, JUSTICE, AND PUNISHMENT

MPhil STUD

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I, Niels Aslak Christensen, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Niels Aslak Christensen, August 31. 2016

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a new reading of Aristotle's account of anger. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines anger as a painful desire for revenge caused by a perceived undeserved slight. I propose that we understand slights not, as is common in scholarship, in a narrow sense of insult or social denigration, but as injustice. Specifically, under this reading a slight is an act, which expresses a lack of concern for the moral worth of another person. To be slighted, then, is to be the subject of an injustice performed with a specific attitude of neglect or disdain for one's moral deserts; and a slight is painful, not simply when it involves harm, but because it is painful to see one's moral deserts disregarded in this way.

Corresponding to this conception of slight, I propose that Aristotle's notion of revenge is best conceived as a measure of rectificatory justice. When we desire revenge, we desire that the offender suffer for his infraction, and that he suffer in a proportionate way to the suffering he has caused us. This, however, does not amount to a simplistic form of retributivism. On the contrary, Aristotle's theory of punishment is sensitive to both retributive and reformative aims of punishment and contains the ingredients for reconciliation of these. Specifically, I suggest that revenge for Aristotle requires that the offender feel a kind of pain that corresponds to the pain caused by the slight. So since the angry person feels the pain of suffering injustice the offender should as a result of revenge feel the pain of being the author of injustice. Hence, the offender's successful punishment, i.e. the victim's revenge, presupposes at least his partial reformation; that he recognises his mistake as such and regrets it.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 AMBIGUITY OF ANGER

For Aristotle, anger is a morally ambiguous emotion. On the one hand, it is seen as a dangerous force capable of destroying relationships and overturning social order. On the other hand, anger is also recognised as a morally appropriate, and indeed required, response to offenses against oneself or those close to one.

In the *Politics*, anger is named as a central contributor to *stasis* (e.g. 1311^a33, 1312^b25-33, 1315a). Anger is like a “wild animal”, and “overturns the rule of even the best of men” (1287^a30-31). Anger, Aristotle thinks, is by nature an excessive and overly hasty emotion. Thus, he compares anger to dogs barking at their owner before recognizing him and to hasty servants, who rush off before hearing the full order (1149^a26-35). Anger, he writes, does not follow “a rational principle” (*Pol.* 1312^b26-30), and is therefore an “impediment to reason” (1312^b31-34). For when people are angry, they are preoccupied with their pain and desire for revenge and so do not take heed of the future. Hence, Aristotle notes, angry people are dangerous, since they do not spare themselves (1315^a), but also reckless and inattentive to dangers, since they are driven by pain (*EN* 1116b34-1117a4). For these reasons, anger must be kept in check, and the city ruled by laws and reason. (*Pol.* 1287^a30-31)

However, even if anger is hasty and violent Aristotle also maintains that it “listens to reason” (*EN* 1149^a26). And while excessiveness in anger is blameworthy, so is deficiency: for even if anger is violent and rash, it is also the required response to insult and injustice.

Anger is the prerogative of the free citizen. Just communities are grounded in proportional exchange of both good for good and evil for evil (Allen 2003, pp. 84ff),¹ and when people are unable to return evil for evil, they feel they live the life of slaves. (1132^b33-1133^a2).² Correspondingly, in Aristotle's view, failure to get angry at injustices is the mark of a slavish disposition (1126^a7-9). Anger is caused by the "appearance of injustice" (1149^b21-24), and to fail to defend oneself or one's family or dependents would be "shameful" ('*aischron*', *Rhet.* 1379^b27-28). Anger is therefore a legitimate, and indeed required, response to injustice, and its demand for retribution something which must be reflected in the laws of the city (Allen 2000 pp. 283ff.): for if moral and legal equality is not preserved in a community, the result is *stasis* (*EN* 1131^a23, 1155^a24-29, *Pol.* 1312^b11).

Like other emotions, anger is therefore not in itself good or bad, praiseworthy or blameworthy (*EN* 1105b30-1106a1). Anger may be felt either rightly or wrongly, in excess or deficiency, and for the right and wrong reason. Therefore, in respect to anger the virtuous person is the one who feels anger "at the right things and towards the right people, and also in the right way, at the right time, and for the right length of time" (1125b32-33). Since, then, anger is an emotion, which (when correctly felt) can be morally appropriate and indeed required, it is incumbent on us to give an account of Aristotle's anger, which makes sense as an emotion the virtuous person might feel. However, as I shall argue, the way in which the *Rhetoric's* account of anger is commonly understood makes it difficult to see it as such. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to develop a new reading of Aristotle's account of anger.

1.2 ARISTOTLE'S DEFINITION OF ANGER

Anger receives treatment in a wide variety of contexts in the Aristotelian corpus. It is, however, in the *Rhetoric* that we find the most in-depth account. In the *Rhetoric*, anger is defined as follows:

¹ Allen 2000, p. 51 argues that this view of reciprocity as grounding communities means that anger was generally accepted in classical Greece as performing a central positive role in the maintenance of the polis. For an opposing view, see Harris 2004, esp. pp. 165ff

² Thus, Aristotle does not accept the view expressed in Plato's *Crito*, that we should never return "evil for evil" (*Crito* 49b-c), as well as that found in the *Protagoras* (albeit put into the mouth of the great sophist himself) that punishment is implemented *solely* for the sake of the future (*Prot.* 324^a6-b7).

“Let anger be [defined as] a desire accompanied by pain for perceived revenge caused by a perceived slight, of the sort directed against oneself or one’s own, the slight being undeserved.”
(*Rhet.* 1378^a31-33)

Further, Aristotle goes on to note, anger always contains a certain pleasure (*tina hêdonên*), which is connected to anger’s constitutive desire and stems from the pleasant contemplation of future revenge (*Rhet.* 1378^b2, cf. *EE* 1229^b32). The definition of anger, then, has four components.

- i. A painful (and pleasant) desire
- ii. For revenge
- iii. Caused by a slight
- iv. Which was undeserved

Understanding Aristotle’s account will require understanding each of these components and how they relate to each other. In addition, an important matter of interpretation is the dual participles of ‘*phainêsthai*’, translated above as ‘perceived’. Anger is a desire for *perceived* revenge for a *perceived* slight. But what does this mean? In the literature, there are roughly two approaches to translating the participles. The first approach, championed by Cope, holds that the participles should be read “emphatically”, thus he translates ‘conspicuous revenge’ and ‘conspicuous slight’.³ Presumably, this is to be understood such that only slights of certain gravity or notoriety cause anger, whereas less “conspicuous” slights are ignored. Correspondingly, such grievous slights require an equally serious reply, a “conspicuous revenge”.⁴

The second group of translators,⁵ on the other hand, take the participles to mean ‘apparent’ or ‘perceived’. Of course, as Cope points out, it would be strange indeed if we were to

³ Readings of the participles similar to Cope’s are proposed by Roberts (1924), Grimaldi (1988) (who translates ‘manifest’) and Kennedy (1991).

⁴ This seems to be part of the motivation behind the reading of Stocker and Hegeman (to be discussed in chapter 2), which takes Aristotle’s anger to respond only to slights from people of a certain standing, and committed in public (Stocker and Hegeman 1996, pp. 267)

⁵ This translation is attributed by Harris (1997) to Gomperz, who translates “[wirklich oder] scheinbar”, and followed by the *Loeb* translator J.H. Freese, who (somewhat liberally) forgoes the brackets and simply translates “real or apparent”⁵ (cf. Harris, 1997, p. 453). Contemporary commentators preferring this

understand the participles as implying *mere* appearance – as opposed to reality. What angry people desire, Cope argues, is not a revenge that is “‘apparent’ and unreal, but ‘manifest, conspicuous, evident’” (1877, p. 10); similarly, they do not get angry over what they take to be a merely apparent and unreal slight. And no doubt Cope is right. However, taking the participles as implying appearances does not entail that they imply the angry subject thinks the slight is *merely* apparent, nor that he desires a merely apparent revenge. Instead, we may take the participles to emphasise rather that the participles emphasises that the definition explains how things appear to the angry person, how he takes things to be. Thus, it is intrinsic to anger that one *thinks* one has been slighted, but not that one has *actually* been slighted. As we shall see, slights are complex, interpersonal events and essentially involve beliefs or impressions about the attitudes and motivations of the slighter. And surely we may be wrong about other people’s motivations and attitudes and thus misinterpret their actions as slights, even if when they are not. But even if we are wrong, surely, our emotion still counts as genuine anger.

But what about ‘apparent revenge’? It does indeed sound odd that an angry person should desire a merely apparent revenge. Perhaps it is for this reason that some editors (Ross, Spengel) elide the first participle (*phainomenês*) despite the fact that it is well attested in the manuscripts (see Harris 1997). If, however, we read the participles as emphasising that we are concerned with the cognitive state of the angry person, what he takes to be the case, this elision becomes unnecessary. Thus, I submit, ‘apparent’ revenge should be read to mirror the second participle thus indicating the following: “anger is a desire for what the angry person takes to be revenge”.

The participles draw out two features of anger (and emotions in general) in Aristotle’s analysis. First, they show that anger involves cognitive content, a set of beliefs or impressions about the world. The angry person takes himself to have been undeservedly slighted, and therefore come to desire what he thinks will constitute revenge. Secondly, the participles make it clear that he may hold each of these beliefs falsely. He may be wrong about whether an action constitutes a slight, about whether or not it is undeserved, and

translation include Cooper (1996), Dow (2010a, 2010b, 2014) Fortenbaugh (2002 [1975], Kennedy (2007, having apparently changed his mind for his 2nd edition), Moss (2012), Striker (1996)).

about what he considers an adequate act of revenge. Yet while being wrong he is nevertheless genuinely angry, even if he is angry for the wrong reason or in the wrong way: for it is (in part) his beliefs about the world, and the painful desire, which results from these beliefs, that constitutes his anger.

This subjective nature of anger's cognitive contents will be important in understanding Aristotle's account. For, as we shall see, if his account is to apply to both virtuous and vicious people (that what each person feels is real anger) there must be sufficient flexibility within the definition to make room for error, whilst allowing instances of anger involving error to be genuine examples of the emotion. Parsing the definition, then, anger, in Aristotle's account, is "a painful and pleasant desire for what one takes to be revenge, caused by what one takes to be an undeserved slight against oneself or one own". So much for the participles; now let us move on to examine the four components identified above.

1.2.1 PAIN, PLEASURE, AND DESIRE

Anger is defined as a painful and pleasant desire for revenge. But why is it painful and pleasant? One might think that anger is painful and pleasant simply because it is a desire, since desires involve pleasure and pain. (Indeed, some commentators think that, for Aristotle, desiring something, i.e. perceiving it as a good to be pursued, just *is* taking pleasure in it (e.g. Charles 2006, p. 21, cf. Moss 2012, chap. 1).) However, desiring and taking pleasure in something must at least differ in that we may desire something while not *currently* taking pleasure in it (see Pearson 2014, pp. 205-7). Hence, in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle explains the pleasure of anger as caused by anticipation of revenge (*apo tēs elpidos tou timôrêsasthai*, *Rhet.* 1378^b2). Angry people, he writes, "dwell in their minds (*dianoiai*) on taking revenge; and thus the imagination (*phantasia*), which occurs, creates pleasure, as in dreams" (*Rhet.* 1378^b8-10). So while angry, we are not yet taking pleasure in actual revenge, but have a quasi-perceptual experience (*phantasia*) of the revenge to come, which either is itself pleasant or causes us to feel pleasure.⁶

But of course, anger is also (and, it seems, primarily) painful. Can we, then, understand the pain of anger in an analogous way as intrinsic to anger as desire?

There does seem to be some indication that the pain (and pleasure) of anger may in a way be

⁶ On this role of *phantasia* in desires, see Moss 2012, chap. 3, Nussbaum 1978, pp. 261ff, Pearson 2014, chap. 2.

explainable by its status as a desire. Aristotle does not explain the pain of desires in general. However, he does explain the pain and pleasure connected to bodily desire or appetite (*epithumia*). *Epithumia* is painful because it is a state of disruption or deprivation; and it is the restoration of this state that makes the object of appetite pleasant (*EN*, 1153^a32–33, see Pearson 2014, pp. 92ff).⁷ Now, Aristotle certainly thinks that spirited desire (*thumos*), of which anger is an expression, is painful (*EE*. 1225^b30–31). Could it be that *thumos* (and thus anger, *orgê*),⁹ like *epithumia*, is painful because of some state of deprivation or disruption? Certainly, Aristotle conceives of anger as an embodied phenomenon (e.g. in *De Anima*, Aristotle describes anger as involving “boiling blood” around the heart (*DA* 403^a29–^b1).)¹⁰ However, whereas the “replenishment” analysis of pleasure and pain readily lends itself to a theory of physical desires, such as hunger and thirst, it is unclear how we could conceive of revenge as satisfying and calming the hot blood around the heart, which is the bodily element of anger, at least without some further explanation of the causal process. So even if we may understand the pain and pleasure of anger as involving material processes, this does not amount to a full explanation. As Aristotle tells us in *De Anima*, the natural philosopher may satisfy himself with a definition of anger as “boiling blood”, but this is only one aspect of anger, namely the material cause, and the dialectician, on his part, will consider the formal cause, which is its constitutive desire for retaliation (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, it might be reasonable to understand the pain of anger as a state of deprivation or disorder, albeit one, which is not (merely) bodily. As Aristotle famously states in *De Anima*, emotions are “enmattered accounts” (*logoi enuloi*) (*DA* 403^a25); emotions involve both material changes in the body and a “rich cognitive structure” of beliefs or impression (cf. Nussbaum 1996, p. 311). Thus, even if anger is painful and pleasant because of its classification as a desire we need to look beyond this classification in order to understand why. For in order to understand the pain and pleasure of anger, we must understand what it is about the angry person, his beliefs or perceptions, that cause him to see slight as painful and revenge as

⁷ Aristotle gives this “replenishment” account of pleasure in the *Rhetoric* I.11 (1369^b33–35). For further discussion of the *Rhetoric*’s account of pleasure, see Frede (1996), Pearson (2014, chap. 4).

⁸ Such pleasures, however, Aristotle argues, are pleasant merely accidentally (*kata sumbebêkos*), and are defective (*EN* 1152^b34) when compared to the “pure” pleasures of contemplation, which are “without pain or appetite” (*EN* 1152^b36–1153^a2).

⁹ *Thumos*, spirited desire, is the faculty responsible for anger (*orgê*), but also for other emotions, such as love and friendship (e.g. *Pol.* 1327^b19–28^a9). Thus, it is not the case, Pearson suggests, that *thumos* is synonymous with anger (*orgê*) and is simply a desire for revenge (2014, p. 201).

¹⁰ This physical explanation of anger is also invoked in *PA* II.4 to explain the angry or cowardly natures of certain animals, by reference to the different constitution of their blood.

pleasant. More specifically, this means understanding what slights are, what they deprive us of, and how revenge relieves the painful deprivation of slight. Further, since only undeserved slights cause anger, it will be central to understand the relevant notion of desert involved. In the rest of this chapter, therefore, I shall lay out the central questions of interpretation regarding each of the remaining three components: slight, desert, and revenge.

1.2.2 SLIGHT

Anger is caused by slights. But what is a slight? In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines a slight as follows:

[...] a slight is the actualisation of an opinion [*energeia tês doxês*] about what appears [to be] of no worth at all. (*Rhet.* 1378^b10)

In addition to the original question, why slights cause a desire for revenge, this definition raises some puzzles of its own. First, is the puzzling expression an “actualisation of an opinion”; second, is the question of what amounts to *worth*.

Aristotle’s further discussion of slight is helpful in understanding what he means by “actualisation of an opinion”. Aristotle distinguishes three kinds of slight, disdain (*kataphronêsis*), spite (*epêreasmos*), and insult (*hubris*). Aristotle has very little to say of disdain, but merely gives the tautological explanation for disdain being a form of slight that “whatever people think is of no worth, they disdain, and they slight what they think is of no worth” (*Rhet.* 1377^b16-17). The latter two forms of slight, on the other hand, receive considerable attention. Spite, he writes, consists in “hindering the wishes of other, not so that one may obtain something for oneself, but so that the other may not obtain it” (1378^b18-20). Similarly, insult “is harming or causing pain,¹¹ from which there is shame for the one who suffers it, not so that one may obtain something for oneself, but for the pleasure of doing so” (*Rhet.* 1378^b23-25). Further, we are told, insult is pleasant (to the insulter) because by harming others the insulter thinks himself superior to the insulted (1378^b26-28). In both insult and spite the slight seems to consist in thinking oneself

¹¹ I here diverge from the OCT version, which reads ‘πράττειν καὶ λέγειν’ (A) in lieu of the arguably better attested ‘βλάπτειν καὶ λυπεῖν’ (ΘΠΓ). Although see Grimaldi 1988, p. 30, n. to 1378^b23: πρᾶττειν καὶ λέγειν.

superior to the object of slight in some way. This is explicitly the case in respect to insult, since it is the reason for insulting being pleasant. But it also seems to be at the centre of spite. For as Aristotle goes on to explain, it is because the spiteful person thinks the other unable to hurt him that he spites him; otherwise, he would be afraid of him and would not be spiteful. (*Rhet.* 1378^b20-23). So in both cases slight seems to stem from an attitude of superiority or hubristic invulnerability. Hence, in both spite and insult it seems that what it means to “actualise an opinion” is to act in a way that makes one’s attitude towards someone or something evident to the other; and this attitude is one of some kind of superiority, that the other is “of no worth”.¹²

If this is right, and if slights are the cause for the pain of anger, it is clear as well that the pain of anger is not caused by some material loss or physical harm connected to the slight. While violent insult, *hubris*, (which consists in harming or causing pain) causes physical pain in itself, it seems that what makes insult a cause for anger is the attitude it expresses: that the victim is “of no worth”. This is clear from several of Aristotle’s other examples of slight, which include ingratitude (*Rhet.* 1379^b29) or forgetting someone’s name (1379^b14). For these examples involve no tangible loss or harm to the offended, but are slights solely by reference to the attitude of the offender. Since, therefore, it is the offender’s opinion, which causes painful anger, we might see slight as a deprivation of sorts, and thus why they are painful. A slight is an actualisation of the opinion that the other is “of no worth”, so perhaps it is offender’s lack of recognition of our worth, which makes slight painful? Nevertheless, we should not lose sight of the fact that anger responds only to the particular expression (*energeia*) of that attitude. Idle attitudes or opinions alone are not sufficient for anger.¹³ So even if anger seems to be caused by a certain attitude on part of the offender, it is only its activation or manifestation (*energeia*) in a slight, which makes it a cause for anger.

¹² It has been suggested to me by Dr Joachim Aufderheide that the opinion “actualised” in the slight need not be that of the offender, but could be that of the offended. If this is the case, slights will intrinsically involve the offended thinking that they are worthless as a result of the slight. While the Greek certainly allows for this reading, the examples Aristotle provides seems to suggest that the opinion “actualised” is that of the slighter. I shall go on in chapter 2 and 3 to discuss the effect of slight on a person’s self-evaluation.

¹³ This is one of the features, which sets anger apart from *hate*. In Aristotle’s view, we may hate groups or classes of people (*Rhet.* 1382^a5-6) – even if they have done nothing to harm us personally. But hate is notably painless and “cold” (*Rhet.* 1382^a10-15) – in stark contrast to the painful and “hot” anger. I shall return to this distinction in chapter 3.

That anger is caused by slight, and that slight is a particular expression (*energeia*) of a particular attitude on part of the offender, further explains Aristotle's claims about the personal nature of anger. Thus, he tells us, "it is necessary that an angry person is angry at someone particular, such as Cleon, but not at Man [in general], and because of something he has done, or intends to do" (*Rhet.* 1378^a₃-78^b₁). The requirement that anger is towards individuals may at first seem a bit strange to us, if we think that this would entail that we cannot get angry at specific groups of people. However, I suspect that Aristotle's account can be made to fit such cases.

First, it is noteworthy that anger is caused by slight "towards oneself or one's own". Importantly, this allows that one can be angry on account of slights directed towards others, provided they are relevantly related to oneself. And while Aristotle's examples seem to consider mostly one's family or dependents (*Rhet.* 1379^b₂₇₋₂₈), it would not be a large stretch to think that one's "circle of concern" (Nussbaum 2016, pp. 18ff) may be expanded to include friends, business partners, or fellow citizens. Thus, importantly, in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle apparently considers it unproblematic to talk about the anger of the Athenians towards treacherous or incompetent politicians (*Rhet.* 1380^b₈₋₁₃). So at the very least it is possible for groups to be collectively angry.

Second, concerning anger *against* groups, it seems not unreasonable that one may, under Aristotle's account, be angry towards a group as a collective bearer of a certain attitude resulting in them being the collective agent of slights. Aristotle could, I think, allow for this while still preserving the point of the passage: provided that point is not that anger need have an individual *person* as its object, but rather that it must have a particular *object* as well as a particular *occasion*. The point of the exclusion of anger at Man in general, then, is not that we cannot get angry at groups but a metaphysical point about the particular nature of actions. Since anger responds to a particular action, a slight, which is done with a particular attitude, it is necessary that we get angry at someone as the author of that slight. This may be a group or an individual, but it cannot be a universal generality, such as "Man in general" – for a universal generality cannot hold particular attitudes, much less perform particular actions. This much is clear from Aristotle account of hate. For here, he tells us that hate, unlike anger, *can* be towards classes or group. The reason he gives is that hate is not occasioned by a particular act but by a character judgement. (Thus, Aristotle writes, "everyone hates a thief or a sycophant" (*Rhet.* 1382^a₆₋₇.) Anger, however requires a

particular cause, a slight, and while particular groups may collectively give a particular slight, a universal class cannot. Thus, we can make sense of Aristotle's contrast between "Cleon" and "Man" without furnishing him with an unnecessarily restrictive and implausible view.

