INVECTIVE AND SATIRE: AN ARISTOTELIAN APPROACH

INVECTIVA E SÁTIRA: UMA ABORDAGEM ARISTOTÉLICA

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Resumo: Pretende-se analisar textos ditos injuriosos (invectivos) e satíricos e as emoções específicas de cada um desses gêneros — raiva no caso dos invectivos e indignação no caso das sátiras — à luz da *Poética* de Aristóteles, comparando-os com textos tardios de Horácio e Juvenal sobre o assunto, buscando mostrar que não é acidental, na poesia, a união dessas emoções em gêneros aparentemente diversos.
Palavras-chave: invectiva, sátira, paixões, Aristóteles.

Abstract: Our purpose is to analyze invective and satire poetry and the specific emotions associated with these genres — anger in the case of invective and indignation in the case of satire — in the light of Aristotle's *Poetics*, comparing these texts with late texts by Horace and Juvenal about this subject, to demonstrate that the union of these emotions in apparently distinct poetic genres is not accidental.
Key-words: invective, satire, passions, Aristotle.

A little way into his *Art of Poetry*, Horace takes up the question of the meters best suited to the several poetic genres: Homer showed in what meter the achievements of kings and generals and sorrowful wars could be written. At first, verses paired unequally were for laments, but afterwards the successful statement of a vow was included as well, though scholars debate which writer [first] published these slender elegies, and the jury is still out on that controversy. Anger armed Archilochus with its own iamb: the buskin and the high boot [i.e., comedy and tragedy] embraced this foot, which was suitable for alternating dialogue, could overpower the noise of the crowd, and was born for action. Horace goes on to mention lyric as the meter best suited to epinician and love poetry, but I shall not pursue his argument, since the question that interests me on this occasion has to do not with metrics but with motive, more particularly that of Archilochus.

Before we examine Horace's statement in greater detail, however, let me cite an equally famous pair of lines from Juvenal's first and programmatic

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satire: If talent denies, indignation produces verse of whatever sort it can, such as I or Cluvenius do (1.79-80). It is safe to suppose, I think, that Horace is using the name Archilochus here as a shorthand for invective poetry, just as Juvenal is plainly speaking about the writing of satire. Assuming that this is the case, I should like to call attention to two points of resemblance in these references to the twin modes or genres: first, and most important, both descriptions specify the emotion that inspires its respective type of poetry: anger in the case of invective, indignation in the case of satire. This manner of identifying invective and satire is neither accidental, in my opinion, nor trivial. Among the things that unite invective and satire as genres is the fact that they are motivated by passion in a way that differs from at least some other branches of poetry.

In describing epic, Horace follows convention in indicating its themes as its "definiens" — wars and the affairs of the mighty — just as the Roman elegists typically do in their "recusationes", or Juvenal himself, when he declares his preference for satire over poems about Hercules, Diomedes, and Theseus (1.52-54; cf. Horace *Epistles* 2.1.250-60). So too, Pindaric epinician is defined by its content, which is to say, praise of athletic victory. Ever since Aristotle, of course, tragedy was characteristically associated with pity and fear, but these were emotions that tragedy was supposed to elicit in the spectators, not the sentiments presumed to inspire the poets themselves to compose their dramas. Horace's association of early elegy and lamentation might be thought to look to the sentimental state of the poet, but whether the originator of the genre was Simonides or someone else, we may doubt whether Horace means that the poet's personal grief is the chief incentive for funerary epigrams, which are commonly uttered in the voice of the deceased. Only love lyric seems to depend on the poet's emotions in the same way that invective and satire do, a point of contact that deserves further investigation on some other occasion, though I shall return to it briefly in what follows.

The second resemblance that I mentioned above is no doubt just a coincidence: Horace and Juvenal refer to invective and satire in the seventy-ninth line of their respective poems. Or is it possible that Juvenal had Horace's *Ars poetica* in mind when he wrote, and had actually counted verses?

In this paper I wish to take Horace's and Juvenal's statements concerning invective and satire literally, and ask what follows for our understanding of the two forms if we view them primarily as literary manifestations of the respective emotions that engender them. Invective, on this account, may be defined as the formal expression of sentiments suited to an angry person, while satire is the expression of those suited to someone who is indignant.

Furthermore, instead of appealing to my own intuitions of what anger or indignation consists in, or to those of modern English speakers generally, as the basis for analyzing invective and satire, I shall resort rather to those of the ancients themselves, and more particularly to the definitions and detailed analyses furnished by Aristotle in the second book of his *Rhetoric*, the most informative account, in my view, to survive from classical antiquity. What is a person motivated by Aristotelian anger or indignation likely to say aloud? Does such speech in fact correspond in a plausible and illuminating way to what we understand by invective and satire? I begin with anger and invective, and then proceed to indignation and satire, pausing along the way to consider some related literary genres. In the end, I consider briefly the mixed case of Old Comedy, and raise some further questions for discussion.