1.2.3 DESERT

Aristotle argues that slights, in order to cause anger, must be *undeserved* (*mê prosêkontos*). The condition is clearly an important one and is repeatedly stressed. Thus, Aristotle tells us, people are not angry, "when they think they have themselves done injustice and suffer justly, for anger is not aroused against what is just: for they no longer think they suffer against desert (*para to prosêkon*), but this is what anger is" (1380^b16-18). Elsewhere in the corpus as well Aristotle seems to consider this "suffering against desert" to be the central feature of anger. For instance, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he explicitly identifies the cause of anger as "perceived injustice" (EN 1135^b25-9).¹⁴ Thus, it is reasonable to assume that Aristotle considers the undeservedness of the occasioning slight an intrinsic part of anger. Moreover, the slight's being undeserved, in the light of such remarks, seems to be not merely a constraint on which slights may cause anger, but rather a central part of the cognitive evaluation that leads to anger's constitutive desire for revenge.

What makes a slight undeserved, I suggest, is that the opinion it expresses is false. The angry person takes himself to have been deprived of recognition of his worth (*axia*). But if he feels the offender's expressed attitude as an unjust deprivation of something, it must be because he feels his worth is greater than the offender's actions make it out to be. Thus, the angry person takes himself to have been denied not merely recognition, but deserved recognition. Conversely, if an act is felt to be in accordance with one's worth, it is not an undeserved slight, and thus does not cause anger. It remains unclear, however, what amounts to worth. Consequently, since the angry person's worth is the object of slight, and since it is the falsehood of that opinion, which makes a slight undeserved, a substantial task for any

¹⁴ It is, therefore, not the case, as Harris (2001, p. 61) holds, that the connection of anger specifically to injustice is a stoic invention first seen in Chrysippus. Furthermore, there is evidence that Theophrastus (unsurprisingly) has a similar view to the one Aristotle expresses in this passage (see Seneca, *On Anger* 1.12.2-5). Cf. Fortenbaugh (2002 [1975], p. 117), Konstan 2006, p. 65-66. For a similar view to Harris' see Nussbaum 2016, pp. 20

reading of Aristotle's account of anger, will be to clarify what is meant by 'worth'. For until we have done so, we have yet to understand what a slight is and what makes it undeserved.

1.2.4 REVENGE

Anger is a desire for revenge. Yet Aristotle says surprisingly little about revenge in his account of anger; and nowhere does he give us a general definition. The following is what we have to go on.

First, revenge must involve infliction of pain. The angry person, Aristotle writes, desires to inflict pain (*Rhet.* 1382^a8), "that the other suffer in turn" (1382^a14-15.). This is also clear in the cursory dialectical definition in *De Anima*, which defines anger as a desire for returning pain (*orexis antilupéseôs*) (*DA* 403^a31). Similarly, in the *Rhetoric's* discussion of hate, hate is specifically contrasted to anger by reference to their diverging constitutive desires. For whereas hate is a desire that the hated person "cease to exist" and the hating person cares little for how that result comes about, the angry person wants to inflict pain, and to *perceive* his revenge (*Rhet.* 1382^a8-9). The focus on pain is also clear from the *Rhetoric's* discussion of the opposite emotion of anger, "to become mild" (*to prainêshtai*). For here it is made clear that while not all revenge need take the form of violent infliction of pain, some pain on part of the offender is required. Specifically, Aristotle tells us that people are mild (i.e. they cease to be angry) towards those who regret and feel remorse. "For they consider their [the offender's] being pained over the deed as justice (*dikên*), and cease to be angry." Thus, it seems, just as the pain of anger is not necessarily the pain of having been harmed or having incurred loss, neither does the pain of revenge need to be connected to some loss or harm felt by the offender. For, it seems, his recognition of his error, his remorse or regret (*metameleia*), may be considered sufficient to alleviate anger.

Second, in order for an act of revenge to be successful as such, it is not sufficient that the offender suffers – he must also know both by whose hand, and for what reason he now suffers (1380^b22-25). Aristotle's reasons for this are unclear: the only explanation he offers is that "anger is towards the individual" (*ibid.*) (cf. p. 13 on 'particular'). And while this idea may cater to some intuitions about what we think is necessary for successful revenge or

punishment, it seems too weak an intuition to stand on its own without further explanation. If Aristotle were relying on a simple notion of reciprocity in his approach to anger's desire for revenge, there is little to explain this second requirement. For while we can straightaway understand why the angry person *himself* needs to be aware of his revenge, it is not clear why the offender must be so as well. Understanding the motivation for this criterion for successful revenge, therefore, will be essential to an account of Aristotle's anger.

Third, revenge is connected to considerations of justice. Since anger is caused by undeserved slight or by "perceived injustice" (*EN* 1135^b25-9), revenge seems to be at least in part motivated by a desire to rectify this injustice. The connection of anger to injustice and consequently the construal of revenge as an act of justice, however, are contended. For as we shall see, not all commentators believe anger to be connected to injustice at all (e.g. Konstan 2002, 2006). And even if they do, some argue that for Aristotle revenge is not aimed at rectifying an injustice qua injustice (e.g. Nussbaum 2016). For now, then, let us be content with the notion that revenge is an act of inflicting pain desired by the angry person, because he has been undeservedly slighted.

1.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Since anger is a desire for revenge caused by undeserved slight, we are left with three pertinent questions, which must be answered by any reading of Aristotle's account of anger. These are:

- 1) What is a slight?
- 2) What makes a slight undeserved?
- 3) What is the purpose of revenge?

The answer to the first two questions will be focused on understanding the relevant notion of worth (*axia*). For a slight is the actualisation of the opinion that someone is "of no worth", and is thought to be undeserved by the victim of slight on account of his belief that this opinion is false. Hence, in order to understand what exactly a slight is, and when it is undeserved, we must understand what worth is. Moreover, since revenge is the aim of anger,

we must come to understand why the angry person comes to desire revenge, and what he aims to achieve thereby.

In the following chapter I present the dominant view of Aristotle's anger: that it responds to dishonour. The reading will be presented, roughly, as a series of answer to the three guiding questions. In chapter 3, I give my critique of this reading, arguing in particular that it fails to account for virtuous anger. Finally, in chapter 4, I develop my alternative account: that anger responds to injustice.

CHAPTER 2: THE HONOUR READING

In this chapter, I present a common approach to Aristotle's account of anger. This reading, which I shall call the 'honour reading', takes anger to respond to a very specific set of offenses; namely those that consist in dishonouring or disrespecting someone.

Under the honour reading the slights that cause anger are broadly construed as acts of disrespect or dishonouring. Thus, according to this reading, the angry person takes himself to have been treated with less respect, than he feels he deserves and consequently to have "lost face" in the eyes of the community. This perceived dishonour, in turn, leads to a loss of self-esteem for the angry person. Correspondingly, his desire for revenge is a desire to regain his lost social esteem, and thereby self-esteem.

The honour reading is quite ubiquitous in the literature. The reading is most developed in Konstan (2003, 2006), and Stocker and Hegeman (1996). But dishonour is generally accorded a central role in Aristotle's account of anger by most modern commentators (e.g. Allen (2000), Cairns (2003), Cope (1877), Fortenbaugh (2002 [1975]) Frank (1990), Grimaldi (1988), Harris (1997) Nussbaum (2016)).

2.1 SLIGHTS AND DISHONOUR

As we saw in the previous chapter, anger is a response to a perceived slight, which was directed at oneself or "one's own", and which was given contrary to desert; and slights are "activations of opinions" that someone is of no worth. But what amounts to worth? Aristotle writes:

Since, then, a slight is the activation of an opinion about something, which we take it to be of no worth at all. (For we think both good and bad things are worthy of serious attention, as well as also what amounts to these, but whatever amounts to nothing at all or little, we assume to be worthy of nothing). [For this reason], there are three kinds of slight: disdain, spite, and insult. (*Rhet.* 1378^b10-15)

According to the honour reading the *endoxon*, introduced by the ‘*oiometha*’ (“*For we think ...*”), explicates the notion of *axia* relevant to slight; namely that to think someone to be “of no worth at all” means to consider them to be useless for either good or bad.¹⁵ According to the honour reading, then, anger is a response to actions, which are interpreted as a sign that they consider us of no consequence for good or bad; i.e. either as someone who can be overlooked, neglected, or bullied, without fear of the repercussions, or as someone whose goodwill they have no use for. For the honour reading, slights are exemplified especially well by the two latter forms of slight, spite and insult. Spite (*epéreasmos*), we saw, consists in obstructing another’s pursuits, without a motive for personal gain but simply to make the other fail. Aristotle goes on “it is evident that he has no idea that the other is likely to hurt him, for in that case he would be afraid of him instead of slighting him; nor that he will be of any use to him worth speaking of, for in that case his thoughts would be how to become his friend.” (*ibid.*). Thus, spite betrays an opinion of the other as useless or *worthless*. Similarly, we saw, insult is said to be pleasant for the insulter, because it makes him feel superior.

For the honour reading, these characterisations encapsulate the paradigmatic causes for anger. What makes us angry is not simply that we have been harmed in some way or deprived of something, but what the other’s actions say about his attitude towards us: the angry person feels that he has been denied due importance or respect (Stocker and Hegeman, p. 66). By acting towards him as if he were insignificant and powerless, the other is seen as acting with an attitude of superiority, and thus as treating him as inferior to the point of him warranting neither the offender’s fear nor his friendship. As we saw in chapter

¹⁵ It is unclear here whether Aristotle means for the explanation of *axia* by reference to capacity for contributing good or bad to express his considered view about the *axia* relevant to slights, or rather to be a report of generally accepted opinion. I do not believe Aristotle considers this explanation of a slight entirely fitting, at least not without qualification. (For similar, non-conclusive, use of ‘*oiometha*’, cf. e.g. *EN* 1128^b16, 1140^b8, 1143^b8, *Met.* 1013^a35, *Rhet.* 1360^b28, 1376^b18). I shall return to this definition in chapters 3 and 4.

1, anger involves attributing specific motivations or attitudes to the offender and in the honour reading the attitude attributed and which the slight is thought to manifest, is one of arrogance and superiority.

Moreover, according to the honour reading, an intrinsic feature of slights is *dishonour*. While the connection of slight to dishonour is only explicitly stated in the definition of insult, for the honour reading the notion of dishonour permeates the entire account. Hence, for instance, Konstan argues (2006) that it is indicative of Aristotle's general view of anger when he illustrates with a speech from Achilles in the *Iliad*:

He (Agamemnon) has dishonoured me, since he keeps the prize he has taken for himself,
and
[he has treated me] like a dishonoured vagrant (*Rhet.* 1378^b32-3; *Iliad*, I.356, IX.648)

In this example of Aristotle's, Konstan argues, Achilles' anger is not roused by the loss Agamemnon has inflicted on him by stealing his loot. Rather, what angers Achilles is that by doing so Agamemnon has acted in a way, which betrays an attitude of utter superiority, and hence has failed to respect Achilles' famed martial prowess, which ought to earn him the respect of his fellow Greeks. The "spoils" themselves (the girl Briseis), he notes, are of little concern to Achilles. It is Agamemnon's *dishonouring* of him that causes his anger (2006, pp. 49-55). For the honour reading, a slight is essentially a "put-down" (Konstan, 2006, p. 47), a "down-ranking" or "status injury" (Nussbaum 2016, pp. 17ff). That is, an act, which by making evident the superiority of the offender diminishes the social or hierarchical standing of the offended and correspondingly elevates the offender.

2.2 WORTH AND DESERT

Aristotle repeatedly stresses that only slights given contrary to desert (*mê prosêkontos*) are causes for anger. But what constitutes the relevant desert in respect to slights? Importantly, Aristotle rules out retaliatory acts as causes for anger (*Rhet.* 1378^b26, 1379^a31, 1380^b13-19), since "anger is not aroused against what is just" (1380^b13). However, presumably, slighting might be justified in other ways than being acts of retaliation. So what constitutes the "right

to slight”, and conversely, what makes a slight undeserved? In the first instance, as noted in the previous chapter, what makes a slight undeserved is that the opinion it expresses is false; that it is not the case that the victim of the slight is “of no worth”. Hence, in order to understand the desert relevant to slight, we must understand what amounts to worth (*axia*).

According to the honour reading, the desert violated by the slight, one’s worth, is grounded in one’s position in the social hierarchy. This assumption is not without textual basis, and indeed Aristotle’s discussion of anger is packed with references to hierarchical inferiority and superiority. Thus, for example, Aristotle tells us that kings are prone to anger because of their superior rank, that we are angry with inferiors when they oppose us (Rhet. 1379^b7), with inferiors in general (1379^b9-12), and that we are not angry with inferiors, who recognise their inferiority, since in that case they do not slight (1380^a22-23). Sights, then, according to the honour reading, are status-offenses, not only in the sense described above, that they diminish the status of the one offended, but also in the sense that they are legitimate or illegitimate on account of the relative status of those involved in the slight. Thus, undeserved slights are breaches of the hierarchical order, and have the consequence of upsetting this order. Sights against inferiors, on the other hand, are not causes for anger according to the honour reading, since such sights are justified by the relative position of those involved. For instance, Konstan writes: “For Aristotle, what counts as belittlement [i.e. slight] depends on status: if your position is inferior, it is no shame to be reminded of it.” (2006, p. 55). The result is that the desert relevant to anger, following the honour reading, is a relative and not an absolute term; someone’s claim to respectful treatment is dependent upon the status of the one from whom he demands it: A citizen may slight a slave but not a king. So whereas one can reasonably demand respectful treatment from inferiors and equals, our superiors are in a position to legitimately slight us, if they so choose, and their status, in turn, guarantees that any retaliatory insult from us will be unwarranted.¹⁶

¹⁶ It is noteworthy that the essential qualification in the definition of anger that the slight must be undeserved is often translated to imply that the undeservedness depends on the status of the offender. Thus, e.g., Konstan translates “[anger is] a desire, accompanied by pain, for a perceived revenge, on account of a perceived slight on the part of people who are not fit to slight one or one’s own” (2006, p. 41).

What the honour reading attributes to Aristotle, of course, is not the implausible view that we can never be justifiably angry with our superiors.¹⁷ For worth under the honour reading does not mean mere formal hierarchical position, but capacity for good or bad.¹⁸ Thus, Konstan notes that anger for Aristotle requires that we consider revenge to be possible (Konstan p. 57) (cf. *Rhet.* 1370^b13-15). Fear and anger, Aristotle says, are mutually exclusive, and when we are afraid of someone, we will not get angry when slighted by them (1380^a33). According to the honour reading, this relation of fear and anger explains the kind of inferiority and superiority at stake in a slight. Anger and fear are mutually exclusive, because when we fear someone, we implicitly recognise their power over us, and hence their superiority and right to slight. Konstan, again drawing on the *Iliad*, exemplifies this by the contrast between the priest Chryses' and Achilles' respective reactions to Agamemnon's mistreatment of each of them (2006, p. 56): for whereas Achilles rages, Chryses feels fear and obeys. Of course, Chryses does not recognise Agamemnon's overall treatment of him as justified by the power-disparity between them. (And indeed, he goes on to cause great trouble for the Achaeans through the mediation of his patron god.) But his reaction to Agamemnon's slight (that is, for Konstan, not the unjust dismissal of his petition for the return of his daughter, but the harsh and undignified treatment of a priest of Apollo) is to submit and appeal to his gods for help. Since revenge is beyond his power, he recognises that Agamemnon is in a position to slight him, and consequently does not feel anger.¹⁹ Conversely, Achilles, though nominally a subject of Agamemnon, *is* in a position to take revenge (of sorts) – namely by withholding his much needed contribution to the war effort. Thus, he does not recognise Agamemnon's power superiority as great enough to warrant the kind of treatment he receives. Had he, however, been the “dishonoured vagrant”, he claims to be treated like, there would, Konstan argues, have been no cause for anger: for when comparing his weakness to the might of Agamemnon a “dishonoured vagrant” would have no claim to be treated any differently.

¹⁷ Cope alone draws this rather puzzling conclusion (1877, p. 10). Cf. Grimaldi 1988, pp. 23-24.

¹⁸ This grounding of *axia* in power is explicitly recognized and elaborated by Konstan (2003, 2006) and Stocker and Hegeman (1996).

¹⁹ We might perhaps plausibly interpret Apollo's reaction as an example of how we might get angry, when “our own” are mistreated. The mistreatment of his defenceless priest awakens the anger of the god Apollo himself and causes him to take terrible revenge in the form of a deadly plague, which does not cease until Chryses' daughter is returned and the Achaeans have offered sacrifice to Apollo.

2.3 REVENGE AS RESTORING HONOUR

According to the honour reading, then, a slight is an act which manifests the opinion of the slighter that the object of slight is of no worth, which means that he is powerless relative to the slighter; and a slight is undeserved when that opinion is false. Further, undeserved slight is a breach of social order since it causes dishonour for the victim, and upsets the relative social standing of the agents involved. Correspondingly, the honour reading takes the aim of revenge to be the restoration of one's honour or social position, which was damaged by the slight. Revenge is thus conceived as a reciprocal act of denigration of the offender, targeting the status of the offender, in order to reassert one's relative social position. Konstan writes:

A slight, as we have seen, consists according to Aristotle in the active belief that another person is of no account. The response to such an act is to restore the opinion of one's worth by an act of reprisal [...]. Anger is just the desire to restore the state of affairs prior to the insult by depreciating the offender in turn. (Konstan 2006, p. 55)

Anger's desire for revenge, then, makes sense as a kind of rectificatory measure (cf. Nussbaum 2016, p. 28). What is repaired, however, is not whatever damage was inflicted as part of the slight. Insult (*hybris*) involves "harming or causing pain, from which there is shame for the one who suffers it" (*Rhet.* 1378^b23-25). But what is answered by revenge is not the harm or pain, but the shame that results; i.e. the victim's lost honour.²⁰ In the example of the *Iliad*, Konstan notes, the return of Briseis is of little concern to Achilles, who initially rejects Agamemnon's peace offers. The reason for Achilles' rejection, Konstan argues, is that they are presented not as amends for an *insult* but as compensation for a *loss*. But Achilles' is not concerned with his material loss, but with the attitude that precipitated Agamemnon's actions. Hence, what is required for reconciliation is not that Agamemnon offers compensation, but that he "be aware of and feel in return the kind of mortification that provoked the anger in the first place." (Konstan 2006, p. 54.) What Achilles' anger requires is not compensation, but Agamemnon's reciprocal humiliation (2006, p. 54-5).

²⁰ In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines shame as "pain or disturbance concerning those evils, which are perceived to lead to disrepute" (*Rhet.* 1383^b12-14)

According to Aristotle, revenge essentially involves inflicting pain on the offender. And it is among other things by aiming at pain (rather than, say, the death of the other), that anger differs from hate. But why the focus on pain? According to Stocker and Hegeman, the explanation for the focus on pain is that by inflicting pain the angry person exhibits his de facto superiority and the consequences of denying them respect:

Aristotle's men do not just suffer pain. They want and try to get their own back, to re-establish their position: with themselves, with the person who insulted them, and with "their public". They do this by hurting those who slighted them and by making them suffer pain, not just suffer harm, not even the "ultimate" harm of death. We could see this last form of getting back at the person as indicating that the re-established position is to be known and felt, and thus public. (1996, p. 282)

The requirement of pain, according to Stocker and Hegeman, is thus tied to the purported public nature of slight and revenge (cf. Cope's translation: 'conspicuous revenge'). It is particularly interesting in this respect that the "ultimate harm" of death is actually counterproductive. In anger, Aristotle writes, we want the offender to suffer, and to explicitly be aware that *we* are the cause of his suffering, and to be aware of the reason for our action against him (*Rhet.* 1380^b22-25, see also Konstan 2003, p. 110). But the death of the offender, of course, would not achieve this goal. Further, since for the honour reading the aim of revenge is the re-establishment of the social hierarchy in the eyes of the other, the other must be alive to recognise this re-configured relation. Hence, the aim of revenge is not *simply* to inflict pain, but through infliction of pain, to make the other acutely and painfully aware of the error of his slight. The offender, then, must realise that we are not powerless and that we cannot be treated with arrogance without repercussions. Thus, we desire revenge, because revenge restores our honour. But since honour is restored through a show of force, it seems, that one's claim to honour is simply grounded in one's power to enforce it. To be honoured in this sense is simply to be feared; to deserve respect is to have the capacity to *command* it.

2.4 HONOUR CULTURE AND NARCISSISM

The honour reading's analysis of Aristotle's anger portrays it as a distinctively narcissistic emotion (Stocker and Hegeman 1996, Nussbaum 2016, p. 25ff). For rather than simply

responding to an injustice and motivating us to seek reparation, anger responds to dishonour and is aimed solely at restoring one's social status (cf. Nussbaum, pp. 28-29). This perceived preoccupation with "loss of face" is taken by some proponents of the honour reading as indicative of Aristotle's general normative outlook. Aristotle writes, they argue, from within and conforms to a substantial degree to the values of an "honour-culture", in which moral goodness and public appearance are inseparable. Gabrielle Taylor (1985) describes members of honour-cultures in the following way:

If a man has lost his reputation then he has lost his value in the eyes of all the members of the group, including himself. So there is nothing left, no inner quality or whatever, which could be judged to be of value. Self-respect and public respect stand and fall together. (Taylor 1985, p. 55)

According to some proponents of the honour reading, classical Greek culture exemplified such a culture, and this had significant impact on Aristotle's writing.²¹ For instance, Konstan writes:

Aristotle envisages a world in which self-esteem depends on social interaction: the moment someone's negative opinion of your worth is actualized publicly in the form of a slight, you have lost credit, and the only recourse is a compensatory act that restores your social position. Anger is precisely the desire to adjust the record in this way (Konstan 2006, pp. 74-75)

For the honour reading, then, Aristotle's angry man's sense of self and of his own goodness is tied up with the recognition of this goodness from others: a man is only as good as his reputation, so when this is damaged his worth is diminished along with it. Thus, according to the honour reading, anger reacts not merely to external loss of face, but to an internal self-doubt, which results from it. And importantly this self-doubt and the requirement to maintain public esteem to sustain one's self-image must apply even to Aristotle's virtuous man. For, if Aristotle's account of anger is to be a general one, it must apply to the virtuous man as well. This charge against Aristotle's account of anger is most developed by Stocker

²¹ The notion that Aristotle's ethics reflects a culture possessed by the ghost of a Homeric honour-code approach to ethics is not uncommon in Aristotle scholarship. Thus he is often taken either to conform to such a culture in his treatment of honour (e.g. Jaffa (1952, p. 123 ff.), Corder (1994)) or to struggle unsuccessfully to accommodate its heritage within his own framework (e.g. Curzer (1990, 1991), Engberg-Pedersen (1983), pp. 78ff).

and Hegeman, who argue that Aristotle's anger is not merely a defence of one's position in a social hierarchy but also of one's sense of self. The result of a slight is not merely loss of honour, but shame (1996, p. 273). Aristotle's account of anger, they argue, gives us an image of the angry person as a narcissist. "Narcissists", Stocker and Hegeman write, "are unable to sustain self-respect and self-regard. They need others to reassure them of their goodness, that they are the way they would like to be." (Stocker and Hegeman 1996, p. 269). They therefore give the following verdict of the kind of normativity they see in Aristotle's account of anger:

If one of Aristotle's men is not accorded the rank and respect he is due – in ways proper to him, to what he is doing, to the other person, and so on – he suffers. He experiences the lack of respect as a deep wound to himself, that is, to his self. To understand this wound, we must understand this self. One key to understanding these wounds of anger, and thus Aristotle's men, is to see these wounds as narcissistic, and their society and social arrangements as allowing, perhaps fostering, narcissism. (Stocker and Hegeman 1996, p. 268)

According to Stocker and Hegeman, being honoured is necessary for human happiness in Aristotle's ethics; the reason being that without the recognition of one's peers one cannot maintain the self-respect that is part of virtuous life. Honour, therefore, is not merely an external good but an essential part of virtue. Angry men (which will include virtuous men),²² they argue, require, demand, that they be honoured; and when they are not they react with violent anger and inflict painful revenge (1996, pp. 273ff). This simultaneous sense of immense self-importance, and "outsourcing" of the foundation of this sense of self-importance to the recognition of others betrays, according to Stocker and Hegeman, a fatal flaw in Aristotle's ethics. By zealously guarding his reputation against any infraction, the virtuous man seeks to sustain a self-image as good, important, and self-sufficient. But if the virtuous man's sense of self as good requires that he be honoured his purported self-sufficiency is an illusion,²³ since the reality of each angry outburst betrays the fundamental

²² While they at one point seem to want to exclude Aristotle's virtuous man, "the *phronimos*", from experiencing the kind of anger, they argue is portrayed in the *Rhetoric* (p. 273), this reservation is seemingly dropped later on, when they discuss Aristotle's virtuous man's valuation of honour (286ff).

²³ See Corder 1994 for a similar argument. For an interesting, if flawed, response, see Leighton 2002.

instability of his perceived self-worth (p. 278-9).²⁴ Hence, we are left with the portrait of a thoroughly unattractive and utterly miserable individual: a man who is insufferable needy, dangerously vindictive, and paradoxically possessed both with a sense of immense self-importance and crippling self-doubt. But surely this cannot be what Aristotle thinks. Hence, there is good reason to look for an alternative account of Aristotle's anger.

2.5 A PRELIMINARY CRITIQUE OF THE HONOUR READING

The honour reading's answers to the three question set up in the previous chapter, then, may be summarised as follows:

- a) A slight is an act, which diminishes the offended person in terms of social status – this leads to a loss of both social esteem and self esteem, since the latter is based on the former. This loss of esteem in the eyes of the public and oneself is painful and leads to a desire for revenge.
- b) A slight is undeserved, when the relative status position of the slighter and the slighted is not such as to warrant the slight. I.e. when the slight is a breach of the social hierarchy. The possibility of taking revenge in itself makes a slight undeserved. Hence, the worth that is the object of slight ultimately amounts to power. One's desert for the respect of others lies in one's ability to command it.
- c) Revenge is a display of power, which restores one's social esteem by reciprocally diminishing the status of the slighter. By inflicting pain on the offender, we show them, the world at large, and ourselves, that we are able to command the respect of others, even if they do not give it to us willingly.

The honour reading is not without merit. It “makes sense” of anger's desire or revenge (cf. Nussbaum 2016, p. 28), and successfully explains the purposes of revenge and why the angry person desires it. Moreover, it makes sense of some of the more peculiar passages in the *Rhetoric's* account, such as the tenet that people are more prone to anger towards their friends than towards other people (see note 2.4 above). However, despite its apparent prima facie plausibility, the honour reading is fundamentally flawed for a number of reasons.

²⁴ It is for this reason, Stocker and Hegeman argue, that Aristotle notes that we are more angry with our friends (1379^b13-15). For it is upon his friends most of all, that the virtuous man depends for his self-knowledge (*EN* IX.9, *EE* VII.12), and hence his self-doubt more threatened, and his anger is more violent, when they are the ones to slight him (pp. 278-79)

First, even if the honour reading makes sense of the internal logic of anger, it is difficult to see how anger can be conceived as the morally appropriate, and indeed required response Aristotle clearly thinks it is. For if its “justice component”, the desert-constraint, is ultimately grounded in power-relations, anger seems less like a moral emotion and more like the self-assertive and self-righteous reaction of the powerful to challenges to their position.

Second, and connected, the account fails to make sense of Aristotle’s repeated assertions both in the *Rhetoric* and elsewhere that anger responds to injustice. Even if we could perhaps argue that the claim to respect constituted by one’s social position (and backed by power) amounts to a reasonable moral claim to respect, a conception of slight as resulting in dishonour and involving essentially an attitude of power superiority rules out all kinds of injustices that are not thus motivated.

Finally, if anger is essentially a pained response to dishonour, it seems to contradict Aristotle’s valuation of honour elsewhere. For in both ethical works Aristotle make it clear that that the virtuous man does not value honour very highly and expressly denies that dishonour causes him pain or self-doubt.

Let us, then, move on to a closer examination and a critique of the honour reading.

CHAPTER 3: CRITIQUE OF THE HONOUR READING

In the previous chapter, I set out the honour reading as a series of replies to the three central questions posed in chapter 1 and hinted at a number of problems for the reading. In this chapter, then, I will elaborate on these criticisms. First, I argue that the honour reading's equation of slights with dishonouring and loss of self-esteem is textually ungrounded and cannot sufficiently account for Aristotle's remarks that anger reacts to injustice. Second, the notion of worth (*axia*) as grounded in power is problematic since Aristotle elsewhere makes it clear that he considers neither moral claims in general, nor indeed desert for honour, to be grounded in power. Third, the honour reading's construal of the aim of revenge as re-establishing the internal hierarchy between offender and offended upset by the slight both fails to account for anger as a response to injustice, and moreover completely lacks textual evidence.

3.1 SLIGHTS AS DISHONOURING OR DIMINUTION

While widely believed, the notion that slight essentially involves dishonour is not very well textually supported. The Greek word for honour, '*timê*', and correlates in the account in the *Rhetoric*, are only explicitly connected to one kind of slight, insult (*hubris*). Aristotle writes:

Dishonour belongs to insult (*hubreôs d' atimia*), and he who dishonours slights. For that which has no worth, has no honour (*timê*), neither for good or bad. (Rhet. 1378^b29-31)

This passage, however, does not support the conclusion that all slights involve dishonour, but merely that dishonouring someone by insulting them is one form of slight. Perhaps, then, the crucial passage for this tenet of the honour reading is the second part, which apparently equates being worthless with having no honour; and which, moreover, seems to

indicate that having honour, like having worth, is connected to capacity for good or bad. Indeed, some proponents of the honour reading appear to take Aristotle to simply equate worth (*axia*) and honour (*timê*).²⁵ However, worth cannot be identical or reduced to honour. On the contrary, it seems that the honour reading must necessarily insist on their separateness in order for the reading to be consistent. For, if anger is only aroused by undeserved slight, and if it is one's worth, which makes the slight deserved or undeserved, it is necessary that the angry person consider his worth as separate from the honour paid to it; otherwise any slight would immediately legitimise itself.²⁶ For if one's worth consists in the esteem in which one is held, and one's honour or esteem is what is damaged by the slight, to what does the angry person then compare his esteem, in order to conclude that the slight is undeserved?

Thus, the honour reading must, on pain of inconsistency, insist on the separateness of worth and honour. What they *can* say, however, is that while slights do not lead to the immediate destruction or diminution of one's self-esteem they do cause self-doubt or recalcitrance about one's worth. Thus, a threat to one's status will lead to self-doubt; and it is this self-doubt, which prompts the angry person to seek revenge in order to reassure himself that he is not in fact worthless. The aim of revenge is thus, for the honour reading, in part to soothe one's hurt ego. The best support for this assumption, I think, is to be found in the following passage about mockery:

And [they are angry] with those who speak ill of or are disdainful about what they themselves care for, such as those who care about philosophy [become angry], if someone [speaks ill or is disdainful about] philosophy; or those who [care about] their looks, if someone [speaks ill or is disdainful about] their looks; and likewise about other things. And much more so, if they suspect that they do not have these things, either altogether or not to a great extent, or if they do not appear [to have them]. For if they strongly think they have in them that for which they are mocked, they do not care. (*Rhet.* 1378^a34^b2)

²⁵ Thus, e.g. Stocker and Hegeman, at times, simply translate '*axia*' as 'honour' (1996, e.g. p. 266).

²⁶ There must, therefore, be "some inner quality" (pace Taylor 1985, p. 55, quoted above on p. 25) to which the angry person compares the treatment he receives. Otherwise, anger would be impossible.

This passage seems to suggest that people who are mocked for features, they know they are lacking in, get more angry. And, perhaps, it is because they feel self-doubt that they are especially likely to react to mockery with anger. However, this observation of Aristotle's is not given as a central feature of anger but merely as an aggravating circumstance. Aristotle nowhere makes a necessary connection between slight and loss of self-esteem. (Indeed, there is no direct mention whatsoever of self-esteem in the account of anger at all!) Even if slights are worse and cause greater anger if they target features of ourselves, about which we are insecure, we may presumably still get angry at people mocking or insulting us, even if they fail to make us feel insecure about ourselves in the process: their behaviour remains outrageous and unwarranted. There is little reason to suppose that a slight must be "successful" in making us doubt our worth in order to arouse anger altogether. For even if insults are intended to cause dishonour and shame, this does not entail that this is true of slights in general. Yet, as we have seen, this is exactly what the honour reading appears to assume. For example, insisting on the immediate effect on one's self-evaluation in response to a slights, Stocker and Hegeman argue that in order for an insult to be serious enough to warrant anger it must be delivered by someone who, while not in a position to legitimately slight, is still someone important enough for their opinion to matter to us. Slights from people whose opinions do not warrant serious attention, they argue, are unlikely, or unable, to cause anger (at least in morally well-adjusted individuals). They write:

Inferiors must, however, have enough social standing to be taken seriously. The undeserved contempt of young and uneducated children for one's public speaking, say, may thus not be able to arouse *orgê* in a good adult (1996, p. 267)

The context of the above passage, however, suggests that the notion of self-doubt, if this is actually what the passage is about, pertains specifically to verbal abuse or mockery, which is a form of insult (*hubris*). There is, then, no direct, strong evidence in the *Rhetoric* to support the conclusion that this feature of shame or insecurity about oneself extends to all instances of slights – even if it is the *intended* result of a particular form of slight (insult). Moreover, the notion that slights from inferiors do not lead to anger is directly contradicted in the *Rhetoric*. For here, Aristotle tells us that slights from inferiors are more likely to cause anger, not less:

And [they are more angry] with those who are of no account (*tois en mêdeni logoi ousin*) if they slight them: for anger presupposes slight towards those who do not deserve [it], and inferiors ought not to slight (*prosêkei tois hêttoi mê oligôrein*). (*Rhet.* 1379^b10-13)

Aristotle here makes it clear that he thinks slights from people who are “of no account” do cause anger, and indeed are more prone to cause anger.²⁷ But if this is the case, and if anger essentially involves self-doubt, it follows that slights from inferiors *do* cause loss of self-esteem.

It would, however, be thoroughly puzzling were Aristotle to unqualifiedly endorse a necessary connection between loss of status and a lessened sense of self-worth. It is true, of course, that he does connect honour to self-esteem. Thus, Aristotle tells us, honour is pleasant because it reassures us that we are good people (e.g. *EN* 1095^b23-30, *Rhet.* 1371^a8-17), and for some people honour might be necessary to uphold a sense of self-worth. Moreover, to be sure, the virtuous person values his honour, and indeed values honour as the greatest of the external goods (e.g. *EN* 1123^b21-22, *EE* 1232^b10-14). However, Aristotle explicitly qualifies the virtuous man’s high valuation of honour. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, he writes:

Being especially concerned with honour, while being disdainful of the many and of reputation seems not to go together. But in saying this we need to make some distinctions. The greatness and smallness of honour has two dimensions. There is a difference between honour from a randomly selected crowd and honour of people of note. Honour also varies depending on what it is bestowed for: it is great not through the number and quality alone of those who bestow it, but because it is bestowed for honourable reasons. (*EE* 1232^b15-21)

²⁷ This passage is immediately followed by the curious passage that people are more angry when slighted by their friends. As we saw, Stocker and Hegeman suggest the reason is that people rely more intimately on the good opinions of their friends. But, given the context, it would not be implausible to assume that the same explanation applies to friends as applies to inferiors: namely that both have a special obligation not to slight. This, indeed, is the reason Aristotle gives in a previous passage to the same effect. (“And [they are angry] more with their friends than with those who are not their friends: For they think that they deserve more [*prosêkein mallon*] to be treated well by them than not [to be treated well]” *Rhet.* 1379^b2-4, cf. also *Pol.* 1328^a1-5). There is, then, little reason to suppose that slights need cause self-doubt, nor that slights from friends are worse for that reason.

Thus, in Aristotle's view, not all honour is equally valuable. In order for honour to be valuable to the virtuous man, it must be bestowed for the right reasons and by the right people. So whereas the virtuous man cares about the good opinion of people, whom he in turn respects, his attitude towards the opinions of the many is utter disdain. This is also made clear in a similar passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

It is, then, honours and dishonours that the magnanimous person most has to do with; and in the case of great honours, accorded to him by people of excellence, he will be moderately pleased, on the grounds that he is getting what belongs to him, or actually less than that – for there is no honour worthy of complete excellence. All the same, he will accept it insofar as they have nothing greater to mete out to him. As for honour from just about anyone, and given for small things, he will wholly disdain it (*pampan oligôrései*), because *that* is not what he is worthy of – and he will treat dishonour in the same way, for it will not justly attach to him. (*EN 1124^a5-13*)

The virtuous man, then, does not value all honour equally, and does not take the opinions of people he in turn despises as indicative of his own character. Moreover, the virtuous man, while he is pleased to be honoured, cares nothing for dishonour. Crucially for our present purposes, the reason he gives is that the virtuous man knows dishonour is not indicative of his character. Hence, his self-esteem and self-knowledge does not rely on him being honoured. On the contrary, the very reason why he can dismiss dishonour is that he knows his own worth! Aristotle defines the virtue of magnanimity, the virtue concerned with honour, as knowing one's worth (*EN 1123^b2-5*, *EE 1232^b31-1233^a2*)²⁸. And it is this correct valuation of his own worth, that it is great, which informs the magnanimous man's attitude to dishonour, and which leads him to seek honour. In respect to the former, because he knows he does not deserve it, in respect to the latter, because he knows that he does. For the virtuous man, then, self-knowledge comes before his valuation of honour.²⁹

²⁸ "The magnanimous person, then, seems to be the one who thinks himself worthy of great things and is really worthy of them. For if someone is not worthy of them, but thinks he is, he is foolish, and no virtuous man is foolish or senseless; hence the magnanimous person is the one we have mentioned." (*EN 1123^b2-5*)

²⁹ Note that this is not incompatible with the view that failure to exact revenge for a slight may lead to a loss of self-esteem. What I am denying is that loss of self-worth is the sole and independent reason for taking revenge. Presumably, a virtuous person would reproach himself for failing to live up to a moral requirement. But his reason for living up to that requirement is not that he would otherwise feel guilty or embarrassed (were this his motivation, he would be guided by shame (*aidôs*) and would thus fall short of virtue (cf. *EN IV.9*)). For instance, I may feel bad about a failure to pay back a loan or meet a deadline, but the reason that I would feel bad about this is not the explanation for why I consider paying back the loan or meeting the deadline the right cause of action. Similarly, a virtuous person may feel that he ought to take revenge for a slight, and reproach

However, it may still be that anger responds to dishonour, even if dishonour does not diminish the virtuous man's opinion of himself. After all, even if he does not take honour as indicative of his own worth, Aristotle's virtuous man is not completely unresponsive to dishonour. As Aristotle tells us, it would pain the magnanimous man "to be dishonoured and ruled over by an unworthy person" (*EE* 1232^b11-13). And perhaps this pain might manifest itself as anger? Let us, therefore, having eschewed the notion that anger must necessarily involve loss of or even a threat to one's self-esteem, investigate further the notion that anger is a response to dishonour.

The most pressing concern for this construal of slights is that it appears to conflict with the other view of anger espoused in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, that anger responds to injustice: for even if undeserved slights as the honour reading construes them are injustices, it seems that there are injustices that are not "dishonourings". So if slights are exclusively "dishonourings" how do we reconcile these two views? It seems to me that there are two possible approaches: One reply, given by Konstan, eschews the understanding of anger as a response to injustice altogether. Thus, he holds that even if Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* specifically connects anger to injustice, in the *Rhetoric*, he has "appropriated the moral dimension of anger" (2006, p. 68) to other emotions. The other possible reply, most recently put forward by Nussbaum (2016), is that for Aristotle, anger does indeed respond to an injustice but that the injustice is understood by the angry person as constituting a diminution or status-injury. (Hence, on this view, while anger responds to injustice, it does not respond to injustice qua injustice.)³⁰ Let us, then, proceed to examine each of these versions of the honour reading, starting with Konstan's.

Konstan (2003, 2006) argues that slights are specifically to be understood as separate from injustices in general. While slights must be undeserved to provoke anger, and anger

himself over a failure to do so, but the reason that he would feel bad is not the reason why he thinks taking revenge is the right course of action. On the contrary, the reason he would feel bad, is because he considers exacting revenge the right thing to do.

³⁰ For reason of presentation, I attribute the first view to Konstan, and the second to Nussbaum. Nussbaum does, however, give some indication that she might in fact agree with Konstan's narrow construal of slight in the *Rhetoric* (2016, 20-21). The view that she goes on to present as the "Aristotelian" account, however, is the less restrictive view that anger responds to injustices in general, but under the guise of "down-ranking" or status-injury. And indeed, as we shall see, this is the more reasonable version of the honour reading.

therefore is constrained by justice, slights are contrasted to unjust acts in general. For it is not merely the case, Konstan argues, that slights expresses an opinion that someone is “of no worth”. Rather, he argues, slights must be acts, which are specifically designed to express this opinion (2006, p. 46). The dishonour that follows a slight, therefore, is not simply its result – it is its intended result. Konstan takes this reading from Aristotle’s explication of the two kinds of slights spite and insult, that they are specifically characterised as not committed for the sake of gain. This criterion, he thinks, is indicative of the general nature of all slights. The reason, he argues, why slight must not be committed for the sake of gain, is that acts committed for the sake of gain are not clearly identifiable as resulting from the opinion that the other is “of no worth”. Unjust acts, he holds, even if they may entail dishonour for the offended, are not slights, unless they express, and are designed to express, a sense of superiority and disdain for the victim’s status.³¹ And this kind of superiority and disdain is most perfectly expressed in acts devoid of other possible motives. Spite and insult, it seems, are not merely acts expressing the opinion that the other is worthless; they are acts *intended* to express such an opinion. For if not for personal gain, what other reason could one have for deliberately obstructing someone else’s pursuits, or for taking pleasure in their humiliation? Therefore, they are the most clear-cut examples of slights. Unjust acts committed for the sake of gain, on the other hand, do not constitute slights; for in such acts, there is a competing motive other than the object’s denigration, and hence the opinion, which the act can be taken to express, need not be that the object “is of no worth”. People may harm us, and harm us unjustly, but still believe us to be dangerous adversaries, whose capacity for retaliation must be taken into account. Indeed, we may interpret someone’s harmful actions against us precisely as the result of their prudent consideration of us as constituting a threat that must be defeated for the sake of their own safety. This is an act for the sake of personal gain, which does not involve treating someone as if they are worthless, in the sense of “incapable of good or bad” in Konstan’s sense. Therefore, he argues, such acts do not constitute slights, and hence do not arouse anger.