Aristotle defines anger or *orgê* as follows: "Let anger be 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" (2.2, 1378a31-33). Let me call attention to three particular features in this account. First, anger entails a desire for revenge, or rather, it just is this desire insofar as it is elicited by a specific kind of stimulus. It is worth noting that, in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle does not define any other emotion as an *orexis*. Second, the desire for revenge is provoked by a slight or belittlement, or, in colloquial English, by a put-down. As we shall see in a moment, for Aristotle a slight or *oligôria* is the only cause of anger, and he will draw some rigorously logical but quite surprising conclusions from this radical restriction on the source of the emotion. Lastly, accordingly to Aristotle, some people, but only some, are unfit to offer a slight; others, by implication, are fit to do so, in which case belittlement or insult does not generate anger.

Aristotle defines an *oligôria* as "the activation of an opinion about something seeming worthless" (2.2, 1378b10-11). A slight, then, may take the form of contempt (*kataphronêsis*), which Aristotle defines as the belief that something is of no value, or of spite (*epêreasmos*), that is, "blocking the wishes [*boulêseis*] of another not in order to have something for oneself but rather so that the other not have it" (2.2, 1378b18-19). With spite, the slight lies precisely in the absence of a personal advantage: no one would gratuitously hinder another person's wishes unless he considered that person useless for good or ill. So too with Aristotle's third category of belittlement, namely *hübris*, which he defines as speaking or acting in ways that cause shame to another for the sheer pleasure of it (2.2, 1378b23-25). If the abuse is in return for an injury, it does not count as insolence but rather as revenge. The kind of affront that provokes anger, Aristotle insists, must be

neither in reprisal for an offense nor beneficial to the offender, but purely a function of arrogance (2.2, 1379a29-32).

Anger, then, is not a response to harm as such, even if the harm is intentional. Deliberate injury, according to Aristotle, evokes not anger but rather hatred or hostility (*misein*). By way of illustration, let me indicate some of the more striking implications of Aristotle's analysis of anger as a reaction to a slight. Aristotle affirms that we cannot slight a person we fear (2.3, 1380a22-23), because fear is a sign of one's own weakness, and hence incompatible with contempt for the other person. We can certainly hate such a person, however, and normally do. As Aristotle says, "no one likes [*philei*] a person he fears" (2.4, 1381b33). Correspondingly, we cannot be angry with those who fear us, since their fear is evidence of their regard for us — hence, they cannot activate an opinion about our worthlessness — though we may certainly dislike them. Nor can we return anger for anger, according to Aristotle, since those who are angry at us do not act out of contempt, but are responding precisely to our disdain for them (2.3, 1380a34-3) — the one thing, we recall, that precipitates anger; yet anger is one of the primary causes of enmity (2.4, 1382a1-2).

Aristotle further asserts that the object of anger is to cause pain, while the object of hatred is to inflict harm (2.4, 1382a8). A slight, we understand, makes one feel small, and the only way to even the score is to induce a similar loss of self-esteem in the other. Our revenge, then, must be perceived by the one who provoked our ire, as Aristotle indeed stipulates in his definition of anger; there is no such thing as unperceived pain. That is why we wish to eliminate those we hate, but when we are angry, what we desire is that the other person feel in return (*antipathein*) the kind of diminishment that provoked our anger in the first place (2.4, 1382a14-15). The death of the other would make that impossible.

With Aristotle's analysis as preamble, I should like to turn to what is perhaps the earliest, but is in any case a classic, instance of invective, although it does not constitute an independent poem but is rather embedded in a larger work: I am referring to Achilles' verbal assault on Agamemnon near the beginning of the *Iliad*, after Agamemnon has demanded a prize from one of his warriors in return for returning Chryseis to her father:

Then looking darkly at him Achilleus of the swift feet spoke (1.148-51, 158-60, trans. Lattimore.):

> O wrapped in shamelessness, with your mind forever on profit,
> how shall any one of the Achaians readily obey you,
> either to go on a journey or fight men strongly in battle?...

o great shamelessness, we followed, to do you favour,
you with the dog's eyes, to win your honour and Menelaos'
from the Trojans. You forget all this or else you care nothing

With this, Achilles declares his intention to return to Phthia. Agamemnon bids him be off, if that is his pleasure (1.179-187):