Of course, Konstan does not need to hold that acts committed for the sake of gain cannot be *interpreted* as slights. It is not, I think, his view that acts that can be *taken for* slights must

³¹ E.g. Konstan writes: “The kind of affront that provokes anger, Aristotle explains, must be neither in reprisal for an offense, not beneficial to the offender, but purely a function of arrogance – that is, a form of belittlement. [...] Anger is not a response to harm as such, even when the harm is intentional.” (2006, p. 46)

actually be intended to express the opinion that the other is of no worth. As examples of slights, Aristotle names several acts, which can hardly be conceived as deliberate slights. For example, he mentions the forgetting of a name or inattentiveness to someone's suffering (*Rhet.* 1379^b10-17). Yet, it is hard to see how these could be deliberate, even if they may be construed as culpable ignorance. On the other hand, it is not so difficult to see how these could be examples of behaviour indicative of the attitude of slight. Remembering that the central element of anger is a *perceived* slight, Konstan may still account for these examples. What he remains committed to, however, is the view that from the perspective of the angry person, the offender's act must be interpreted as a deliberate expression that he is "of no worth" (cf. Konstan 2006, p. 46).

This narrow construal of slight, Konstan argues, is also why someone else's revenge on us does not cause us to get angry. For, he argues, a desire to take revenge does not require that one consider the other worthless:

One might suppose that Aristotle excludes revenge or retribution as a cause of anger on the grounds that the victim is aware that he has earned it, and, as Aristotle says, we do not get angry when we perceive that we are suffering justly. But what of harm inflicted for the sake of personal advantage? Aristotle's line of reasoning is clearly the same in both cases: getting even with another, or doing harm for the sake of gain, do not in themselves betray a belief that the target of such behavior is of no importance, and hence do not count as slights, which are the only grounds for anger. Anger is not a response to harm as such, even when the harm is intentional. (Konstan, 2003, p. 109)

This explanation, however, even if consistent with Konstan's reading, does not seem to chime with the one Aristotle himself gives in the *Rhetoric*. To be sure, Aristotle *does* tell us that acts done in anger are not slights:

And against those who have acted in anger, they are either not angry or less angry, since they do not appear to have acted out of slight (*ou gar di' oligôrian phainontai praxai*): For no one slights when angry, since whereas slight is painless, anger is with pain. (*Rhet.* 1380^a34-1380^b1)

This passage seems to support Konstan's argument to some degree. For here Aristotle does seem to think that a desire for revenge precludes the action it leads to from constituting slight. However, it is important to note that the reason Aristotle gives does not have to do with any feature of revenge itself, but with the painful nature of anger, and the painlessness of slight. Konstan is of course right in saying that an act of revenge need not indicate slight; there is no conceptual reason why we may not wish revenge upon people, we deem otherwise worthy of respect. However, we have seen above, the opposite may also be the case. Moreover, Aristotle goes on to give a further reason, for why retaliation does not qualify as cause for anger:

And [people are mild] if they think they themselves have done injustice and suffer justly, for anger is not aroused against what is just: for they no longer think that they suffer against desert, which is what anger is. (*Rhet.* 1380^b16-18)

Unlike the above passage, the indication here clearly is that revenge does not constitute undeserved slight, with the emphasis on 'undeserved'. And this is not because a desire for revenge precludes, or fails to indicate with certainty, that one thinks the other worthless. Rather, it is because the victim of revenge does not consider the other's action unjust.³² This argument, then, trades on the desert-constraint on anger, and not on what sorts of action may or may not be interpreted as slights. Thus, the reason why Aristotle thinks (legitimate) acts of revenge do not cause anger is not that they cannot constitute slights, but rather that they are perceived as deserved. Hence, the justice constraint remains in place. Moreover, Konstan's construal of the rationale underlying revenge makes his assertion that revenge does not constitute slight quite puzzling. Consider the following passage:

A slight, as we have seen, consists according to Aristotle in the active belief that another person is of no account. The response to such an act is to restore the opinion of one's worth by an act of reprisal [...]. Anger is just the desire to restore the state of affairs prior to the insult *by depreciating the offender in turn*. (Konstan 2006, p. 55, my italics)

Here Konstan makes it quite clear that he thinks revenge is an intentional act of depreciation. Hence revenge, in Konstan's view, is exactly the kind of act, which Konstan

³² Cf. *EN* 1149^b21-24

considers a slight to be. As discussed above, there is nothing precluding us from anger, and hence from desiring and taking revenge on people we consider inferior. Contrariwise, in Aristotle's view, it is exactly the fact that we consider them inferior, which causes us to see their slight as undeserved, and hence to desire revenge. In the case of slights from inferiors, then, it seems the evaluation that the other "is of no worth" is in fact intrinsic to the evaluation leading to the desire for revenge, since it is exactly their lack of worth, which makes the slight undeserved. The reason why someone's just revenge upon us does not constitute a reason for anger, therefore, must lie in the notion of desert (as Aristotle clearly tells us), and not in what kind of attitudes can or cannot be expressed in an act of revenge.

Konstan's construal of Aristotle's anger makes for an extremely restrictive account (as he himself acknowledges (2003, p. 108)). Acts motivated by gain and acts of revenge, even if they are perceived as undeserved are not, in his view, causes for anger: For unless they are interpreted as involving an immediate motive of intentional dishonouring they do not constitute slights. This is needlessly restrictive and quite counterintuitive – even if we accept the premise that anger is related to slight as dishonouring. Thus, for example, we might think that being simply overlooked and ignored is even worse for one's status than being intentionally insulted. Intentional insults may be hurtful and damaging to a person's ego, but at least they acknowledge his existence. On the other hand, one might think that for some people simply being unintentionally overlooked indicates an even worse form of slight than being deliberately snubbed. (Consider, for instance, the unnamed protagonist in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, and his yearlong quarrel with an officer, who never knows he exists.) More worrisome, however, is that Konstan's narrow construal of slights entails that many, and perhaps most, unjust acts are ruled out as causes of anger. It is of course the case that Aristotle does indeed rule out some cases of injustices as causes for anger. Thus, e.g. in order for actions to constitute slights, they must be committed voluntarily. Conversely, acts done involuntarily are ruled out; as are acts that harm us but were not intended to have the consequences they did (*Rhet.* 1380^a9-13). In order for an action to constitute a slight, then, it must be (interpreted as) deliberate, or at least the result of culpable ignorance (cf. section 4.4.2). Yet, Konstan's account is even more restrictive than this. For, in his view, all unjust acts interpreted as committed for any other motive than deliberate diminution of the victim's status are ruled out as causes for anger. This, of

course, does not entail that people are not emotionally affected by unjust harm. But in response to unjust harm, he argues, people feel not anger, but hate (Konstan 2003) (*to misein, ekhthra*) or indignation (*to nemessan*) (Konstan 2006).

Hate, Konstan argues, is the emotional response or attitude reserved for hostile and harmful injustices (2003, pp. 109-111, cf. 2006 p. 45-6, cf. also Stocker & Hegeman, pp. 266-7). However, as Aristotle construes hate in the *Rhetoric*, it seems a poor candidate for an immediate emotional reaction to particular injustices. Hate, Aristotle tells us, is a response to a person's character (*Rhet.* 1382^a4). Thus, hate does not require a particular occasioning act, but a character judgment (see Fortenbaugh 2002 [1975], p. 15). For the same reason, Aristotle holds, we may hate not just particular people, but classes of people. Anger, as we have seen, is a personal relation occasioned by a particular event – hence it requires a specific target, identified as the author of the slight. Hate, on the other hand, is general and principled. “Everyone,” Aristotle writes, “hates a thief or a sycophant” (*Rhet.* 1382^a6). While it is the case that hate, for Aristotle, may sometimes be occasioned by some particular act or event (as candidates, he mentions anger, spite, and slander (*Rhet.* 1382^a2))³³, it seems that, on Aristotle's view, when we hate people, we do not hate them qua authors of that particular action. Rather, we come to hate them for what they are, on account of what that action tells us of their character; and we would have hated them even if they had never acted towards us as they did (*Rhet.* 1382^a3-4).

For these reasons, Aristotle thinks, hate does not inspire a desire for revenge. When we hate someone, he writes, we do not wish them to feel pain, but for bad things to happen to them (1383^a9), or simply that they “cease to exist” (1382^a15-16). Thus, unlike in anger, it is not important that we ourselves are the authors of what befalls them, or that we perceive what happens to them (1382^a9). Hate, then, appears to be the attitude one bears towards one's enemies, or to bad people in general, rather than a particular reaction to a particular injustice. As Konstan himself notes, hate, in Aristotle's analysis, is “a settled and principled antagonism” (2003, p. 111). And while perhaps we may grow to hate a repeated offender, to think that the general emotional response to any and all perceived injustices against us is to

³³ Although, importantly, unlike in the case of anger, he does not specify that these act must be directed against oneself or one's own.

develop a “settled and principled antagonism” (which involves wishing the offender dead!) is surely implausible, and surely not what Aristotle has in mind. What, for instance, would he consider one’s reaction to be towards injustices from people one generally cares about? Moreover, hate is specifically contrasted to anger as painless; yet, surely, it is painful to be the subject of unjust harm.³⁴ The reason Aristotle gives for the painlessness of hate is that “The things which cause pain are all perceptible while things, which are especially bad are least perceptible, such as injustice or folly. For the [mere] presence of vice (*kakia*) causes no pain” (*Rhet.* 1382^a10-11). Presumably, what Aristotle means is that viciousness in someone is a mere potentiality for harm, and it is only once that potentiality is activated that it causes bad things to happen, and consequently pain. The fact that vicious people exist, by itself, is painless. It is the vicious and harmful actions of evil people, which cause harm and pain to their victims. Hate, however, does not respond to those actions, but to the evil people themselves, and not because their actions or because of any harm they may or may not inflict, but to their mere existence, because they are evil. Hence, hate is painless.

If this is what hate is, it seems a poor candidate to fill the conceptual space vacated by Konstan’s narrow construal of anger, since neither the cognitive content nor the phenomenal nature of hate in Aristotle’s account seems to match the task Konstan wants it to fulfil. For since hate is occasioned by the character of the opponent, and not by a specific act, since it is a painless, and since it is a settled state also felt towards classes, hate cannot be understood as an immediate response to a particular unjust harmful act.

The other candidate Konstan suggests to take the place of anger as an emotional response to unjust acts is indignation (*to nemesan*). Indignation in the *Rhetoric* is indeed an emotion essentially connected to justice. However, rather than a reaction to injustice, indignation is introduced as the antithesis to pity (and the noble cousin of malicious envy (*phthonos*)):

Most directly opposite to pity is indignation (*to nemesan*). For pain at undeserved good fortune is, in one sense, opposite to pain at undeserved bad fortune, and is due to the same character. And both emotions show good character, for one ought to sympathise and pity those who undeservedly

³⁴ Aristotle’s emphasis in the painlessness of evil is a general cause for concern among commentators (Konstan included, 2003 p. 111). Thus, for instance, Dow (2011) argues that Aristotle is wrong to classify both love and hate as emotions, since Aristotle defines emotions as essentially involving pleasure and pain. See also Cooper 1996, p. 243.

fare badly, and be indignant with those who [undeservedly] fare well. For what happens contrary to desert is unjust, whence we ascribe indignation even to the gods. (*Rhet.* 1386^b10-16)

Indignation is “pain caused by perceived undeserved prosperity (*euprattein*)” (*Rhet.* 1387^a9-10) in terms of material goods (*Rhet.* 1387^a13-15). However, Aristotle does not seem to think that those, with whom we are indignant, must have necessarily done anything wrong or unjust. Rather, indignation seems to respond to a form of “cosmic” injustice; that those who ought not do well, do well. This also seems to be implied by Aristotle’s repeated use of ‘*tugchanô*’ (‘happen to’, ‘obtain’, ‘come upon’) to describe the type of acquisition of goods that cause indignation. Moreover, whereas anger focuses on the harm done to the victim (whether in terms of status or in a more general way), indignation responds only to the benefit of the offender.³⁵ Perhaps this is why indignation is not tied to any specific propensity for action: the indignant, even if they may feel some moral satisfaction when they see people lose what they are unworthy of (*Rhet.* 1386^b25-29), are not said to actively pursue any rectification of this perceived injustice. Presumably, this is because no particular infraction lies behind the injustice: there is no unjust harm to be rectified, nor is there any particular, identifiable victim to be compensated or avenged.

Consequently, and more importantly, indignation lacks the personal or agent-centred nature, which was also absent from the account of hate. When we respond with indignation, we may think that the object of our emotion is a bad person, or perhaps even that they have committed some wrong,³⁶ however, there is absolutely no indication that indignation requires that oneself or one’s own have been the subject of the other’s injustice. If this is the case, however, indignation cannot fill the gap vacated as a consequence of Konstan’s narrow construal of anger, as a response to injustice towards oneself or one’s own.

All of this may of course simply be the case. Perhaps Aristotle really did not consider any particular emotional response to being the subject of injustice. However, this would leave a lacuna in Aristotle’s account: a lacuna, which is quite conspicuous given the emphasis on

³⁵ Aristotle does write that we may be particularly indignant, when others, whom we think more deserving, or we ourselves, are comparatively worse off, than the one with whom we are indignant (*Rhet.* 1387^b4-15). Yet, the definition is quite clear: indignation, as the antithesis to pity, responds to undeserved prosperity, without reference to one’s own position. These, then, must be regarded as aggravating circumstances, which make indignation more likely, or more intense, and not as intrinsic to indignation itself.

³⁶ E.g. *Rhet.* 1387^a35^b2

anger in contemporary oratory. Anger played a central role in particular in forensic oratory appealing to the punitive mind set of the jury: appeals to anger serves as appeals to the jury's sense of justice, and their desire to punish unjust and harmful acts (see Allen 2001, pp. 51ff, 151ff, e.g. Dem. 19.91, 21.123, 21.8, Lys. 32.19). One would think, therefore, that Aristotle should at least have some comment on such appeals; and if he reinterprets anger in the way Konstan suggests, something else would need to take the place of anger in many cases. Yet, as we have seen, neither of Konstan's suggested candidates seems to fit such a description.

There is, however, a second option open to the honour reading. For it is not at all necessary, even if one thinks slights involve dishonour, to think that slights must be interpreted as deliberately intended to dishonour. As noted above, the specific focus on a lack of motive for gain is not characteristic of all slights, but only of spite and insult. The second option, (which is the view introduced by Nussbaum as the "Aristotelian" view (2016, p. 20-21, although see n. 30 above),) then, is to hold that all unjust acts committed against us (excluding those which are the result of ignorance, etc.) are slights in the sense of involving an attitude of depreciation of someone's worth or status. Blatant disregard for someone's moral deserts, under this reading, involves a depreciation of their social status; hence to be the subject of injustice is to be dishonoured. Importantly, however, this means that when we get angry over an injustice, we are not concerned with the unjust act as an injustice, but with the act as a depreciation of our status (Nussbaum 2016, p. 25). An injustice, then, is perceived by the angry person as an indignity, which leads to loss of status, and requires retaliation to restore hierarchical order (p. 26).³⁷ For instance if someone, for the sake of gain, cheats me of my fair share in a business transaction, he has not merely deprived me of some good; he has treated my moral deserts as unimportant, something, which can be ignored for the sake of his gain. His disregard, however, is not interpreted as disregard for my moral claim to my fair share, but for me as a person of such-and-such status or rank, etc. The result is a lowering of my status relative to him. And my status can only be re-established by an act, which shows him that his action was not merely wrong, but that it was wrong because of what he takes me to be. Revenge, then, shows the offender that I am not a person whose moral claims can be dismissed with impunity; that I am superior, or at least equal, to him and up to the task of defending myself against such indignities.

³⁷ For this view, see also Cairns (2003, esp. pp. 26-28).

This reading has the advantage of making sense of Aristotle's examples of slights that are not overtly intended to diminish someone's honour, and more broadly, of anger as a response to unjust harm. For it is no longer the case that anger requires us to think someone intended to denigrate us in order to feel diminished and dishonoured by his actions. However, we should not overlook the important caveat, that even if anger under this construal of slight may respond to injustices, it does not respond to injustice qua injustice: the focus on the injustice as an indignity has the effect of turning the central concern of the angry person away from the injustice itself. For importantly, according to this version of the honour reading, what we desire when angry is not for the injustice itself to be addressed. On the contrary, as in Konstan's reading, the focus of the angry person remains squarely on the relative status of offender and victim: that the latter has depreciated the status of the former, who requires the offender's reciprocal and relative diminution.

This, however, seems misguided. For is it really the case that morally and psychologically well-developed individuals respond to injustices in this way? Of course, it may be the case, as Nussbaum points out, that "[i]t is very easy for people to shift mentally from a eudaimonistic concern (this is part of my circle of concern, what I care about) to a narcissistic status-focused concern (this is all about my pride and rank)" (2016, pp. 25-26). However, Aristotle's account in the *Rhetoric* is supposed to explain not merely how some people feel when angry but what anger is in itself. Consequently, this kind of "mental shift" must occur when all people, even good and virtuous ones, feel anger.

This "shift" in the evaluative concern of the angry person, becomes even more problematic in the case of anger on part of others. If a stranger hurts someone I love and care for, it is difficult to see how I may plausibly take this as an attack on me or on my status. I do not know the stranger, nor does he know me; so how can his action be understood as involving, and indeed be the result of an evaluation that *I* am "of no worth"? Yet, Aristotle certainly thinks that anger may be a response to injustice or slights towards others. As the definition of anger states, anger is caused by undeserved slight towards "oneself or one's own". So how do we make sense of such cases? There are, I think, two possible answers open to the honour reading.

On the one hand, we may think that Aristotle would indeed consider an attack on a loved one a slight to oneself. However, as Nussbaum notes, this would involve some measure of cognitive error or misinterpretation on part of the angry person: For how can someone, who does not know me, and who may not even know of my existence, entertain an opinion that I am of no worth (2016, p. 25-26)? More seriously, however, as Nussbaum rightfully goes on to point out, there is something deeply morally amiss, and indeed narcissistic, in reacting to an attack on a friend or a loved one as a diminution of one's own status. What should concern us ought not to be an egocentric focus on ourselves, but a sympathetic reaction to their plight. So while it seems at least somewhat misguided in the case of injustices towards oneself to take the primary concern to be loss of status, it becomes positively morally objectionable that this should be the primary concern when someone else is the victim.

Alternatively, (a possibility not considered by Nussbaum) we might think that we get angry on part of others, not because we misinterpret their humiliation as affecting our own status, but because of the unjust diminution of the other. It is thus not the case that we get angry because of a selfish concern for status, but because we care for them and about the indignity they have been subjected to. And there is some reason to think that this is exactly what Aristotle intends. To this end, it is of considerable importance that Aristotle specifically writes in the definition of anger that we get angry at slights "toward ourselves or our own."³⁸ This seems to imply, that a slight towards "one's own" is not a slight towards oneself. If that were the case, we should rather expect the explanation for anger on part of others to feature in the definition of slight, and not in the definition of anger as a separate condition. Thus, we might expect the definition of slight to be something like "the manifestation of the

³⁸ On the other hand, Aristotle does write that "people are angry with those who slight such people, which it would be shameful (*aischron*) for them not to defend, such as parents, children, wives, and dependents" (*Rhet.* 1379^b27-29). This does appear to imply that it might be detrimental to one's honour if one were not to revenge such insults. However, the wording still makes it clear that the slight is directed toward these people, and not oneself. Moreover, the fact that it would be shameful for one not to defend them (and thus that the slight affects one's honour) does not imply that this potential shame is the cause for one's anger. This passage could equally be taken to imply that a slight towards "one's own" is something, to which one is morally required to respond – and that, for this reason, it would be shameful to fail to do so. Thus, Aristotle regularly uses '*aischron*' to refer to what is morally base or repugnant.

opinion that oneself and one's own are worthless". But this is not what we get in Aristotle's account.

However, if a slight towards "one's own" is not a slight towards one self, if it is their status, which is on the line, what is the reason for our anger? We may grieve with them, of course, and wish to help them through their suffering. But what makes *their* diminution a cause for *our* anger? And what reason do we have, what constitutes our motivation, to seek revenge? If we think that essentially anger responds to the feeling of having been dishonoured there is little to explain this in the case of anger on part of others: for their diminution is not ours. We may of course desire, that they regain their lost status, but if that is the case, anger seems more like a desire to correct a wrong. This explanation, therefore, shifts us away from the honour reading. For now, the reason for our being angry is not that our status is called into question, but rather that "our own" have been unjustly harmed (albeit "status-harmed") and that we require they be compensated for their loss. Thus, any sensible explanation of (non-narcissistic) anger on part of others requires that we consider anger as responding specifically to an injustice, and that revenge is (at least in part) a desire for moral satisfaction, not re-established status.

3.2 WORTH AS POWER

This, then, brings us to the notion of worth and desert. For if the central evaluation of anger is that oneself or one's own have been treated contrary to desert, what grounds this desert? As we saw, what makes a slight undeserved, unjust, is that the opinion the slight expresses, is false: that it is not the case that the object of slight is "of no worth". But what is "worth"?

For the honour reading, we saw in the previous chapter, worth in the end reduces to power. The honour reading's construal of worth is supported by a number of passages. The strongest indication, I think, is found in the explication of worth following the definition of slight. ("For we think both good and bad things are worthy of serious attention, as well as also what amounts to these, but whatever amounts to nothing at all or little, we assume to be of no worth." (*Rhet.* 1378^b10-15)) The honour reading takes this explication to report Aristotle's considered view about what amounts to worth. Worth, according to the honour reading, is capacity for good or bad, for it is on account of this capacity that we deserve

respect, and, if necessary, can command it. And since the honour reading takes anger to respond to dishonour, worth will be a desert for honour.

This, however, is problematic for several reasons. First, it is problematic since Aristotle explicitly states that neither social position nor power grounds desert in respect to honour. Thus, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*' discussion of magnanimity, he writes:

The result of good fortune, however, also seems to contribute to magnanimity. For the highborn, the powerful and the rich are thought worthy of honour, since they are in a superior position, and everything superior in something good is more honoured. That is why these things make people more magnanimous, since some people honour their possessors for these goods. In reality, however, it is only the good person, who is to be honoured; but the person who has both is widely thought more worthy of honour. Those who lack virtue but have these other goods, cannot justly claim to be worthy of great things, and are not rightly called magnanimous; that is impossible without complete virtue. But when they possess these goods they become arrogant and insolent (*hubristai*). For without virtue, it is not easy to bear the results of good fortune suitably, and when these people cannot do it, but suppose they are superior to other people, they think less of everyone else, and do whatever they please. They do this because they are imitating the magnanimous person though they are not really like him. They imitate him where they can; hence, they do not act in accordance with virtue, but they think less of other people. For the magnanimous person is justified when he thinks less of others, since his beliefs are true; but the many think less of others with no good reason. (EN 1124^a21-^b8)

Here, Aristotle makes it clear, that while certainly many people think that power, wealth and status grounds desert for honour, people who think so are deceived (see also his remarks in the *Rhetoric* to the same effect, e.g. 1387^a11-15, 1387^b4-8). Honour does indeed indicate superiority, but the superiority, which grounds claims to honour, is superiority in virtue. Aristotle also alludes to this kind of misunderstanding in the *Rhetoric*, when he writes that:

Men expect to be specially respected by his inferiors in birth, in power, in goodness, and generally in anything, in which he is much their superior; as where money is concerned, a wealthy man looks for respect from a poor man; where oratory is concerned the man with a turn for oratory looks for respect from one who cannot speak; the ruler demands the respect of the ruled, and the man who thinks he ought to be a ruler demands the respect of the man, whom he thinks he ought to rule. Hence, it has been said:

“Great is the wrath of kings, whose father is almighty Zeus”

and

“Yea, but his rancour abideth long afterward also”,

their great resentment being due to their great superiority. (*Rhet.* 1378^b36-79^a4)

People, Aristotle thinks, generally tend to take whatever they think they themselves excel in as grounding claims to honour, and they will be especially prickly in respect to this quality of theirs (*Rhet.* 1378^a34-^b2). But Aristotle’s reporting the fact that some people consider certain qualities valuable and to ground a just claim to honour, does not entail that he thinks they are right. Yet, for the honour reading, it seems, the equation of worth with social status or power is not merely an idiosyncratic fallacy of some misguided individuals; it is essential to anger. But if this is the case, the conclusion must be that for the virtuous person every episode of anger betrays a deep confusion about his moral deserts. The virtuous person knows that the only honour that is worth having is honour from good people and given in recognition of his virtue. But why should he then think that a display of power superiority (which the honour reading takes both slights and revenge to be) should do anything to diminish or restore his honour among people who hold the same values as him? He knows that power does not amount to a claim to honour, and he has no use for “false” honours awarded for the wrong reason, or by the many. The honour reading, then, ascribes a double inconsistency to Aristotle; first when it argues that loss of honour is essential to anger, and second when it argues that worth equals social position or power.

The reason, I think, why the proponents of the honour reading takes the apparent equation of worth and power at face value is that it grounds the distinction of the three kinds of slights. Aristotle specifically mentions that what constitutes spite as slight is that the spiteful person considers the other incapable of either benefitting or hurting him (*Rhet.* 1378^b20-23). However, insult (harming others for the sake of one’s own gratification), or spite (obstructing others without an intend to benefit therefrom), are not the kind of actions, we should think characteristic of the virtuous man. So, even if the opinion expressed in spite and insult is that power is tantamount to worth, this does not entail that Aristotle endorses this opinion. Spiteful and insolent people are vicious, and vicious people do not possess the

moral knowledge required to judge correctly what is and is not valuable or worthy. So if someone spites or insults a virtuous person, the reason for his anger need not be that he himself confuses his capacity for revenge with his moral desert, or with his claim to honour. The error lies entirely on the part of the offender. Nevertheless, they have still failed to treat him according to what he considers his own deserts, even if these are grounded in a different (and morally appropriate) standard. Their behaviour is spiteful and insolent, and he does not deserve to be treated this way. Importantly, then, anger does not require a conflation of one's worth with one's power. Two different standards of what amounts to worth may be in play.

Indeed, the mistaken conflation of power and worth seems to be exactly what is at play when Aristotle explains the insolence of the youth and the rich. "For", he writes, "they think they make themselves superior by being insolent" (*Rhet.* 1378^b28-29), and if insult is an expression of power superiority, it is because they express their power superiority, that they feel superior in worth. Similarly, Aristotle remarks (in the passage quoted above) that those who possess power and wealth, but are without virtue, are arrogant and insolent (*hubristai*) (*EN* 1124^a29-30, cf. *Pol.* 1295^b9). The fact that certain slights involve confusion of what amounts to worth, however, does not entail that the object of slight is himself mistaken, when he reacts to the slight with anger. It seems, then, that we should not take the *endoxon* that worth equals capacity for good or bad to express Aristotle's view of what constitutes worth (at least not unqualifiedly). On the contrary, it is invoked to explain the occurrence of slights such as spite and insult.

The second reason the honour reading (here, again, in Konstan's version) assumes that worth equals power is the requirement that anger must involve thinking that revenge is possible, and the mutual exclusivity of anger and fear. Aristotle writes:

And [people are mild] towards those they fear or before whom they are ashamed, so long as they feel this way, they will not become angry. For it is impossible to be afraid and angry at the same time. (*Rhet.* 1380^a32-34)

According to Konstan, anger requires power (2006, p. 57) because a slight is deserved or undeserved on account of whether one is capable of avenging it. Thus, he argues (2006, p. 56) that the reason why Aristotle believes we are not angry with those we fear, is that fear involves acknowledging that the other is *superior* to us, and hence that the slight is not *undeserved* (*mê prosêkontos*). So if we cannot retaliate, the other may legitimately slight us. As Konstan writes: “if your position is inferior it is no insult to be reminded of it” (2006, p. 55). The reason why fear excludes anger, then, according to Konstan, is that it intrinsically involves an acknowledgement of the other’s superiority, and hence his “right to slight”. However, Aristotle never explains the fact that it is impossible to feel fear and anger at the same time, by an identification of worth and power. Now, Aristotle does think that there is a connection between being afraid of someone and admitting their superiority, at least in some sense. He writes:

And [people are mild] towards those who humble themselves and do not dispute: for they appear to admit that they are inferior, and those who are inferior are afraid, and no one, who is afraid, slights: that anger ceases towards those who humble themselves is made clear by dogs, for they do not bite those who sit down. (Rhet. 1380^a22-26)

Konstan takes this to imply that the notion of inferiority and superiority at work in the evaluation of desert are, in all cases, in terms of power (e.g. 2006 p.57). Slightings involve, at least in the cases of insult and spite, a notion of power superiority on part of the offender. But if this is the case, it is impossible to slight and be afraid at the same time. Thus, the admission of inferiority relevant to the argument, and implied by someone’s fear, is indeed an admission of power-inferiority. Importantly, however, in this example, we are seeing things from the perspective of the slighter: we do not ascribe an attitude of slight to someone who clearly fears us, since people who slight generally take themselves to be *superior* in terms of power.

However, admitting power inferiority does not entail admission of moral inferiority. So unless we have already accepted the honour reading’s notion that power superiors, qua power superiors, have the right to slight power inferiors, the mutual exclusivity of fear and anger has little independent traction as a justification for the equation of worth and power

in general. For the fact that admission of power inferiority entails fear, and fear excludes slight does not establish that admission of power inferiority entails a forfeit of one's moral deserts. One can feel inferior in terms of power and still believe that one has been unjustly treated. Therefore, if we can give some other explanation for the mutual exclusion of anger and fear, the fear constraint gives us no independent reason to accept the honour reading. Here, then, is a sketch of such an explanation.

First, it is noteworthy that anger and fear have opposite physical properties: anger involves boiling blood around the heart; in fear, we are cool and go pale (*DA* 403a26^{b1}, *EN* 1128^{b10-16}, *MA* 701^{b18}, 22-3, *Problems* 877^{a24-6}).³⁹ Of course, noting that the two emotions involve opposite bodily states does nothing to explain their conceptual mutual exclusivity. And since emotions are “enmattered accounts” (*logoi enuloi*), which involve both physical and cognitive components, their mutual exclusivity cannot be explained merely by reference to their differing physiological make up. However, the physiologically opposite nature of anger and fear highlights the fact that their mutual exclusivity may have to do, not with any convoluted relation to the notion of desert involved in the cognitive content of anger, but is a result of more “technical” oppositions in the respective psychologies of anger and fear.

A feature of Aristotle's account is that anger must involve actively entertaining some notion that revenge is attainable. Thus, he writes, we do not feel anger towards the dead, or those who otherwise cannot come to feel our revenge. This, of course, does not entail that we cannot have irrational, or “silly” (*EN* 1111^{b20-22}), desires for what is in fact impossible⁴⁰. And indeed, Aristotle goes on to cite such a case of irrational desire in anger:

Hence, the poet spoke well about Hector, when he wanted Achilles to cease his anger:

“For it is senseless clay he abuses in his wrath” (*Rhet.* 1380^{b28-30})

Actively entertaining a desire involves the imagination (*phantasia*) of the desired object (e.g. *DA* 433^{b12}, 27-29). (As we saw in section 1.2.1, this *phantasia* is the reason for anger also

³⁹ Cf. Pearson (2012, pp. 115-116) for a discussion of the interplay of fear and anger in respect to their related bodily states.

⁴⁰ Such as a desire for immortality (e.g. *EN* 1111b22-23, *EE* 1225b32-34) (cf. Pearson 2012, p. 31).

being pleasant (*Rhet.* 1378^b8-10.) Hence, in the example, when Achilles realises the folly of continuing to abuse a dead body, he ceases to be angry. But so long as he rages, he must, at least in some sense, entertain the idea that Hector is still perceiving the revenge exacted on him. Thus, it seems, when angry, we must, if not believe that revenge is possible then at least be able to sustain some quasi-perceptual imagination, *phantasia*, of the revenge to come. In order to desire revenge, then, we must, at the very least, be able to sustain an imagination of revenge, in order to have that desire. When afraid, however, we may not be able to sustain such an imagination. For Aristotle, fear is the *phantasia* of imminent danger (*Rhet.* 1382^a21-3). Aristotle stresses that we do not fear things that are far away or not presently a concern. (We are not, for example, constantly in a state acute fear of death, even though we all know that we must die (*Rhet.* 1382^a24-7)). Fear of someone, then, is not a quasi-dispositional state towards a person whom I know may potentially harm me, but an acute state of terror that I am at this very moment in immediate danger of him doing so. I suspect, then, that Aristotle's thought is the following: Anger involves entertaining the possibility of revenge, or at least an imagined possibility; but in the presence of an immediate threat, I cannot entertain such a possibility. Being angry and afraid would not merely be a case of an irrational or recalcitrant emotion (as Achilles in the example above). It is not simply that I experience a conflict between my rational belief (Hector is dead) and some cognitive component of my emotional state (Hector currently perceives my revenge); nor between belief and perceptual impression (such as being subject to an optical illusion).⁴¹⁴² Rather, anger and fear are opposite activities of the spirited part of the soul (*thumos*).⁴³ Thus, being subject simultaneously to both anger and fear, would involve both having opposite impressions (*phantasiai*), and being moved, by way of the same faculty (*thumos*) towards opposite aims (i.e. towards fight and flight), all at the same time. But it seems that this would be impossible. Either a person is angry, and his inflamed *thumos* and pleasant expectation of revenge makes it impossible to appreciate anything as fearsome or dangerous (*EN* 1115^a27-^b9, *Pol.* 1312^b26-30). Or he is afraid and his state of sheer terror makes it impossible for him to enjoy at the same time a pleasant *phantasia* of himself triumphing

⁴¹ Such as the appearance that the sun seems a foot across, discussed in *De Anima* III.3 (*DA* 428^b2-4).

⁴² Scholarship is divided as to the specific role of *phantasia* in emotions, and whether emotions require belief, *phantasia*, or both. However, most agree that Aristotle considers recalcitrant or irrational emotions to be explained as a conflict between belief (*doxa*, *hupolêpsis*) and *phantasia*. (Cf. Cooper 1996, Dow 2009, 2013, Moss 2012, chap. 4, esp. pp. 97-9, Pearson 2014)

⁴³ *Top.* 126^a2-12. Cf. Cooper (1996, pp.249-50).

over the feared object.⁴⁴ But he cannot experience both at the same time. This would require not merely opposite impressions (*phantasiai*) about the same thing, but also that these opposite impression moved the same faculty (*thumos*) towards two opposite motivations. And even if the former is possible, surely, the latter is not.

Note, however, that there is nothing to prohibit the possibility of my anger resurfacing once the immediate threat has passed; or for *thumos* to overcome a state of fear. I may vacillate between anger and fear feeling the two successively as I entertain in turn thoughts of pleasant triumphant revenge and painful imminent destruction. Anger and fear are *pathê*, occurrent and acute states, not settled dispositions. This is why Aristotle explicitly stresses that fear excludes anger, “so long as [the persons experiencing fear] feel this way” (“*heôs gar houtôs echôsin*”, *Rhet.* 1380^a32-3). If this is the case, moreover, there is nothing to prevent us from feeling undeservedly slighted without experiencing anger. This also seems to be implied in the *Topics*, when Aristotle argues that the pain of anger “comes before” anger (*Top.* 125^b32-34). One may have the impression, and hence the pain, of undeserved slight, but for some reason still not be roused to anger. And one such reason could be a present state of terror, of a suppressed *thumos*, preventing *thumos* from being excited to anger’s constitutive desire for revenge.

If this is right there is little reason to read the fear-constraint on anger as implying that the desert-component in the evaluative content of anger has to do with power relations. Rather, the explanation is simply that fear and anger are mutually exclusive because they involve opposite (and therefore mutually exclusive) movements of *thumos*. Hence, the equation of worth (*axia*) and power hinges on how one takes the *endoxon* that worth relates to capacity for good or bad. As I have argued, however, there is good reason to think that Aristotle does not commit himself to it; at least not in an unqualified sense. Worth does not reduce to capacity for retaliation. I shall return to the notion of worth and what I think Aristotle means by the *endoxon* in the following chapter. For now, let us move on to revenge.

⁴⁴ It is noteworthy, however, that Aristotle thinks fear requires at least some hope, hence, he notes, fear makes people deliberate (*Rhet.* 1383^a5-8). Hence, he argues, the “utterly ruined” are not afraid (*Rhet.* 1383^a3-5). Importantly, however, the hope we feel when afraid, according to Aristotle, is not a hope of overpowering what one fears but of escape.

3.3 REVENGE AS RECOVERY OF RELATIVE STATUS

Perhaps the honour reading need not assume that the angry person must himself subscribe to the idea that honour is merited on account of rank or power. A virtuous person may thus believe he is entitled to honour on account of his virtue and still get angry when he does not receive the respect, to which he feels and truly is entitled. The fact that I take someone's mistreatment of me as a result of their impression that I am powerless does not, after all, require that I believe that what makes their actions unjust is my *de facto* power. However, even granted this, the honour reading still seems to rely on the notion of power as grounding worth. For as the honour reading understands revenge, it is exactly an exercise of power, designed to reciprocally diminish the other in order to re-establish relative position. Yet, if someone knows that his power and his worth are separate and unrelated entities, why should he think that a display of power superiority somehow restores his lost honour? Why, that is, should the virtuous man be intent on instilling in the offender the true belief that he ought to be honoured, on the illegitimate ground that he is powerful? The virtuous man, Aristotle tells us, cares nothing for honour given for the wrong reasons, nor for honour among the many. But since this is the case, why would he desire that the offender come to recognise him as superior in power in the first place? And why would he care about correcting the offender's wrong impression? He does not care about dishonour, because he knows it does not attach to him, so why should he worry what some morally depraved individual individually thinks of him?

Of course, insofar as insult and spite are damaging to his material wellbeing the virtuous person might care that the offender refrains from future infractions. After all, being the subject of repeated indignities and transgressions is unpleasant. This seems like a prudent justification for retaliation. Moreover, given that repeated insults or public slander may have some impact on his overall position among people he does care about and thus on his wellbeing it would, again, be prudent to take efforts to dissuade others from doing damage to his reputation. However, such explanations fail to take into account the personal nature of Aristotle's anger. The angry person is not simply reacting impersonally and prudently to a threat. Nor is he merely concerned about his public standing in general. Of course, Aristotle does seem to indicate that a slight is worse if committed in public or before certain people,

whom we respect (*Rhet.* 1379^b23-27). Again, however, this is an aggravating circumstance, and not an essential feature of anger. On the contrary, there is nothing to indicate that slights cannot be rendered in private.⁴⁵

When angry, therefore, we do not want the offender to suffer as part of an overall strategy to protect our honour or general social esteem, but in response to his particular offense. We care, that is, not simply about some loss of an external good (which in the honour reading would be public esteem), but about the specific attitude of the offender, which is expressed by the slight. It is his opinion or attitude, and only his, which is the cause of anger. The personal nature of slight in Aristotle's account entails an equally personal nature of revenge. Revenge must be observed by the angry person himself, (angry people "want to perceive what happens" (*Rhet.* 1382^a9)), and, as we saw, the offender must know that the revenge comes from us and specifically in retaliation for his slight (1380^b22-25). Hence, it seems that either the honour reading cannot sufficiently account for the personal nature of revenge; or it must ascribe to any instance of anger, even the anger of the virtuous man, a narcissistic desire, not merely for sustaining a good public image, but for correcting the false assumption of the offender's that they are not powerful.

This, however, is not the greatest difficulty facing the honour reading's understanding of revenge. The greatest difficulty lies in the complete lack of any independent textual evidence to ground the assumption that revenge is about reasserting one's status. All Aristotle tells about the desire for revenge is that anger is a desire to inflict pain. (e.g. *Rhet.* 1382^a8, 1382^a14-15, *DA* 403^a30). Anger aims at the suffering of the offender. And for all Aristotle says, it seems that suffering is the final purpose of revenge. Thus, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle tells us that "[Spirit (*thumos*)] stops when he pays back [for the offense] (*apodidôî*); for revenge stops anger, as it produces pleasure in return for pain" (*EN* 1126^a21-22). But why, then, do we desire to inflict pain, and how does the suffering of the offender alleviate the pain of anger? I shall return to this question in the next chapter.

⁴⁵ Unless, that is, one goes by a specific reading of the '*phainêsthai*'-participles in the definition of anger. Thus, as noted in chapter 1, Cope argues that the participles should be read "emphatically", meaning "manifest, conspicuous, evident". Anger, he argues, due to a manifest slight "a slight which is so manifest that it cannot escape observation, and because it has been noticed by everybody, requires the more exemplary punishment [...]" (1877, p. 10). Similarly, Grimaldi argues that the participles imply a certain "public nature" of slight and revenge (1988, pp. 21-22). See, however, Harris 1997 for a rebuttal of this rendering of the participles.

For now, however, it suffices to point out that the honour reading's assumptions about the purpose of revenge are simply ungrounded: nowhere are we told that the purpose of the suffering is the offender's reciprocal diminution.

3.4 SUMMARY

The honour reading, I have argued, faces serious difficulties as a reading of Aristotle's account of anger. First, it provides us with an account of anger, which makes it exceedingly difficult to understand anger as an emotion, which can be a morally justified and indeed required response. Yet, Aristotle clearly holds that anger is sometimes morally required. Secondly, it leaves us deeply confused as to the virtuous man's evaluation of the value of the opinions of others. For whereas Aristotle tells us repeatedly that the virtuous man cares nothing for dishonour, and only for honour given for the right reasons and by the right people, the honour reading requires that we attach, in each case of anger, at least some value to the other's opinion of us, whoever they are, and whatever their opinion rests on. Similarly, the honour reading's construal of the virtuous man's personal valuation of his own worth, and thus his desert for honour, means that he must, at least in episodes of anger, equate his worth with his capacity for revenge. Yet, Aristotle is quite clear that power or rank, etc. does not amount to desert for honour. All of this might have been the result of confusion on Aristotle's part.⁴⁶ However, as I have shown, the textual evidence for each of the three key tenets of the honour reading is surprisingly weak. Hence, there is little reason not to pursue an alternative reading. This, therefore, is the purpose of the final chapter.

⁴⁶ Cf. Jaffa (1952, p. 123 ff.), Corder (1994), Curzer (1990, 1991), Engberg-Pedersen (1983), pp. 78ff.)

CHAPTER 4: ANGER AND JUSTICE

4.1 THE STATUS OF THE RHETORIC'S ACCOUNT OF EMOTIONS

I have argued that the honour reading's construal of the *Rhetoric's* account of anger is severely at odds with Aristotle's general ethical outlook, and that this should motivate us to adopt a different approach. There is, however, another possible explanation for the apparent inconsistencies. For perhaps Aristotle did not mean for his account of anger in the *Rhetoric* to be universal in scope. Perhaps, he merely reports on how some or most people feel when angry? Even if Aristotle does not himself endorse the connections between desert for honour and power or hierarchical position, such notions certainly were commonplace in Greek culture,⁴⁷ and thus Aristotle may simply be outlining prevalent ideas of his time. At least some commentators suggest that the *Rhetoric's* account of emotions does not relate Aristotle's considered views of the emotions treated there. Thus, Cooper detects in the *Rhetoric* no coherent "scientific" theory of emotions but merely "a preliminary, purely dialectical investigation that clarifies the phenomena in question" (1996, p. 239). Similarly, Striker argues that the treatise of the emotions is not a fully developed and independent Aristotelian thesis but more likely a collection of definitions invented in Plato's Academy (1996, 287-288).⁴⁸ ⁴⁹ If this is the case, we need not attempt to reconcile the view that anger responds to slight with the remark in the *Nicomachean Ethics* connecting it to injustice; nor need we assume that the *Rhetoric's* account holds of virtuous anger.