Go home then with your own ships and your own companions,
be king over the Myrmidons. I care nothing about you.
I take no account of your anger. But here is my threat to you.
Even as Phoibos Apollo is taking away my Chryseis,
I shall convey her back in my own ship, with my own
followers; but I shall take the fair-cheeked Briseis,
your prize, I myself going to your shelter, that you may learn well
how much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back
from likening himself to me and contending against me

Achilles contemplates whether to draw his sword and slay Agamemnon on the spot, or else check his anger (*kholos*,192), and appears inclined to the former at the moment when Athena appears and urges him to desist from strife (*eris*, 210), and instead to reproach Agamemnon in words (*all' êtoi epesin men oneidison*, 211); and so he does, though raging in his heart (μάλα περ θυμῷ κεχολωμένον, 217). But Peleus' son once again in words of derision spoke to Atreides, and did not yet let go of his anger (1.223-31):

You wine sack, with a dog's eyes, with a deer's heart. Never
once have you taken courage in your heart to arm with your people
for battle, or go into ambuscade with the best of the Achaians.
No, for in such things you see death. Far better to your mind
is it, all along the widespread host of the Achaians
to take away the gifts of any man who speaks up against you.
King who feed on your people, since you rule nonentities;
otherwise, son of Atreus, this were your last outrage

Achilles then predicts that the day will come when Hector will slay many Achaeans, and they will rue their treatment of the best of them. Achilles' harsh words — the term of art is *oneidizô* — are inspired by anger, which in turn is motivated by a slight or show of disdain: Agamemnon has publicly manifested his superior status, and Achilles is forced to yield to him, though he considers himself to be in no way Agamemnon's inferior. In Achilles' eyes, Agamemnon is among those "who are not fit to slight him or his own," as Aristotle's puts it. A figure of low status, like Thersites, is not in a position to feel anger when he is mistreated by his superiors. Later, Achilles will reject Agamemnon's offer of gifts in compensation for the insult with the words: "My heart swells with anger when I recall those things, how Agamemnon

treated me shamefully before the Achaeans as if I were some vagabond without honor" (9.646-48). Had he really been a vagabond, he would have felt neither shame nor anger.

Achilles' anger takes the form of a desire for revenge, as Aristotle specifies: he must compensate for the loss of esteem or *doxa*. Thus, he imagines the moment when the Greeks, and Agamemnon in particular, acknowledge that they need Achilles more than he needs them. We may even suppose that Achilles refrains from killing Agamemnon because he wants not so much to destroy him as to humble him in turn, and if he is to achieve this, Agamemnon must, as Aristotle says, be alive to perceive it. However, Achilles' words, stinging as they are, do not constitute vengeance. Achilles remains humiliated, and his anger continues to burn. His abuse of Agamemnon, while it is a product of anger, is not the desired end; that will come later, when Achilles finally accepts Agamemnon's apology. In the meantime, his reproaches, however harsh, are impotent. It is just this situation, in fact, that I should like to designate as paradigmatic of invective.

Invective, as I propose to define it, is a verbal response to a slight that falls short of redressing the loss of face or status that the slight has brought about; it is an expression of anger but does not appease it, because the perceived effect of the slight persists. One may give further vent to abuse, or sulk, or seek a genuine kind of vengeance which will put an end to the passion. But invective is at best a stopgap, a manifestation of rage rather than an action genuinely aiming to resolve it. So Hamlet reflects on words as the resort of the powerless (II.II.558):

> Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
> That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
> Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
> Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,
> And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,
> A scullion![1]

Before proceeding to test the utility of this definition of invective against canonical examples of the genre, I should like to indicate some further implications of Aristotle's discussion of anger for the case of Achilles that we have been examining. First, Agamemnon does not fear Achilles, since one cannot slight a person whom one fears, and Agamemnon has certainly slighted Achilles; nor in turn could Achilles be angry at Agamemnon if he believed

[1] I am grateful to Tad Brennan for bringing this quotation to my attention, and for stimulating comments on other aspects of the present argument.

that Agamemnon feared him. Second, and perhaps more surprising, Agamemnon is not angry at Achilles. For Achilles' own anger is a sign that Agamemnon has succeeded in putting him down, and thus Achilles is no longer in a position to diminish Agamemnon in turn. This is why the wrath of the *Iliad* is Achilles', and not Agamemnon's.