However, although the *Rhetoric's* treatise on emotions does not amount to a full scientific

⁴⁷ As Aristotle himself often states, people tend to confuse power, wealth or hierarchical status with worth, and with claims to honour (e.g. *EN* 1124^a29-^b5, *Pol.* 1293^a23, 1328^b2-5). For general discussions of honour in classical Greek culture, see Adkins (1972, pp.14ff), Allen (2000, pp. 59ff.), Williams (1993, pp.81ff.)

⁴⁸ Cf. Frede (1996), who argues that the theory of pleasure and pain in the *Rhetoric* differs significantly from that of the "mature" ethical work, and is remarkably similar to Plato's analysis in the *Philebus*.

⁴⁹ For opposing views, see Dow (2011), Leighton (1996, pp. 230-231), Fortenbaugh (2002 [1975], pp.12ff)

theory,⁵⁰ it is certainly more than merely a collection of phenomena, accompanied by a few provisional explanatory remarks. Were that not the case, it would in Aristotle's own view fall short of fulfilling its role in the *Rhetoric*.

The point of the treatise in the *Rhetoric* is to give the orator an understanding of the emotions, in order that he may be able to successfully manipulate them in his audience (cf. Nussbaum 1996, p. 310). In order to instil an emotion, Aristotle writes, the orator must know how people are disposed (*pôs echontes, pôs diakeimenoï eisi*) when under its influence, which people, objects, or events they feel it towards, and for what sorts of reasons. If he does not know all of these, he will not be able to reliably produce that emotion (*Rhet.* 1378^a22-26). (For this reason, the account of each emotion is structured around these three items (e.g. 1380^a1, 1380^b35, 1382^b20, 1383^b11, 1385^b11-12, 1388^a31).⁵¹) Hence, if the treatise amounted to little more than a report of commonly observed phenomena, or to popular beliefs about the emotions (i.e. if the definitions were not true), it would fail to provide the necessary knowledge required. But that in turn would entail that rhetoric would fall short of the status of *technê*.⁵² For Aristotle, a *têchnê*, is a disposition (*hexis*), which reliably produces its intended results by proceeding from true principles (*EN* 1140^a7-10, 21-23, cf. Cope 1867, pp. 19ff, Skrbina 2014, p. 25). And, since appeal to emotion is one of the three technical forms of proofs or appeals (*pisteis*), the account of emotion, which informs these "proofs", must be true as well. For the purposes of rhetoric, then, mere *endoxa* about the emotions will not suffice.

Moreover, the account of the emotions must be not only true, but also universal. In order to produce emotions in any audience, the orator must know more than merely the idiosyncratic manifestations they find in some individuals or groups. For if that were not the case, the orator may be able to instil, say, anger or pity in some audiences, but not in all. Hence, in order for an account of an emotion to enable the orator to reliably achieve his aim it must be universally true of that emotion in all its manifestations.

⁵⁰ As Aristotle notes in the *De Anima* (403^a26-^b19), a full scientific theory of emotions would involve reference to both the material make up of the emotions as well as their cognitive contents. Cf. Fortenbaugh 2002 [1975], pp. 12ff.

⁵¹ A notable exception being the discussion of gratitude (*to charin echein*), which focuses on explicating what it is to do someone a favour (*charis*). (See Dow 2011, p. 53ff)

⁵² Thus, rhetoric would not be a *têchnê* relying on teachable, universal and true principles, but, as Plato puts it in the *Gorgias*, merely a "knack" (*empeiria*), which is informed merely by some individual genius or singular observations. But this is manifestly not Aristotle's view. (cf. McCabe 1994)

This, however, does not entail that the orator must possess a full scientific account of the emotions. As Aristotle tells us in *De Anima*, a full scientific account will involve reference to both the “dialectical definition” of an emotion, as well as its material cause. Thus, for instance, a scientific account of anger will involve a description of the boiling blood around the heart, an understanding of its cognitive content, and presumably an understanding of the part of the soul which is responsible for anger (*thumos*). However, a scientific understanding of the emotions goes beyond the need of the rhetorician. For the orator it is sufficient to know what the universal causes of anger are (in order to produce and defuse it), and what angry people want (in order to know when to employ appeals to anger). Hence, it is not surprising that the *Rhetoric’s* account does not amount to a full scientific treatise. For such a treatise is beyond the scope of a work on rhetoric (see Cooper 1996, pp. 240f).

The fact that the definition of the emotions in the *Rhetoric* must be universal in scope does not stop Aristotle from getting specific. The bulk of each account consists of enumerations of specific causes for each emotion, of specific people more or less likely to experience it, and specific circumstances under which people are more or less likely to be susceptible to appeals to it. These reports of common phenomena are likely in part meant as *topoi* for the orator to draw on when crafting his speeches. However, Aristotle generally makes sure to explain each phenomenon by reference to his definition of the relevant emotion. Hence, for instance, he does not simply state that the wealthy or powerful are more easily aroused to anger, but explains their irascible dispositions by reference to the inflated sense of their own worth resulting from their abundance of wealth or power (*Rhet.* 1387^b35-89^a1). Thus, Aristotle’s reports of common phenomena serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, they provide material for the orator. On the other hand, however, they also contribute to lend credibility to the definitions of the emotion by showing their success in explaining commonly observed phenomena.

The universal nature specifically of the account of anger is further independently evidenced by Aristotle’s use of the *Rhetoric’s* definition of anger in the *Topics* exactly as an example of a universal definition. That is, a definition, which tells us not merely about the anger of some

particular individual (that he desires revenge because of an apparent slight), but what anger is universally (namely a desire for revenge because of an apparent slight) (156^a27-^b1).⁵³

Moreover, it is telling that Aristotle continues to identify the cause of anger as slight in the ethical works (e.g. *EN* 1149^a29-36), and that he does so only shortly before naming “the appearance of injustice” the cause of anger (1149^b21-24). This latter fact in particular should be taken as strong evidence that we ought not consider the two causes (slight, injustice) as opposed or inimical to each other; for if we do, Aristotle would be blatantly contradicting himself in the span of less than one page. Let us, therefore, proceed to re-examine the notion of slight.

4.2 SLIGHT RECONSIDERED

According to the honour reading a slight is an attitude of belittlement, either deliberately intended to express or implicitly communicating that the slighter takes the other’s status to be inferior. However, ‘*oligôria*’ does not have to mean belittlement in the honour reading’s sense of status injury. ‘*Oligôreô*’ means to ‘esteem lowly’, or ‘think little of’, but it is not a given that the worth (*axia*), which is the object of slight, is to be spelled out in terms of status. Thus, for instance, in the *Politics*, ‘*oligôria*’ and ‘*oligôreô*’ are sometimes used in the sense of neglect or carelessness (e.g. 1303^a16, 1310^a13); and to overlook something is certainly a broader notion than to think something inferior in status. This carelessness, moreover, does not necessarily stem from underestimating something as weak or useless, but may simply originate in the attitude that the object of slight is not one’s responsibility (e.g. 1261^b36). So in a broad sense, to slight something is, for some unspecified reason, to not pay it attention. This, however, does not indicate that all instances of slight involve blameable

⁵³ Cairns (2002, p. 27) suggests that Aristotle’s account of anger is ‘prototypical’, meaning that it is not necessary that the angry person feels or thinks all of the constituent cognitive content stated in the definition. Thus, for instance, in his view, a person may feel a desire for revenge, because of a slight, but not feel that the slight was undeserved, and still feel anger. However, if this were the case, the definition would fall short of a universal definition, which encompasses all instances of anger. Moreover, this suggestion fails to take account of the omnipresence of subjective appearance-words in the accounts (e.g. *phanêsthai*, *oïesthai*, *nomizein*), and the considerable elasticity they accord. The definition of anger states how the angry person interprets the situation, how he feels, perceives, or takes things to be (*pôs echôn*). Thus, Aristotle can insist on the universality of the definition, and still explain people’s anger in situations, where they are clearly in the wrong. For the definition of anger merely requires that they think they have been unjustly slighted, not that they actually have been so. Moreover, Cairns overlooks the possibility of recalcitrant emotions. For instance, a person may be angry, because it *appears* to him that he has been slighted, even if he also knows that the act was, in fact, not a slight. Cf. Dow (2009, 2014), Moss 2012, pp. 90ff, Pearson 2014. Such cases, then, do not tell against the universality of Aristotle’s definition.

oversight. Some things really are insignificant, and do not warrant serious attention. It is indicative of the meaning of 'slight', therefore, that Aristotle takes it to be the general attitude of virtuous people. The magnanimous man, he writes, is characterised by slight (*oligôria*) and disdain (*kataphronêsis*)⁵⁴ towards the opinions of the many (*EN* 1124^a10, 1124^b1-5). And generally, the other virtues are characterised by disdain (*kataphronêsis*) towards their particular object:

Further, it seems characteristic of the magnanimous man to be disdainful (*kataphronêtikon*); each excellence makes one disdainful of what is esteemed great contrary to reason (e.g. courage disdains dangers of this kind – it considers it shameful to hold them great; and numbers are not always fearful: so the temperate disdains the many great pleasures, and the liberal wealth). But this characteristic seems to belong to the magnanimous man because he cares about few things only, and those great, and not because someone else thinks them so. (*EE* 1232^a39-^b6)

This is helpful in understanding what 'slight' means for Aristotle. An attitude of slight towards something means that one does not take it to be worthy of consideration. It is not, of course, that when the courageous person disdains (*kataphronein*) danger (*EN* 1104^b1), the dangerous thing does not register for him as dangerous. As we are told, the courageous man is one who fears what one ought to fear, and according to right reason (*EN* 1115^b12-14). (Someone who never fears, Aristotle writes, would be "some sort of madman" (*EN* 1125^b26-28).) However, for the sake of the fine (*to kalon*) the courageous person will stand firm against "death and wounds" (1117^b10). Hence, he disdains dangers: not in the sense that he does not consider dangerous things dangerous, but rather, in the sense that when compared to the fine, they are of little importance to him (*EN* 1117^b7-16).⁵⁵

The general attitude of slight, then, is indeed captured by the *Rhetoric's* *endoxon*. ("For we think both good and bad things are worthy of seriousness (*axios spoudês*), as well as also what amounts to these, but whatever [amounts to] nothing at all or little, we assume to be of no worth" (*Rhet.* 1378^b12-14)). To slight something, to think it of little worth, is to think

⁵⁴ As we saw in section 1.6, Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* gives little in the way of a definition of disdain to set it apart from the slights in general. Similarly, in the ethical works, disdain and slight are used seemingly interchangeably (compare 1124^a10, 1124^b1-5). I return to the notion of 'disdain' in section 4.3 below.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of courage along these lines, and specifically of the problem of fear in courageous person, see Leighton (1988).

it unimportant or inconsequential, and not meriting serious attention; i.e. not to take it as a reason for specific action or behaviour. However, we should remember that the passage in the *Rhetoric* informs us not about what actually constitutes a person's worth, nor what the victim takes to constitute his worth. The passage concerns what makes up the attitude of slight; and as we have seen, the sligher and the slighted may subscribe to different standards as to what constitutes worth. Thus, the attitude of slight of the virtuous man towards the opinions of the uneducated masses, and that of someone who insults another in order to assert their power superiority are in important ways both similar and radically different. Both take the other (his opinion, his worth) as unimportant and insignificant. But whereas the virtuous man slights the many because his conception of "good or bad, or what amounts to these" is correct (*EN* 1124^b6-7), the hubristic insulter's slight is grounded in a conflation of power and worth. For he either takes his own power to ground his moral right to exert it over the weak as he pleases; or he simply does not care about right or wrong, but only considers "good or bad" what may benefit or hurt him in some way.

My suggestion, therefore, is that the "worth" the angry person considers violated in a slight is his general moral desert (whatever he takes to constitute it). A slight, then, is an act which from the perspective of the angry person is experienced as an assault on his (or his own's) just deserts, either in respect to some good, or more generally to respectful treatment. Hence, since slight is an action informed by the attitude that the slighted's moral deserts are unimportant or non-existent, anger responds to an injustice.

4.3 WORTH AND STATUS, A CAVEAT

The honour reading is wrong to equate worth with power or hierarchical status. For, more generally, anger responds to an infraction against one's moral deserts. However, this does not entail that social status is irrelevant to desert. Admittedly, the *Rhetoric's* examples of occasions for anger are overwhelmingly examples of acts or attitudes that look like they are informed by a sense of hierarchical superiority. Thus, although Aristotle does not explicitly mention honour or dishonour (*timê*, *atimia*) in respect to slight in general, but only explicitly connects it to insult (*hubris*), the notion of honour and status is never far from view in the *Rhetoric*. This, however, should not surprise us. Even if anger in Aristotle's analysis does not explicitly concern status, in the Greek mind status grounds moral deserts

and is in turn partially grounded in honour. In the polis, moral and political rights were linked to one's status as a citizen; and to be a citizen was to have a measure of honour. Thus, in the *Politics*, Aristotle writes:

One who partakes of honours is especially spoken of as a citizen; thus for example, Homer said, "like some dishonoured vagrant". For one who does not partake of honours is like a metic. (*Pol.* 1278^a35-8).

It is of considerable interest that this passage quotes the same lines from the *Iliad*, which are invoked in the *Rhetoric* to illustrate anger (see p. 20-22). For taking the two together, we get a sense of what Aristotle intends by its inclusion in the *Rhetoric*. The reason why people are angry when they are dishonoured is not simply that they have lost face. Rather, since one's moral status is in part grounded in one's honour, an attack on one's honour is also an attack on one's moral status. Hence, honour ('*timê*') does not simply mean reputation or popular esteem. For, as the above quote indicates, a share of honour is in part what constitutes one's political rights and privileges. Thus, it is noteworthy that in the *Politics*, '*timê*' is often used to denote political office or, more generally, political influence. (*Pol.* 1281a31, 1283a16, 1290a40, 1294a1, 1296a15): to have a share of honour is to participate in the political life and decision-making of the polis.

Accordingly, an attack on a person's honour is not simply an attack on their status in the sense of mere public opinion. For since one's status as a citizen is what grounds one's moral and political rights, and that status is in part grounded in one's honour, an attack on someone's honour is an attack on these rights as well. Thus, to be "dishonoured" (*atimos*) was not merely to be humiliated or to have one's reputation damaged; it was to lose one's moral status as an equal member of the citizenry, and the rights and privileges that go along with it:⁵⁶ ⁵⁷ a "dishonoured vagrant" is not merely a political, but a *moral* non-entity. Hence, even if the virtuous man does not generally care about the opinions of the many, he "would be pained to be dishonoured and ruled over by an unworthy person" (*EE* 1232^b10-14). The

⁵⁶ On the legal sanction of *atimia* as disenfranchisement or revocation of citizen rights, see for instance McDowell 1978, pp.73ff, Kamen 2013, chapter 7.

⁵⁷ It is no accident, then, that Aristotle remarks that the failure to respond to a slight is indicative of a "slavish" nature (*EN* 1126^a9.). To allow oneself to be treated contrary to one's deserts amounts to a tacit acquiescence to the implicit opinion of the slight, that one does not have the right that is challenged along with one's status; i.e. that one is like a slave or a metic.

reason is not, however, (as the honour reading suggests), that the virtuous man requires honour to sustain his self-esteem, nor is it because he cares about the opinion of each of his fellow citizens people individually. However, without a basic level of respect surrounding his person, it is impossible to uphold the status required to take part in the polis, and more generally to ensure himself against encroachments on his deserts. Therefore, in order to sustain a happy life in the polis, any person, including the virtuous man, must enjoy some measure of respect among his fellow citizens.⁵⁸

In a sense, then, the honour reading is right to argue that anger responds to status injuries. However, the status that is 'injured' in a slight is not simply one's hierarchical position relative to the sligher, nor does a slight necessarily result in a loss of public esteem. Rather, the object of slight is one's *moral* status as a person with certain deserts, rights, and claims that must be respected. And while one's moral status may depend on one's status as a citizen, and thus on a minimal measure of honour, it is not primarily as a diminution of their public esteem, that people respond to slights, but more generally as a challenge to their moral status or desert. Anger, therefore, does not involve a "shift", as Nussbaum argues, from "I have been wronged" to "I have been diminished". For, there is no inherent contradiction between thinking one has been the subject of a "status-injury" and that one has been wronged. To judge that one's moral status or desert has been the object of slight *is* to think that one has been wronged; for a slight is exactly a depreciation of one's moral deserts or moral status. Therefore, when anger responds to a perceived undeserved slight, it responds to a perceived injustice.

4.4 SLIGHT AS INJUSTICE

In order to better understand the construal of slight as injustice, let us examine Aristotle's account of justice.

Aristotle gives his account of justice in the *Nicomachean Ethics*' book V. In the first instance, he identifies justice in a general sense with other-directed virtue. To be just in this

⁵⁸ Moreover, it is important to note that the virtuous man is not a hermit or a stoic recluse; he is an active and engaged citizen. And this involves participating in the receiving of honours. Thus, his political activity as such requires and is in part aimed at honour among his fellow citizens (*EN* 1095^b24-30), and this honour is earned by being a good and beneficial member or even leader of the community (cf. *EN* 1163^b1-4, 1109^b35, 1134^b7, *EE* 1242^b15-21, *Pol.* 1309^a14)

general or universal sense is simply to act in accordance with virtue in one's dealings with others. Conversely, injustice in the universal sense consists in other-directed vice.

4.4.1 SPECIAL JUSTICE

In addition to this general characterisation of justice Aristotle lays out a set of principles, which govern justice in human interaction. He calls this set of principles 'special justice', and they constitute a separate virtue. To be just in the special sense, then, is a disposition to act and be affected in accordance with the principles of special justice.⁵⁹

Special justice is divided into two areas, distribution and rectification. In both distributive and rectificatory justice, the aim is to achieve equality. For, Aristotle writes, the just is the equal, and injustice the unequal (*EN* 1131^a10-12). Equality in distribution, however, does not mean that everyone should have identical shares. Rather, equality is defined in terms of the proportional mean between the participating agents' worth (*axia*) and their respective shares. Thus in distributive justice, equality consists in each agent receiving a share proportional to his relative worth. E.g. if agents A and B are to share an amount of goods, and A's worth is twice that of B, A ought to receive two thirds of the goods (*EN* 1131^b5-9). Importantly, in distributive justice, the key term is *worth* (*axia*), which again indicates that we should understand 'worth' to mean moral desert. What amounts to worth, it seems, depends on the type goods to be distributed. In the discussion of distributive justice, however, Aristotle remains on the purely formal level and contents himself with stating that even if people often disagree about what constitutes worth, all agree that distributive justice is distribution in accordance with relative worth. (Thus, he notes, in distribution of political power, democrats argue that free birth constitutes worth, whereas oligarchs think it is wealth, and aristocrats that it is virtue (1132^a25-29)).

The second form of special justice is rectificatory justice, which governs transactions (*synallagma*) between agents.⁶⁰ This form of justice covers both voluntary transactions,

⁵⁹ Moreover, since virtues are dispositions towards action and passion (*EN* 1109^b30-31, cf. Kosman (1980), a person who possesses the virtue of special justice will likely also tend to be emotionally affected by transgressions against justice (cf. Williams 1980, p. 197). Thus, for instance, Aristotle writes that feelings of pity and indignation are indicative of good character, since they are affections occasioned by injustice. (*Rhet.* 1386^b11-15)

⁶⁰ Aristotle never gives an explicit definition of transactions. However, from his examples we can glean that he considers 'transaction' to cover a wide range of interaction between agents. Joachim helpfully explains 'transaction' as follows: "A συνάλλαγμα is any legally cognizable relation which comes to exist between two

where goods are freely transferred between agents (e.g. selling, buying, lending, renting), and involuntary transactions, where one agent inflicts a material loss or harms another against his will (e.g. theft, robbery or luring away slaves vs. murder, mutilation, slander, insult) (1131^a2-8). Rectificatory justice requires that the equality between the agents be preserved on either side of the transaction. Unlike in distributive justice, however, equality does not rely on the respective worth of the agents involved (1132^b2-7). The only concern is the value of the goods involved in the transaction. Thus, in voluntary transactions of goods, each agent must receive goods, with an equal value to those he gives over (in V.5 Aristotle describes how goods are made commensurable by currency, and how their comparative value is determined by the respective needs of the agents involved in the transaction). In involuntary transactions, however, the picture becomes more complicated. Some commentators argue that Aristotle's theory of rectificatory justice is essentially compensatory. According to these, what is required to restore equality is simply that the offender pays back what he has taken, or in some other way compensates the victim for his loss (*zêmia*), so the distribution is restored to its "pre-injustice state".⁶¹ This view is to some extent supported by Aristotle's "arithmetical" illustration of the judge's equalising measure after an involuntary transaction.

The judge restores equality, as though a line [AB] had been cut into unequal parts [AC and CB], and he removes from the larger part [AC] the amount [CD] by which it exceed the half [AD] of the line [AB], and adds this amount [DC] to the smaller part [CB]. And when the whole [AB] has been halved [into AD and DB], then they say that each person has what is properly his own, when he has an equal share. (*EN* 1132^a25-29)

While, this simple construal may seem appropriate in response to some injustices, such as compensating economic loss at the expense of the offender who profited, it appears ill

private individuals (or corporations, clubs, etc.) by the free act of one or both of them. [...] If the relation between the two agents arises with the consent of both parties, it is an ἐκούσιον συνάλλαγμα, a contract in the usual sense of the term. [...] If, on the other hand, the relation arises against the consent of one party, it is an ἀκούσιον συνάλλαγμα (involuntary transaction)" (Joachim 1951, p. 136).

⁶¹ Thus, e.g. Curzer writes: "Rectificatory justice concerns the righting of wrongs. Wrongdoers must be compelled to compensate their victims' for losses. The right rule (*orthos logos*) for rectificatory justice is to restore things in so far as possible to the preinjustice state (1132^a6-10)." And Brown "It is striking that 'equalizing' is seen as restoring *both parties* to equality—i.e., restoring the status quo before the offense [...]" 2009, n. on 1132^a, p. 230, my italics). Cf. also Bostock 2000, p. 61, Irwin 1988, p. 429, McKenzie 1981, p. 18, n.2, Young 2006, pp. 185-186.

equipped to handle a number of the cases Aristotle mentions. Thus, for instance, in the case of murder, it is unclear how e.g. compensating the victim's estate brings about equality. Even if we think that the value of a life can be estimated in terms of external goods, compensating the victim's estate hardly amounts to compensating the victim. More importantly, the result of such a compensatory act is not that each agent is brought back to his state prior to the injustice, for in the case of compensation for e.g. violence or murder the result is net loss for the offender.⁶² We should note, however, that what Aristotle calls loss or gain is not necessarily to be understood in terms of external goods. Thus, he writes:

And since it is unequal, the judge tries to restore this unjust situation to equality. For [not only when one steals but] also when one is struck and the other strikes him, or one kills and the other is killed, the action and the suffering are unequally divided [with profit for the offender and loss for the victim]; and [the judge] tries to equalise the loss by taking away the profit. (For in such cases, without qualification, even if that is not the proper word for some cases; we speak of profit, for example for the one who struck, and of loss for the victim. At any rate, when what was suffered has been measured, we call it on the one hand loss and on the other hand, profit.) Thus, as the equal is the mean between more or less, profit and loss are at once both more and less in contrary way, since more good and less evil is profit, and the contrary loss. And the equal, which we say is the just, is the mean between them. So that rectificatory justice will be a mean between loss and gain. (EN 1132^a7-19)

Here Aristotle seems to be saying that the offender's profit simply consists in the offender's loss. This is clear enough in cases of appropriation of property. But even in cases of violence, Aristotle insists, we should think in a similar way. Thus, when someone has been harmed against his will, the offender's profit consists simply in the victim's loss.⁶³ I.e. since the victim has "more evil" than his due (i.e. a loss), conversely the offender has less evil than he ought (i.e. profit). The compensatory act, then, which restores equality, will be a reciprocal infliction of harm on the offender, so that he no longer has 'less evil', and this reciprocal

⁶² For a thorough critique of the simple view of rectificatory justice as compensatory, see Brickhouse 2014, esp. pp. 192ff. See also Burnet 1900, n. on '*tou blabous tèn diaphoran*' pp. 218-219

⁶³ As Brickhouse notes, in the example of the unequally divided line, "there is only one line". And the offender's profit consists exactly in the part of the line, by which his share exceeds the victim's – which in turn is the victim's loss (2014, p. 198).

harm, conversely, “compensates” the victim.⁶⁴ For since the offender’s profit *is* the victim’s loss, when the offender has his due, so does the victim.^{65 66}

It should be noted, however, that Aristotle’s account of rectificatory justice does not amount to simple reciprocity. For while he conceives of corrective justice in economic terms of loss or profit, this “economic” analysis does not exhaust his account of corrective justice. Thus, Aristotle writes, “it makes a great difference” (*EN* 1132^b32) whether an action was committed involuntarily or voluntarily. For even if an act results in an unequal state of loss and gain for the victim and offender respectively, not all actions that have unjust results are such as to make the offender unjust (1134^a16-24, 1135^a16-20).

Hence, Aristotle carefully distinguishes three levels of culpability (*EN* V.8, esp. 1135^b11-1136^a4): In order for an act to be not merely an injustice but also such as to make its author unjust (what I shall call an “act of injustice”), it must be both voluntary and the result of deliberate decision. Accordingly, Aristotle distinguishes three other categories, which fail either one or both of these criteria, namely acts done under compulsion, misfortunes (*atuchêmata*) and errors (*harmartêmata*). Acts done under compulsion are involuntary, and therefore not unjust. Similarly, misfortunes are acts whose consequences exceed reasonable expectation, and which are thus the result of inculpable ignorance. For acts done under compulsion or for misfortunes the offender is absolved of all responsibility, since they are wholly involuntary and could not have been prevented by the offender (as Aristotle puts it, “the origin (*archê*) is outside him” (1135^b20, cf. 1110^b2, 17)). Such acts, then, are not unjust even if they may have unjust consequences, since an act can only be unjust if it is voluntary

⁶⁴ See Brickhouse 2014, for a similar, though not identical, reading.

⁶⁵ Broadie (2002, p. 36) argues that Aristotle does not distinguish between punishment and forced reparation since he does not distinguish between civil and criminal cases. This, I think, is right. But if we understand the principle as above, it is applicable to both, and Aristotle is excused for not making this distinction.

⁶⁶ The aim of rectificatory justice, then, is not to restore the state prior to the injustice, but to neutralise profit and loss by making sure neither agent has more or less than his due. The point is not to reset the situation to that prior to the transaction (indeed, in all cases other than mere appropriation of property this would be impossible.) Rather, the aim of rectificatory justice is to equalise the amount of good and evil suffered by each agent. Aristotle’s account of rectificatory justice, then, is “bifunctional”, in that it governs both exchange of good for good and evil for evil (in voluntary and involuntary transactions, respectively) (Brickhouse 2014, esp. pp. 197ff). It is noteworthy, however, that Aristotle goes on in V.5 to explain how incommensurable goods are made commensurable in terms of currency. And while this account is developed solely in terms of exchange of goods, it might perhaps be the case that it can be expanded to makes not merely two goods commensurable, but also more of an evil and less of a good. If so, the rectificatory measure need not necessarily require that the offender suffer the exact same evil he has inflicted. For if more of a good and less of an evil or the converse can be made commensurable, the legal penalty for unjust harm may be to impose a loss of some good on the offender, or by compensating the victim at his expense. This, however, is not directly evidenced, and thus remains mere speculation on my part.

(1135^a22-23). On the other hand *errors* are voluntary acts, which are done without malicious intent. Errors include acts where the effect could have been predicted (but where the agent failed to do so) (1135^b13-19), as well as acts done in fits of passion or anger (1135^b21-25).⁶⁷ In contrast to misfortunes, errors are unjust, since they are voluntary; but since they are not the result of malicious intent or deliberate decision, they are not always such as to make their author unjust. Thus, Aristotle writes, errors are pardonable (1136^a5)⁶⁸ if they are the result of culpable ignorance or of “spirit or other passions that are necessary for human beings” (1135^b20-21). If, however, errors are not merely the result of ignorance, but betray a fundamental ignorance of a moral nature in the agent, they are not pardonable. (In *EN* III.1 Aristotle writes, “certainly, every vicious person is ignorant of the actions he must do or avoid, and this sort of error makes people unjust, and in general bad.” (*EN* 1110^b28-30).) Thus, the kind of ignorance, which makes an act pardonable, is ignorance of the “particulars” in relation to the action, not of the universal principles for right action (1110^b31-1111^a3). Further, errors are not pardonable if they are the result of passions that are “neither human nor natural” (1136^a9). Hence, it seems, errors may be the result of vice (including vicious ignorance), in which case they are not pardonable, since even if they are not strictly speaking the result of forethought or decision, they are caused by the vicious nature of the agent.

The kind of unjust acts, which make their authors unjust (i.e. acts of injustice), then, are unjust acts, which result from vice. In accordance with the distinction between general and special justice and injustice, Aristotle further distinguishes between acts, which are the result of vice in general, i.e. which are unjust in the general sense of other directed vice, and those which are the result of the vice of “special injustice”. Special injustice is the vice corresponding to the virtue of special justice, and whereas special justice concerns equality, special injustice is a disposition characterised by a vicious desire for profit (*pleonexia*), i.e. for the unequal. (1129^b6-11).

⁶⁷ Aristotle qualifies the passions, which can make an act an error to those, which are “natural or necessary for human beings”. Thus, I take it, he excludes acts of passions, which are in themselves vicious and excessive, such as e.g. envy, spite or shamelessness (*EN* 1107^b10-13)

⁶⁸ Notably, *hamartia*, tragic error, is the primary cause for pity in the *Poetics*.

Figure 1: Aristotle's Types of Unjust Acts

<i>Acts with unjust consequences</i> Agent is not responsible and not unjust		<i>Unjust acts</i> Agent is responsible but not unjust	<i>Acts of injustice</i> Agent is responsible and unjust		
Involuntary	Counter-voluntary	Voluntary			
Misfortunes (<i>atuchēmata</i>) <i>Inculpable ignorance</i>	Acts done under compulsion	Errors (<i>hamartēmata</i>)		Vicious acts	Viciously unjust acts
		Pardonable errors <i>Natural passions</i> <i>Culpable ignorance of particulars</i>	Not pardonable (vicious) errors <i>Unnatural passions</i>	<i>Other vicious motive</i>	<i>Motive of profit (pleonexia)</i>

Profit (*kerdos*), in the sense relevant to the account of justice, we saw, is defined as intrinsically unjust, since profit is always relative to another agent's loss (indeed, profit just *is* the victims loss). Hence, special injustice is a specific desire for more than one's fair share. Curzer (1995, p. 215) takes this to mean that "*pleonexia* is a desire for certain goods, not qua good, but qua more than one's share".⁶⁹ However, this can hardly be Aristotle's intention. If for no other reason than because the vicious person is not capable of correctly determining what his fair share would be, and hence will not be able to tell when he has more, since he is ignorant of what is just (see Balot 2001, pp.30ff, *EN* 1110b28-30). Rather, I take it, special injustice is simply a lack of concern for what is just, i.e. to be unaffected by considerations of fairness.⁷⁰ The identification of *pleonexia* as a desire for profit, then, does not mean it is a desire for profit *qua profit*. Rather, it is simply that since the unjust person "wants more", and since his desires are unchecked by considerations for justice, this invariably entails that what he desires amounts to profit. Thus, special injustice lies in wanting more *in spite of* whatever is just. As Williams (1980) points out, this might make it difficult to distinguish special injustice as a particular vice; for since justice concerns the distribution of all kinds of

⁶⁹ Thus, in Curzer's view, *pleonexia* is similar to what Williams calls "counter-justice, a whimsical delight in unfairness" (1985, p. 13-14).

⁷⁰ cf. Williams 1980, p. 197

goods (*EN* 1130^b30-1131^a1), special injustice will involve desires which are indistinguishable from those of other vices. For instance, the vain person desires more honour than he deserves (1125^a28-34), and the illiberal more wealth (1121^b22-1122^a6), and the unjust person will do the same. There is, however, an important difference between these cases and special injustice. For even if the desires of the unjust person and the illiberal or the vain overlap, the vain and the illiberal may both believe that they deserve what they desire; indeed, they may be illiberal and vain precisely *because* they overestimate their just deserts. Thus, the illiberal or the vain may still be generally concerned with fairness, even if they are incapable of actually determining their fair share. (Notably, the vain person is defined specifically as someone who believes himself worthy of great things when he is not; so, it seems, the vain person wants more than his fair share of honour, precisely because he wrongly thinks he deserves it.) By contrast, questions of fairness never enter the viciously unjust person's deliberative process. Thus, unlike at least some other vicious people, the viciously unjust person's overreach does not involve deceptions about his own deserts.⁷¹ Importantly, however, the vain or the illiberal remain unjust in the general sense of other-directed vice. With these distinctions in mind, then, let us consider how we might construe of slight as injustice.

4.4.2 SLIGHT AS ACTS OF INJUSTICE

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle states that slights are voluntary (*Rhet.* 1380^a10). Hence, according to the distinctions above, we can rule out misfortunes as slights. Thus, an act, which unjustly harms someone, but is not identifiable as an injustice (except in the incidental sense of having unjust results) is not a cause for anger. Moreover, voluntary acts, which were not intended to produce the results they did, are not slights (1380^a9-13). Hence, we can rule out errors, which result from ignorance of the particulars pertaining to the action. Finally, slights are painless (1380^a36-^b1). Hence, we can rule out those errors that result from painful passions such as anger. The distinctions between unjust acts and acts of injustice, then, line up with the criteria for what constitutes a slight.

Further, it seems, since slight is an action which "activates" the opinion that the other is of no worth, and since worth means moral desert, slights are acts of injustice. In the first

⁷¹ I thus disagree with Balot, who argues that unjust agent must believe that what he gets is fair (2001, p. 31).

instance, acts of special injustice are slights. The unjust person acts without a concern for moral fairness; thus, his transgressions express a failure to appreciate the moral deserts of others; which is what a slight is. Similarly, the person who acts from vice in general, and thereby commits an act of injustice, slights. For even if his act results from an inflated sense of his own deserts, this will in turn result in the depreciation of the other's. Thus, for instance, if the illiberal person, in a distributive act, takes more than his due, even if he does so because he thinks he deserves it, his overreach will amount to a simultaneous depreciation of another's desert in respect to the same goods. Similarly, when the illiberal person "takes from sources he should not" (*EN* 1121^b32-35) he slights, for instance by not respecting others' deserts in respect to their property. Acts of injustice, therefore, are slights.

The honour reading is right, then, to argue that slights are distinct from injustices in general. For unjust acts, which are the result of error, the unjust results of misfortunes, do not cause anger, since they are not slights. Let us, then, briefly revisit the *Rhetoric's* three forms of slight, and see how they are each instances of acts of injustice:

First, insult (*hubris*) is an act of injustice (indeed, of the "most common sort", *Pol.* 1311^a26). An insult, we saw, is an assault on a person's honour done for the sake of the offender's gratification. The viciousness of insult, it seems, is not special injustice. For, Aristotle tells us, it is explicitly not done for the sake of gain or profit, but merely for the sake of one's own (perverse) pleasure in the other's suffering. However, since, insults involve "harming or causing pain" (*blaptein ê lupein*), to those who are subjected to it, as well as their social standing, it certainly inflicts a loss (*zêmia*) on the victim (and thus profit (*kerdos*) for the offender). What constitutes insult as slight is that it involves depreciating the victim's moral desert, their '*axia*'. As we have seen, insult is informed by a sense of power superiority, hence, it seems, the slight of insult is that the insulter takes his power superiority to ground his "right to slight". This mistake of power as worth, then, results in his depreciation of the victim's worth. For since the insulter thinks power constitutes worth, he fails to appreciate the moral deserts of the victim, which are not in fact grounded in power. Thus, insult is an act of injustice.

Similarly, spite (*epêreasmos*) is injustice. Spite, Aristotle tells us, is the act of frustrating the pursuits of others, when it is not done for the sake of personal gain. Like insult, spite, in

Aristotle's analysis, is an act resulting from a sense of power superiority; for, he argues, if the spiteful person thought the other were capable of taking revenge, or capable of benefitting us in some way, he would not spite him. While Aristotle never explicitly makes this connection, it seems that spite is related to the vicious emotions of envy (*phthonos*) and the Greek equivalent of schadenfreude, *epichairekakia*. Envy consists in a pain over (even deserved) good fortune of others (*EN* 1221^a38-b3, 1233^b19, *Rhet.* 1386^b18), and schadenfreude in pleasure over others' losses or misfortunes (*Rhet.* 1386^b34); and it is thus not a large leap to imagine how an envious person might be motivated to obstruct the pursuits of those he envies. Hence, Aristotle tells us, envy "contributes to injustice", since it "leads to actions aimed at others" (*EE* 1234^a30). An act of spite constitutes an injustice, since it harms others or their endeavours, and relies upon a depreciation of their just deserts based in power superiority. However, if spite is motivated by envy, it may be an error, and not an act of injustice. Yet, if spite is caused by envy it is not among the pardonable errors. For while it is perhaps not the result of deliberation, but is motivated by pain, it still betrays the inherently unjust nature of the offender, since envy is an inherently vicious and unjust emotion.⁷² Thus, spite is an act of injustice.

Finally, then, is disdain. As noted in section 1.6, Aristotle has very little to say about disdain, but merely states that it is slight, since "whatever people think is of no worth, they disdain, and they slight what they think is of no worth." (1378^b16-17) However, a cursory look at Aristotle's use of '*kataphronêsis*' elsewhere may be of help. There are only six occurrences of '*kataphronêsis*' or correlates in the ethical works (five in the *Nicomachean Ethics*); and three of these are found in the account of magnanimity, where they are used more or less interchangeably with '*oligôria*' (cf. 1124^a10, 1124^b1-5).⁷³ In the *Politics*, '*kataphronêsis*' is the attitude of people who deem themselves superior: either morally (*Pol.* 1302^b29-31); in ability (1307^b6-11); in power (1302^b25-29, 1312^a6-11, 1307^a19-20, 35); or morally, because they conflate their power superiority with moral deserts (1293^a23, 1318^b2-5). Hence, in line with the above construal of "acts of injustice", to act with *kataphronêsis* for another person's

⁷² Moreover, if slight is lack of recognition of another's desert, envy, in and of itself, might constitute slight, since envy is pain at deserved good fortune. *Rhet.* 1386^b18-20

⁷³ The other two occurrences are at 1104^b1, where '*kataphronêsis*' indicates the attitude taken towards danger by the courageous person, and at 1172^a36, where it indicates the attitude towards argument engendered by repeated exposition to sophistry. Finally, there is one occurrence of *kataphronêtikon* in the *Eudemian Ethics*, which is cited and discussed above on p. 60.

worth, is to either consider their moral desert insignificant or inferior to one's own, or simply to blatantly disregard their desert, perhaps because one thinks they are weak enough that they can be unjustly treated with impunity. If this is right, the attitude the unjust person takes towards his victim's moral deserts (whether as a result of special injustice or some other vice) is adequately described as *kataphronêsis*.⁷⁴ Thus, the category of disdain is not so much a distinct category of slight as the general attitude of all slights, which are not instances of spite or insult. (This, then, is in line with Aristotle's seemingly synonymous use of '*oligôria*' and '*kataphronêsis*' in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the tautological "definition" in *Rhet.* 1377^b16-17). In conclusion, undeserved disdainful acts are acts of injustice.

Finally, we should consider errors (*harmartêmata*). Some errors, we saw, are not pardonable, since they result from vicious and unnatural desires. But what about pardonable errors? While they are certainly unjust they do not entail that their author is unjust. Does this mean that they should always be pardoned? I do not think so. Insofar as errors are the result of a failure to appreciate the particularities of a situation, it is generally reasonable to assume that they constitute slight. For the "particulars" they overlook, insofar as they amount to a transgression on the desert of others, will very often be the deserts of others; either in some degree, through a failure to properly assess someone else's deserts, or completely, through passionate oblivion. Hence, it seems, it is generally reasonable to get angry over pardonable errors. Whether one should forgo revenge, then, will hinge on something external to the action itself. I shall return to this below in section 4.5.3.

If I am right, we can now see how Aristotle can hold, without contradiction, that anger is a response to slight and to injustice: slights *are* unjust acts or acts of injustice. Importantly, it is because of the attitude the slight is interpreted as expressing that we react with anger. If the same or similar actions are not interpreted as involving a depreciation of our deserts, but are seen as committed either involuntarily, or by accident, we do not respond with anger. Consequently, in none of the three kinds of slight, are we concerned merely with some unfair loss or gain. Anger, therefore, focuses on the injustice of the offender's attitude.

⁷⁴ It should be noted, however, that not all instances of disdain are causes for anger. Anger is a response to undeserved slight and neither all slight nor all disdain is undeserved. (Thus, for instance, the magnanimous man "justly disdains" (*dikaiôs katapronêi*) the many (*EN* 112^a6).)

4.5 REVENGE AS RECTIFICATORY JUSTICE

Since anger, responds to acts of injustice we can perhaps understand its constitutive desire for revenge as a desire for rectificatory measures. To this end we are faced with two questions: a) what does revenge, as a rectificatory measure, rectify (i.e. how is it justified?); and b) how does it achieve this goal?

4.5.1 REVENGE IS DISTINCT FROM COMPENSATION OR PENALTY

Right off the bat, we should note that revenge cannot merely be a desire for compensation for a loss, nor for the offender to suffer an evil corresponding to the harm he has inflicted. Presumably, justice requires rectification of any unjust act, and not merely for unjust acts with vicious motives. Even if a person harms us in a fit of rage or in ignorance, his passion or ignorance does not absolve him of responsibility: errors are not misfortunes. Moreover, the result of an unjust act is net loss for the victim, and thus profit for the offender: so even if there is no slight to be avenged, there is still an “inequality” to rectify. Therefore, if revenge is a rectificatory measure, it must be at least conceptually distinct from the rectification of profit and loss.

Aristotle’s initial economic analysis of rectificatory justice, however, makes no special exceptions for involuntary acts or acts done in ignorance. Hence, if revenge were merely a desire for rectificatory measures, there is no reason why we should not respond with anger towards all injustices. We should, however, not think that Aristotle’s theory of rectificatory justice equates any and all injustices, whether they are simply unjust acts or acts of injustice. For Aristotle makes it clear that rectificatory justice does not consist in simple reciprocity:

The truth is that reciprocity suits neither distributive nor rectificatory justice, though people take even Rhadamanthys’ conception of justice to describe rectificatory justice: ‘if he suffered what he did, upright justice would be done’. For in many cases, reciprocity conflicts [with rectificatory justice]. If, for instance, a ruling official [exercising his office] struck someone else, he must not be struck in retaliation, but if someone struck a ruling official, he must not only be struck but also receive corrective punishment. Moreover, the voluntary or involuntary nature of the action makes a great difference. (*EN* 1132^b25-32)

Aristotle here clearly indicates that in the case of some injustices retaliation in equal measure is insufficient for justice. Aristotle's argument cannot be, as some commentators believe,⁷⁵ that the same damage done to an officer is somehow worse, than if it were done to someone else. For the assertion that disparity in status makes the gain or loss greater or smaller would violate his principle that in corrective justice the two parts are treated as equals.⁷⁶ Rather, it seems, Aristotle is making the point that the gravity of an injustice, and hence the severity of the rectificatory measure, has to do with more than the amount of harm inflicted on the victim or the profit earned by the offender. Thus, in the above quote, we should understand that someone who strikes a ruling official has done more than simply strike someone. In addition to inflicting unjust harm, he has shown direct disregard for the dignity of office, and hence his action is more than simply unjust harm: it is a slight.⁷⁷ Consequently, what is required in order to achieve justice is not merely that the inequality in terms of loss and profit be equalised: the injustice of the offender's attitude must receive specific attention. In his example, then, equalising loss and profit by striking back the offender does not constitute the full application of rectificatory justice; for the offender must also be punished for his insolence.