For us, it is natural to imagine two people mutually angry with each other, and to see in an exchange of insults the expression of their reciprocal ire. In the status-conscious account offered by Aristotle, however, anger is a one-way emotion. Agamemnon offends Achilles, but he does so out of arrogance or contempt rather than anger: his behavior represents the kind of *oligôria* that evokes anger in another. As Agamemnon says, he is the stronger, and the proof is that Achilles is helpless to retaliate except in words. Achilles' response may seem to us to resemble Agamemnon's outburst, but it is, on Aristotle's terms, distinct and complementary, since it is an expression rather than a cause of anger, a sign of humiliation rather than of haughtiness or disdain, a response to an insult rather than the insult itself. And Aristotle's terms are, I am arguing, the appropriate ones by which to understand the *phenomemon* of classical invective, if indeed we have been right to take Horace's reference to Archilochus' anger as defining the nature of the genre.

There is one further point I should like to make about invective, again on the basis of Aristotle's analysis of anger. Anger, according to Aristotle, is a personal matter, in the sense that one can be angry only at an individual — at Cleon, for example — and not at a class of people or at mankind in general (2.2, 1378a34-35). In this, anger differs from hatred or dislike, which may be directed against a group, for instance at thieves as such (2.4, 1382a4-7). Achilles is angry at Agamemnon in particular, not at haughty kings generally, and his invective is accordingly directed specifically at him. The personal quality of the verbal attack is characteristic of all invective, insofar as invective is driven by anger. We see it in Archilochus' assaults against Lycambes, and in Hipponax's abuse of Boupalus. For this same reason, I would not classify Semonides' poem on women as an instance of invective. If anything, it may well be an example of satire, for reasons that I shall indicate shortly.

Unfortunately, our knowledge of archaic Greek invective is largely dependent on secondary testimonies and the most meager of fragments, and it is difficult, on the basis of the fragments of Archilochus and Hipponax, the acknowledged founders of the genre, to arrive at a clear image of how it functioned. Fragment 172 of Archilochus, addressed to Lycambes, might belong to an invective scenario, as defined above, if we suppose that Archilochus lambasted Lycambes for breaking his promise to give his daughter

in marriage to the poet (cf. Dio Chrysostom 74.16): "Father Lycambes, what have you devised? Who has stolen your wits, with which you were formerly so well equipped? Now the citizens will view you as a laughing stock."

By gratuitously rejecting Archilochus as his son-in-law, Lycambes exhibited his contempt for him, and so elicited his wrath. Archilochus is helpless to alter the situation, and so he responds with personal abuse.[2]

Compare the spirit of Horace's sixth *Epode*, where the allusion to Archilochus and Hipponax is accompanied precisely by the threat of reprisal:

> Beware, beware, for I am fierce against villains and bear my horns at the ready, like the son-in-law spurned by faithless Lycambes or Bupalus' bitter enemy. You think if someone attacks me with a black tooth I'll weep, unavenged, like a child? (11-16).

At the risk of drawing over fine distinctions among types of abuse, like some belated incarnation of Menander Rhetor, I should like to suggest that invective differs not only from lampoon but also from what the Greeks normally called *psogos*. It is true that Pindar refers to Archilochus as *psogeros*, "growing fat on bitter-tongued animosities" (*Pythian* 2.52-56); but Pindar is here contrasting Archilochean poetry with his own, which aims at praise as opposed to blame or reproach. In Aristotle, words based on the stem *psog-*

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[2] Fragments 327 and 328 West (= frr. 290, 291 Tarditi) are two complete iambic poems attributed to Archilochus in the *Codex Vaticanus Barberinianus graecus* 69f. Unfortunately, they were in all likelihood composed by a humanist in the early Renaissance (see G. TARDITI, "Due carmi giambici di uno Ps.-Archiloco", *Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medioevale* 3 [1961] 311-16). I cite them as examples of a type of poem that resembles invective but, on my view, should not be classified as such. Both poems are vulgar attacks on passive males or cinaedi. The first concerns a certain Capys:

Iron's the only thing Capys likes, everything else is foolishness except an upright penis penetrating the recesses of his buttocks, etc.

[σίδηρός ἐστι μοῦνος ὀν στέργει Κάπυς,
τὰ δ' ἄλλα λῆρος ἦν ἀρ' αὐτῶι πλὴν πέους
ὀρθοστάδην δύνοντος ἐς γλουτῶν μυχούς, etc. (327.1-3)].

The second takes as its conceit a comparison between cinaedi and prostitutes:

The mind of a cinaedus and an evil whore are alike: both take delight in receiving money, are screwed and drilled, fucked and humped, etc.

[ἶσος κιναίδου καὶ κακῆς πόρνης ὁ νοῦς·
Χαίρουσιν ἀμφω λαμβάνοντες κέρματα
κινούμενοί τε καὶ διατρυπώμενοι
βινούμενοί τε καὶ διεσπεκλωμένοι, etc. (328.1-4)].

The poem ends with a defense of poetry as the only true source of pleasure. But these indirect or third-person criticisms are more like lampoons than invective. They are motivated not so much by anger on the poet's part, resulting from some imagined belittlement, as by scorn for the behavior of the other, much like Catullus' squibs concerning Gellius, for example. Their object is ridicule, not revenge. That the second poem attacks a class rather than an individual reveals that it is a product of aversion or misos rather than of rage.

(22 occurrences) are almost invariably paired with the opposite term *epainos*.[3] In the *Rhetoric*, more particularly, praise and blame are specified as the province of epideictic oratory.[4] I would accordingly reserve the term *psogos* for poetry of moral condemnation arising from a judgment concerning vice, as opposed to a passionate outburst provoked by a personal affront and the anger it induces.[5] If we seek an opposite for invective, we would do better to identify it as love lyric rather than praise poetry, inasmuch as both, as I suggested earlier, are motivated by emotion, the one negative or hostile, the other positive and, like anger, in its essence a species of desire.

I would distinguish from invective also the kind of poetry represented by Ovid's *Ibis* (and presumably Callimachus' as well). Ovid himself indicates that this poem is not so much invective as a preliminary to invective. In this pamphlet, I shall mention neither names nor deeds, but I shall allow you to conceal for a short while who you are. Then, if you persist, my iambic book will let loose its arrows, dyed in the blood of Lycambes. For now, I curse you and yours in the manner in which Callimachus cursed his enemy "Ibis" (51-56). Perhaps these strange birds are best designated as curse poetry, literary versions of imprecations inscribed on magical amulets or pronounced, as in Theocritus' second idyll, over a spinning *iunx* (cf. Lindsay Watson and Christopher Faraone).

Returning now from our digression on parallel species of vituperation to the founders of invective poetry proper, we may remark that Pliny the Elder

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[3] Thus, in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle explains that people earn praise and blame for those things for which they are responsible (1223a12-13: "ὅσων γὰρ ἄλλος αἴτιος, εἶνος καὶ τὸν ψόγον καὶ τὸν ἔπαινον ἔχει"; cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1109b31-32: "ἐπὶ μὲν τοίς ἑκουσίοις ἔπαίνων κα ψόγων γινομένων, ἐπὶ δε τοῖς ἀκουσίοις συγγνώμης, ενίοτε δὲ καὶ ἐλέου"; ibid. 1110a31-b1; *Magna Moralia* 1.9.10.4-6: "ἐπι μὲν γὰρ τῇ αρετῇ ἔπαινος, επὶ δὲ τη κακίᾳ ψόγος: ψόγος ἐπαινος δὲ καὶ ψόγος οὐκ επὶ τοὶς ἀκουσίοις"; *Poetics* 1448b24-27; ibid. 1448b28-1449a6, contrasting archaic heroic and iambic poetry).

[4] Cf. 1358b12-13: "ἐπιδεικτικοῦ δε τὸ μὲν ἔπαινος τὸ δε ψόγος"; 1367a33-35, 1368a33-37, 1408b14-15, 1411b19-21, 1414b30-35, 1415a6, etc.

[5] Cf. Sir Richard C. Jebb, ed., SOPHOCLES: *Antigone*, abridged ed. by E. S. Shuckburgh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902) 162-63 ad v. 759 (ou ... *khairôn epi logoise dennaseis eme*): "lit., revile me with (continual) censures: ψόγος is merely censure, fault-finding, not necessarily implying offensive speech." So too, Longinus says that encomia, while exhibiting weightiness and grandeur, are usually lacking in *pathos*, and that orators who express praise (*epainetikoi*) are least disposed to rousing emotion (On the Sublime 8.3: "παρά γε μὴν τοὶς ῥήτορσι τά ἐγκώμια καὶ τα πομπικά καὶ ἐπιδεικτικὰ τὸν μὲν ὄγκον καὶ τὸ ὑψηλὸν ἐξ ἁπαντος περιέχει, πάθους δὲ ληρεύει κατὰ τὸ πλεῖστον, ὅθεν ἥκιστα τῶν ῥητόρων οἱ περιπαθεῖς ἐγκωμιαστικοί ἢ ἐμπαλιν οι ἐπαινετικοὶ περιπαθεῖς"). CORBEILL 2002 argues that Ciceronian vituperatio has the moral aim of "exposing an opponent as fundamentally opposed to the inherent well-being of the Roman community" (205); if this is indeed its purpose, I would classify it as *psogos* or censure rather than personal invective.