Importantly, the word Aristotle uses for punishment here is not revenge (*timōria*), but corrective punishment (*kolasis*). In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle distinguishes corrective punishment from revenge in the following way:

⁷⁵ e.g. McKenzie 1981, p. 18, n.3

⁷⁶ Aristotle tells us that in rectificatory justice the characters of the parties involved are irrelevant. "[I]t does not matter," he writes, "if a decent person has taken from a base person, or a base person from a decent person [...]. Rather, the law looks only at the differences in the harm, and treats the people involved as equals." (*EN* 1132^a2-5). If this is the case, however, the character or relative status of the people involved in the injustice cannot factor into the judge's calculations; he looks only to the harm or injustice done. In the case of an economic transaction, it would not make a difference whether a rich person stole from a poor person, or vice versa. Their respective claims would each amount to the exact value of the stolen goods, which can be assessed without reference to the relative status of the agents involved. So even if we may think that the poor person would suffer more for the same loss, this does not, in Aristotle's view, entitle him to anything more than he has lost in the first place. Similarly, in the case of the officer, then, the reason why the offender must be punished besides being "struck in return" cannot be that the officer's status influences how the judge measures the harm or loss to the officer, or the profit to the offender. Rather, then, Aristotle means to say that the relative moral status of the agents involved, which would be the basis of a distributive act, are irrelevant to determining the harm (cf. Weinrib 1995, pp. 76ff.). This, however, does not rule out looking to the offender's attitude. On the contrary, part of understanding the offender's action ("what did he do?") will involve understanding motives and intentions (cf. Stone 2001, p. 157); thus determining that gravity of the injustice (whether it was an error, an act of injustice – or perhaps a misfortune) is a separate exercise from determining the harm.

⁷⁷ Thus, while rectificatory justice requires that we treat people as equal in determining damage and compensation, it does not require us to treat people as equal in terms of determining whether the damage was unjust or not. Cf. Brickhouse 2014, pp. 197ff. An officer (in the exercise of his office) is allowed to use violence; and while in the capacity of his office, he is sacrosanct: hence, he may legitimately strike and not be struck himself.

But there is a difference between revenge (*timôria*) and corrective punishment (*kolasis*), for corrective punishment is for the sake of the one who suffers it, whereas revenge is for the sake of the one who exacts it, so that he may be appeased (*plêrôthêi*). (*Rhet.* 1369^b12-14)

Whereas revenge looks back to the injustice and is exacted for the sake of the hurt moral feelings of the offended, corrective punishment looks forward and aims at the moral betterment of the offender.⁷⁸ Both are, of course, relevant perspectives for the court to consider. Hence, in modern legal theory we similarly distinguish between the corrective or deterrent aims of punishment and the concern for the victim's right to see the offender punished, i.e. between consequentialist and retributive conceptions of punishment. However, it is difficult to see how Aristotle's principle of corrective justice can warrant the forward-looking, consequentialist corrective punishment. For while he certainly thinks that legislation should be concerned with encouraging the good behaviour of citizens and that the polis should punish citizens in order to improve them (1104^b17, cf. 1180^a18), his account of justice focuses solely on the retrospective, retributive aspect (see Allen 2000, p. 183). Perhaps, however, we should not see the conceptual distinction between forward-looking, consequentialist and retrospective, retributivist (or compensatory) purposes of punishment as involving any conflict. Thus, corrective punishment, like revenge, takes the form of infliction of pain. (E.g. it is through infliction of pain that corrective punishment moulds or tempers the inappropriate desires of the offender (*EN* 1104^b16, *EE* 1214b30)). Moreover, like revenge, corrective punishment is only imposed in response to voluntary acts (*EN* 1113^b23) or culpable ignorance (1114^a1). So while Aristotle upholds a conceptual distinction between the corrective punishment and revenge, it is not at all clear that they should differ in praxis. (Thus, both are named as the legal sanctions enacted by the courts against an offender (1180^a9)). Similarly, Aristotle at one point indicates that both will suffice to assuage anger (1126a27-29).⁷⁹ It might therefore be that the difference between revenge and corrective punishment is merely one of perspective, i.e. whether we see the punitive action as undertaken for the sake of the victim or the offender.

⁷⁸ See Irwin 1999, glossary entry on 'corrective treatment', p. 321

⁷⁹ "The people we call irritable are those who are irritated by the wrong things, more severely and for longer than is right, and are not reconciled until [the offender has suffered] revenge or corrective punishment (*timôria ê kolaseôs*)" *EN* 1126a27-29

In the following, I shall argue, that this is exactly the case: While there is a conceptual distinction between corrective punishment and revenge, in practise they amount to the same actions. Moreover, I suggest, the two aims, rectifying injustice and “correcting” the offender, each relies on the other: for while on the one hand corrective punishment is justified as an act of revenge; on the other hand, successful revenge depends on the success of corrective punishment.

What, then, is the aim of revenge; and how is it justified through Aristotle’s principle of rectificatory justice? First, we should note that whereas rectificatory measures, generally conceived, are aimed at equalising the loss and profit of the injustice (i.e. at equalising the shares of external goods or evil or harm suffered), the aim of revenge is simply to inflict pain. Hence, when we desire revenge, we do not merely desire equalisation of the profit or loss, which resulted from the act. For when an unjust act is committed with an unjust attitude (i.e. when it is a slight), in addition to some form of compensation we also require that the offender be subjected to painful revenge or punishment. But if anger is a response to injustice, and if rectificatory justice consists in balancing out profit and loss, how do we square the additional requirement of painful revenge or punishment with the general account of rectificatory justice? If justice requires revenge, revenge must be justified by the principle of rectificatory justice; otherwise, Aristotle’s theory would be incomplete. Hence, revenge must be analysable as an equalising act of justice. Yet, at the same time revenge must be distinct from the equalising act required by any unjust act. The key to understanding this, I think, is pain.

4.5.2 THE PAIN OF ANGER AND REVENGE

As we have seen, revenge is a desire to inflict pain on the offender; moreover it is because the angry person takes pleasure in the other’s pain that he ceases to be angry. Thus, Aristotle writes, “[spirit (*thumos*)] stops when he pays back for [the offense] (*apodidôî*); for revenge stops anger, as it produces pleasure in return for pain” (*EN* 1126^a21-22, cf. the *DA* 403^a31 definition of anger as a “desire for returning pain” (*orexis antilupêseôs*)). But why does inflicting pain cause pleasure? Of significant importance, I think, is the painful nature of anger itself.

Anger is a painful desire for revenge. As we saw in section 1.5, we might understand the pain of anger in terms of deprivation. However, what exactly is it that we have been deprived of, when we are angry? Since anger responds to an injustice, it may often be the case that the angry have incurred some loss, or been physically harmed. However, we have seen, not all unjust harm or loss cause anger. So, it seems, if the pain of anger is specific to anger, and not merely concurrent with it, we should look elsewhere to understand the cause of the painful nature of anger. Moreover, it would seem, not all slights involve a loss on part of the victim. Thus, for instance, Aristotle lists other people's inattentiveness to one's suffering (*Rhet.* 1379^b33-37), or the forgetting of name (1379^b14) as causes for anger. Hence, it seems, what causes anger is simply that we feel the other's attitude towards us is not in keeping with what we deserve. A slight, though it may often accompany an unjust act, is more generally simply behaviour indicative of an attitude of depreciation of our deserts. Thus, if it is the attitude of the offender expressed in the slight, and their attitude alone, which is the causes anger, the pain of anger must also be caused by this attitude. Hence, the honour reading is right in taking anger to respond to being denied importance or significance. However, we have seen, the honour reading is wrong when it takes the pain of anger to be caused by loss of self-esteem or social status. Rather, I propose, the reason why anger is painful is simply that it is painful to have one's moral deserts disregarded. The slight, then, is a distinct deprivation in addition to the material harm or loss inflicted in an unjust act; namely deprivation of moral recognition. Therefore, since slights cause pain simply qua slight, they inflict a separate harm, and since rectificatory justice requires that we equalise harm, slights must be separately punished. When someone has unjustly harmed us, then, and when their unjust act is indicative of slight, justice requires that we equalise both the resulting injustice in terms of material loss of physical harm, *and* the pain caused by their unjust attitude. This, then, is part of why Aristotle thinks that voluntariness or involuntariness "makes a great difference" in the measurement of rectificatory justice (*EN* 1132^b32), and that voluntariness warrants additional punitive measures. For the pain felt by the victim because of the offender's slight is not the same as the pain of loss caused by the unjust act. Hence, the pain inflicted in revenge or corrective punishment is the deserved payback for the pain of the slight. We might, however, still ask why we should think inflicting pain makes up for the pain of the slight; and this, in turn, requires looking into why revenge is pleasant.

4.5.3 REVENGE, PUNISHMENT AND REGRET

Aristotle says little about why revenge is pleasant except for the remark that it produces “pleasure in return for pain” (*EN* 1126^a21-22). However, a couple of passages may be helpful in understanding what the person might want to achieve with his revenge – namely those which tell us under what conditions revenge is deemed unnecessary and is forgone by the angry person. In the *Rhetoric’s* account of the opposite emotion of anger, becoming mild, Aristotle writes:

And [people are mild] towards those who admit fault and regret (*metamelomenois*), for they hold their pain over what they did as justice (*dikên*), and cease to be angry.

Similarly, in the *Topics*, Aristotle hypothesises the objection to his definition of anger, that we get angry with our parents but do not desire revenge upon them. In response, he writes that “upon some offenders it is sufficient revenge (*timôria*) just to cause them pain and make them regret (*metamelesthai*)” (*Top.* 156^a38-^b1). These passages are important for two reasons. First, they are important because they support the connection of revenge to justice. When we are angry, according to the above quote, we seek justice (*dikê*), and notably ‘*dikê*’ in the *Rhetoric* passage, is parallel to ‘*timôria*’ in the *Topics* passage, which indicates that revenge is indeed a measure of (rectificatory) justice. Secondly, and relevant to our present purposes, what makes an acts of revenge unnecessary in these cases, is that the offender has already suffered some measure of pain; and this pain is taken as sufficient for justice to be considered done. So when the offender feels pain because of their actions, the angry person has already achieved his aim. Importantly, however, this pain must take the form of regret (*metameleia*). Surely, we would not consider any pain the offender might feel to be sufficient for revenge, even if it is a direct result of his action. For instance, if a drunk driver hits a loved one, and is himself hurt in the crash, we may still justifiably want him punished by the law, even if he was himself hurt worse than the victim. Hence, it seems, not just any suffering on part of the offender can constitute revenge.⁸⁰ If this is the case, then the reason

⁸⁰ Importantly, Aristotle does allow that we feel pity for an offender, and cease to be angry. He writes: “And [people are mild] if they feel pity, and if [the offender] has suffered more evil, than the angry people would have inflicted: for they think it is as if they had taken revenge.” The operative words here, however, are ‘as if

why we desire revenge is not merely because justice demands that pain is returned for pain: for punishment must be relevantly connected to the injustice.⁸¹ Thus, Aristotle states that revenge must be explicitly perceived by the offender as coming from the angry person and in return for his slight (*Rhet.* 1380^b20-21). Perhaps, then, the reason why regret can take the place of revenge is that it, like revenge, is a pain relevantly related to the particular act of injustice. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle writes:

Everything caused done in ignorance is not voluntary, but it is *involuntary* only when it causes pain and regret. For if someone's action was caused by ignorance, but he now has no objection to the action, he has done it neither willingly, since he did not know what it was, nor unwillingly, since he now feels no pain. Hence, among those who act because of ignorance, the agent who now regrets his action seems to be [acting] involuntary, but the agent with no regrets may be called non-voluntary, since he is another case – for, since he is different, it is better he has his own special name. (*EN* 1110^b19-24, cf. 1111^a19-20)

Here, regret seems to be primarily the attitude of the agent who has acted involuntarily. However, the fact that we regret an action does not entail that we have acted involuntarily. Rather, it is merely a condition for an action being involuntary (and not merely non-voluntary) that it causes regret.⁸² Thus, Aristotle elsewhere clearly states that people regret voluntary actions committed in incontinence or which result from vice (*EN* 1166^b15-25, cf. *MM* 1211^a38-^b2), and such acts are clearly voluntary as per the distinctions drawn above (pp. 67-69). Aristotle never formally defines regret (there is no entry for *metameleia* in the

bôesper) and 'they think' (*oiontai*). Even if people may decide that the other's suffering makes up for their transgression, this does not, strictly speaking, amount to revenge. This, then, may be an example of what Aristotle means, when he says in *Rhetoric* I.1 that moving a judge to pity amounts to "warping a straightedge rule before using it" (1354^a24, cf. 1415^b5-8). For the judge moved to pity may mistake the suffering of the offender as constituting revenge, even it is still required by justice. Of course, pity may sometimes be the correct response (cf. Garver 1995, pp. 105ff), for instance if the offender acted in pardonable error, and regrets. But the fact that the offender has suffered pain by itself does not amount to equalising the inequality of his unjust act.

⁸¹ Cf. McKenzie (1981), pp. 10-11

⁸² Even if an agent is not responsible for an action, since the "origin is outside him", an agent may still feel regret. Regret, then, does not require voluntariness, but is a retrospective attitude taken towards an event, which we may see ourselves as playing a part in, even if we know are not responsible. And it is not without moral importance that we take this kind of attitude to such acts (hence, they the need for a "special name"). Regret in this sense, then, may be equivalent to what Williams calls 'agent-regret' (1982^a). (See also Witt 2005) This, in turn, might help explain why Aristotle thinks people sometimes feel anger towards people who have acted in ignorance (e.g. those forgetting a name or who overlook our suffering (1379^b33-37, 1379^b14)) For, it seems, if they do not regret their action, it amounts to a tacit approval of it. Hence, we might add non-voluntary, unjust actions (i.e. wrongful acts committed involuntarily but for which the agent feels no regret) to the list of undeserved slights.

Rhetoric's catalogue of the emotions). However, we can surmise from what he says of it that he considers regret a kind of retrospective pain directed at actions one wishes one had not done, because one wishes one had not done them. Thus, if regret is a pain directed at one's wrongful or mistaken actions, because they were wrong, we can see why it makes revenge unnecessary.

We have seen that the pain that constitutes revenge must be felt by the offender as relevantly connected to his wrongful action. If, however, he already feels such pain, if he feels regret, revenge becomes unnecessary. Hence, it seems, the pain the angry person wants to inflict is a pain that takes the place of the regret, which the offender ostensibly does not feel, even though he should.

I suggested in chapter 1 that we might see the pain of anger as a state of deprivation. And we are now in a position to see what exactly the angry person feels he has been deprived of. For a slight, it seems, is a deprivation of recognition of one's moral deserts. Hence, we can see why regret relieves anger. For if regret is the offender's retrospective, painful recognition of his own mistake, that he acted against the victim's desert; and if regret makes up for slight, it seems that the equalising measure, which the angry person is entitled to and desires, is the offender's retrospective painful recognition of the moral deserts, which he has disregarded. Hence, the kind of pain, which "pays" for a slight, is the pain of recognising that one has committed an injustice. The pain of regret and the pain of anger, then, are respectively the pain of being the doer and sufferer of an injustice, and revenge atones for slight, because it forces the offender to recognise his role. Thus, the aim of revenge is not simply to return pain for pain, but in the absence of regret to force the offender's recognition of his mistake as a mistake, and to make him take the appropriate, painful, retrospective attitude to his actions. This, in turn, might also help us see when errors are considered pardonable, and need not cause anger. Pardonable acts, Aristotle tells us, are unjust acts done through natural appetites or through ignorance of the particulars pertaining to the action. Above, I suggested that such ignorance (whether motivated by appetite or simply carelessness) amounted to slight. Such acts, moreover, seem to be among the primary examples of actions that cause regret. So, presumably, if the agent who has committed an error regrets, the angry person (if he is reasonable) has already achieved his aim. Hence, pardonable errors are pardonable, exactly because they are such as to elicit regret. If they do not, however, the angry person remains entitled to revenge.

If this is right, we can see how revenge as a corrective measure not merely justifies painful corrective punishment, but also depends upon the corrective potential of inflicting pain for its success. For in order to make the offender take the kind of retrospective attitude towards his offense, which anger aims at, he must be at least partially reformed. The offender must be brought to recognise that his action constituted an injustice, and he must be brought to take a painful, regretful attitude towards it. Thus, the painful corrective punishment, which is justified as revenge, in turn contributes to achieving what the angry person aims at. As rectificatory measures, therefore, the two are not distinct in praxis, and each relies on each other: the one for its justification, the other for its success.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that the standard approach to Aristotle's account of anger, the honour reading, attributes serious inconsistencies to Aristotle. First, the honour reading is unable to explain anger as a response to injustice; however, Aristotle repeatedly connects both anger to injustice, and revenge to justice. Moreover, the honour reading, if it takes the *Rhetoric's* account of anger to apply to the virtuous person, attributes a serious inconsistency to Aristotle's ethical theory regarding the value of honour. As I have shown, however, the textual support for the honour reading is surprisingly weak. Thus, there is little reason to assume that Aristotle takes anger to respond to dishonour; and even less to think that dishonour leads to loss of self-esteem.

In chapter 1 I set up three questions for any reading of Aristotle's account of anger. Here, then, are my replies to each of the three questions:

1. What is a slight?

A slight, I have argued, is an act, which makes explicit a depreciative attitude towards someone's worth. By 'worth', I understand general moral deserts. Thus, undeserved slights are acts of injustice. Anger, therefore, responds to injustice. The injustice, which causes anger, however, is not the inequality of loss and profit, which results from the act, but the unjust attitude of the offender, i.e. his slight. Thus, a slight is a deprivation of recognition of one's moral deserts, and it is this deprivation, which makes anger painful.

2. What constitutes a slight as undeserved?

A slight is undeserved when the offender's attitude towards the victim and the treatment which results does not accord with the victim's actual worth. Hence, undeserved slights are slights which result from a wrong assessment of the other's worth, or which fail to take the victim's worth as a reason for acting.

3. What is the purpose of revenge?

Revenge is an act, which inflicts pain on the offender. Revenge is justified as a rectificatory equalising measure, which returns the pain of the slight. However, since the pain of slight is a pain of deprivation of recognition, the aim of revenge is to induce the specific pain of regret in the offender. For it is the offender's painful retrospective recognition of his slight as undeserved, which makes up for the initial slight's painful deprivation of recognition.

There remain at least three worries to consider. First, someone might object that my account of anger makes for a petty and vindictive emotion. For is it really the case that the virtuous person must react to any and all slight with a desire to correct the offender opinion and make him feel pain? And if so, is he really that different from the narcissist described by the honour reading? The answer here must be no and yes. Even if acts are registered as unjust by the virtuous man and as slights, this does not entail that he must react to them with anger. Anger is caused by a perceived undeserved slight, but this does not entail that any perceived undeserved slight causes anger. Thus, we should remember that slight is also characteristic of the virtuous person. He is the kind who "considers few things great" (*EN* 1125^a3-5). Hence, his reaction to insignificant slights, is probably to treat them exactly as that, insignificant. Moreover, we are also told that in respect to anger, the virtuous person errs on the side of deficiency (1126^a1-3). Against grievous slights, however, he will react with anger and seek revenge.

This, however, leads to a second worry. For the fact that the virtuous person overlooks small slights does not makes these any less undeserved. Does this, mean that the irascible man, who reacts violently to small slights, is justified in his reaction? To an extent, yes. For insofar as the slight is undeserved, he has been unjustly denied the recognition he deserves and is entitled to revenge. Note, however, that the harm of the slight is not the victim's felt pain; it is the depreciation of his worth, and a slight may be serious or trivial. The fact that the irascible person feels great pain on account of a small slight, then, does not entail that he is entitled to a more painful revenge. The offender's painful recognition should be measured to the gravity of the slight, not to how gravely the slight is taken by the angry person.

Finally, we may worry whether my reading makes sense of other expressions of anger. Even if the virtuous person is not a narcissist, and does not conflate his worth with power, surely there are people who do. And since the account of anger is supposed to be universal and apply to all instances of anger, these cases must be covered as well. On my reading such instances of anger are the result of a moral mistake on part of the angry person. Some people may indeed think that their worth is constituted by power, and that what revenge requires is that they establish their power superiority. Note, however, that in such cases, they are still concerned with making the offender recognise their worth according to the standard they hold. Therefore, like other angry people, they want the other to recognise their moral worth. However, they remain, however, mistaken about what actually constitutes worth, and hence get angry for the wrong reasons, express their anger in the wrong way, and require the offender to take retrospectively recognise “failures” that are not actually failures.

If I am right, Aristotle’s account of both anger and justice becomes a lot more palatable. First, we no longer have to see Aristotle’s angry person as a narcissist, who is obsessed with maintaining his reputation. Moreover, anger is not simply a vindictive desire to exchange evil for evil. For the angry person is not simply out to inflict pain, but rather desires to receive the recognition he has been denied, and correct the unjust attitude of the offender. Moreover, under this reading, Aristotle’s account of rectificatory justice, which initially seemed solely retributive, is able to justify forward-looking corrective punishment, since corrective punishment serves to achieve the retributive aim of revenge.

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