(36.12) is our earliest witness for the story that Hipponax drove the sculptor Bupalus and his brother to suicide with his verses because of his indignation at a statue with which they caricatured the poet's notorious ugliness; against the veracity of the tale, Pliny cites the fact that the brothers continued to create statues after the ostensible year of their death. No doubt the suicide was an inference from Hipponax's own verses, in which, very possibly, he imagined himself propelling the brothers to take their own lives, as opposed to reporting that this had actually occurred. This, of course, is pure speculation on my part, but it is consistent with the idea of invective as suspended between the slight that engenders anger and the deferred act of revenge. Just as erotic poetry requires that the beloved not be finally attainable, thereby providing the space necessary for desire, so invective operates in that interval between humiliation and retaliation, to which the poet returns again and again thanks to an addictive pleasure derived from continually fantasizing the moment of requital. Lest it be supposed that I am importing a characteristically modern psychological mechanism into the Aristotelian account of anger, we may recall that, for Aristotle, *orgê* is accompanied by pleasure as well as by pain, the pleasure occurring precisely because the desire to avenge the slight is accompanied by the expectation (*elpis*) of its fulfillment.

As Aristotle puts it, when we dwell on revenge in our thoughts (*dianoia*), a *phantasia* arises that instills a pleasure analogous to that we experience in dreams (2.2, 1378b1-9). This is just the pleasure, I suggest, that invective poetry provides to the reader as well as to the writer.

It is now time to pass to satire and the particular emotion that gives rise to it, according to Juvenal, namely indignation or outrage. If we seek an Aristotelian equivalent for *indignatio*, we shall have to content ourselves with the term *nemesis*, or, more precisely, to the nominalized verbal form *to nemesan*, as Aristotle defines it in the *Rhetoric*: "to be indignant is to be pained in the case of someone who is seen to be succeeding undeservedly" (2.9, 1837a9-10). So understood, indignation is, says Aristotle, the opposite of pity, which he describes as "a kind of pain in the case of an apparent destructive or painful harm in one not deserving to encounter it, which one might expect oneself, or one of one's own, to suffer, and this when it seems near" (2.8, 1835b13-16). Put schematically, *to nemesan* is pain at undeserved good fortune, whereas pity is pain at undeserved misfortune (2.9, 1386b9-12).

Indignation, then, is clearly an emotion, but, like pity, one that takes account of fairness; as Aristotle puts it, "what happens contrary to desert is unjust" (2.9, 1386b14-15). In this respect, Aristotle anticipates what has, over the past thirty years, come to be the prevailing modern view of the

emotions as deeply informed by evaluative beliefs; indeed there are scholars, most notably Martha Nussbaum in her recent book, *Upheavals of Thought*, who characterize the emotions as nothing but cognitive judgments, albeit of a particular sort. Aristotle himself is aware, however, that some maintain that *phthónos* or "envy," not indignation, is the opposite of pity (2.9, 1386b16-17). Later, the Stoics will contrast pity as pain at another's ill fortune with envy as pain at another's good fortune (e.g., Andronicus *Peri pathôn* 2 p. 12 Kreuttner = SVF 3.414), and Cicero will affirm that "to pity and to envy [*invidere*] befall the same person, since the same person who is pained at the adverse circumstances of another is pained also at the favorable circumstances of another" (*Tusculan Disputations* 3.21; but contrast *Ad Atticum* 5.19.3: τὸ νεμεσαν interest τοῦ φθονεῖν). For Aristotle, however, this opposition fails to take account precisely of the element of ethical appraisal that is, in his view, essential both to pity and to indignation. Thus, although he acknowledges that *phthónos* too is "a disturbing pain arising from the well-being" of another (2.9, 1386b18-19; cf. 2.10, 1387b22-24), it is heedless of desert, and responds simply to the fact that an equal is faring better than we are (2.9, 1386b19-20).

In his fuller definition of *phthónos* (2.10, 1387b23-25), Aristotle specifies that "*phthónos* is a kind of pain, in respect to one's equals, for their apparent success in things called good, not in order to have the thing oneself but [solely] on their account" – that is, irrespective of its use to us. This indifference both to desert and to self-interest renders *phthónos* an emotion unsuited to a decent (*epieikês*) person (Aristotle does not indicate what the opposite of *phthónos* is in his view; one possibility is an uncritical sensitivity to another's suffering "tout court", without regard to desert).

I have dwelled on the distinction Aristotle draws between envy and indignation in order to highlight the latter's connection with merit and equity. Indignation presupposes moral standards: it arises when those who are undeserving of good fortune are seen to prosper, irrespective of whether we ourselves are thereby diminished, save by comparison. Indignation is not a reaction to a personal offense, as anger is. The pain associated with it arises in response to the perceived situation of another. The poet who is moved by indignation, accordingly, will be inclined to denounce not only those who fare better than their betters, but also the kind of world that permits such a reversal of what is due. The voice of the satirist is personal, but the object against which he rails is in fact the fallen condition of society. This is why satire always projects a vision of an ideal order or golden age, whether it is located in the remote past or among a hardy and virtuous people dwelling

at the outer limit of the *oikoumenê*. It serves as the model in relation to which one can measure the decline of the world as it is.

One might suppose that Juvenal has anger to spare, and that it is anger as much as indignation that fuels his satire. Indeed, he speaks of his liver scorched by *ira* at the state of things in Rome (1.45: *quanta siccum iecur ardeat ira*), and perhaps he means the reader to understand that he considers the corruption of Rome to be a personal affront. But elsewhere in the satires, if I am not mistaken, *ira* is characterized negatively, and often, like "rabies" and "furor", designates a madly violent passion. Thus, in his sixth satire, Juvenal takes a lenient view of the crimes of Procne and Medea on the grounds that they were driven to their deeds by high passion rather than calculating greed: "...These women ventured on great iniquities in their time, but not for money. Towering iniquities win less wonder when anger turns that sex to crime, and they are carried headlong as rage ignites their livers (6.644-50)."

In any case, the usage of Latin *ira* is not necessarily identical to that which Aristotle stipulates as the quality of *orgê*. But I would nevertheless maintain that the distinction I, or rather Horace and Juvenal, have drawn between anger and indignation as the motives behind invective and satire respectively does reveal something essential about the nature of the two genres, when the emotions are understood as Aristotle defines them.

According to Aristotle, those people are prone to indignation "who think that they deserve good things and have them, since it is unjust that people unlike themselves should be thought to deserve similar goods; and, secondly, those who are themselves good and worthy people, since they judge properly and hate what is unjust" (2.9, 1387b4-8). Aristotle also includes ambitious people in this category, and in general those who believe that they themselves deserve things which, in their view, others do not. The motive to indignation may be interested, but it is not fundamentally a reaction to personal injury. When people have been wrongfully deprived of what is rightly theirs, they feel hatred or rage rather than outrage, and respond not with satire but with invective or *loidoria*.

Indignation, moreover, is not an egalitarian passion. Rather, it recognizes a hierarchy based on merit, and is disposed, if other things are equal, to condone long-standing differences of wealth or power. As Aristotle puts it, "what is ancient seems practically natural" (2,9, 1387a16). This is why "nouveaux riches [*neoploutoi*] who acquire office by means of their wealth offend more than anciens riches [*arkhaioploutoi*]" (2.9, 1387a22-23). So too, the Roman idea of *indignatio* retains a close connection with *dignitas* or rank. Juvenal takes umbrage as much when aristocrats behave dishonorably as he

does when the humble overreach themselves — witness his scorn for noblemen who descend into the gladiatorial arena — but this double perspective is entirely compatible with Aristotle's conception of *to nemesan*. By its depravity, the nobility reveals that it does not deserve its privileges.

A caveat, however, is in order here. Latin *indignatio* is not the same as Aristotle's *nemesan*, already an archaic term by the fifth century B.C. when Aristotle revived it in order to express the opposite of pity as he understood it. In fact, *indignatio* corresponds rather better to the modern sense of "outrage" at any unjust act or circumstance,[6] although its connection with rank is often apparent in Juvenal and elsewhere.[7] In rhetoric, *indignatio* was one of the three parts of the conclusion to a speech (Cicero *De inventione* 1.98*: "conclusio est*

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[6] The difference between indignation as Aristotle defines it and modern outrage is revealing both of the nature of the Greek sentiment and its literary expression in satire. The quality of the modern emotion may be illustrated from an article entitled *The Compassion of Lyndon Johnson*, that appeared in a recent issue of The New Yorker (CARO, ROBERT A. *The Compassion of Lyndon Johnson*, The New Yorker [1 April 2002] 56-77). The article describes Johnson's reaction upon learning that a Mexican-American soldier, who was killed while on patrol in the Philippines in 1945, was denied a service in the chapel of the funeral parlor in his home town of Three Rivers, Texas, because of racial prejudice. Johnson's immediate response was to arrange for Private Felix Longoria to be buried in Arlington Cemetary. Caro reports that Johnson "was clearly in the grip of his emotions." His aide, John Connally, said of Johnson's decision: "This was an instinctive thing — his instinctive sense of fairness and his basic feelings... It had to do with outrage. Here was a veteran who had died for his country and he can't get buried in his home town" (66; ellipsis in the original), and again: "His reaction was outrage, true outrage.... It was outrage over injustice, it was instinctive, it was real — it was from the heart" (67; ellipsis in the original). Later, Johnson was to play down his role in the affair so as not to offend powerful supporters in the Anglo community of South Texas; as Caro puts it, "His empathy and tenderness for people oppressed simply because their skin was dark, strong though it was, had not been stronger than his ambition" (77). Be that as it may, Johnson's original outrage was not in response to a person who was prospering undeservedly; on the contrary, it was elicited by unmerited misfortune. On Aristotle's view, the emotion evoked by such a situation ought to be pity, not indignation, although it is not clear that the adversity in question is of the sort that Johnson "might expect himself, or one of his own, to suffer," as Aristotle stipulates in his definition of eleos. Johnson's feelings were aroused by the spectacle of injustice: no doubt he would have been equally outraged at the unwarranted advancement of a coward as at the slight to a soldier who died in action. Where we see a single emotional response to undeserved success or failure, I am suggesting, Aristotle saw two. Correspondingly, to the extent that satire assumed a posture of resentment at wrongful advantage, it tended to slight pity. Besides, very few are virtuous in the satirist's eyes. As Aristotle noted, only those people are capable of pity who believe that at least some of their fellow beings are decent; "for he who thinks that none is so will think that all are deserving of misfortune" (2.8, 1385b34-35). Caro's article is excerpted from his book, LBJ: *Master of the Senate* (New York: Knopf, 2002).

[7] E.g. *Satires* 5.64-65, of a servant who resents the guest for whom he pours: *quippe indignatur ueteri parere clienti quodque aliquid poscas et quod se stante recumbas*; cf. 5.119.

exitus et determinatio totius orationis haec habet partes tres: enumerationem, indignationem, conquestionem"),[8] which Cicero defines as the means by which "great hatred is aroused against an individual or deep revulsion toward an action" (1.100). Cicero then lists the several tropes or *loci* of *indignatio*, which generally speaking depend on demonstrating that the crime in question is exceptionally egregious and offends all standards of decency. In this respect, it is something like anger, which in forensic contexts, whether Greek or Roman, was often taken to be the opposite of pity. Thus Cicero writes in *De partibus orationis*: "in trials, the what is relevant to anger pertains generally to the plaintiff, while what is relevant to pity pertains to the defendant, although sometimes the plaintiff too should rouse pity and the defense anger" (58). Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria* seems to substitute indignation, or something like it, for Cicero's anger: "They exploit pretty much the same emotions, but the one makes greater and more frequent use of some, the other of others...." The plaintiff too sometimes has tears deriving from pity for the person he is avenging, and the defendant sometimes complains fervently of the unfairness of the accusation of a plot (6.1.9). *Indignatio* is a mechanism for rousing the hostility of jurors, and corresponds to the contrary strategy of rendering the defendant pitiable. Compare the plaintiff in Lysias (15.9; cf. Plato *Apology* 35B-C; Libanius *Or.* 19.13; Danielle Allen 1999: 194; Boltanski 1999: 57 suggests that pity "transformed by indignation ... acquires the weapons of anger"):

> And if any one of you, gentlemen of the jury, thinks that the penalty is great and the law too harsh, you must recall that you have not come here as lawmakers on these matters, but rather to vote according to the established laws, nor to pity those who do wrong, but rather to be angry with them and to come to the aid of the entire city.

Anger, on this conception, is close to indignation: a pleader arouses it by arguing that a guilty individual is about to get away with a crime, and hence achieve what he or she does not deserve, whereas pity is evoked by representing oneself as innocent and threatened with unjust punishment. We can see why satire, inspired by righteous anger or indignation, tends to eschew pity as indignation's opposite, though avoidance of pity has also to do with the nature of the genre. Satire is meant to be funny, and pity is the death of humor. I cannot help mentioning an example I came across in a recent number of the *Times Literary Supplement*: Anthony Grafton (1998: 4), reviewing a book on renaissance laughter, asks: "Why is it funny to expose one's genitals

[8] Contra QUINTILIAN *Institutio Oratoria* 4.3.15, who places indignatio under the category of digression: *nam quidquid dicitur praeter illas quinque quas fecimus partes egressio est: indignatio, miseratio, inuidia, conuicium, excusatio, conciliatio, maledictorum refutatio, similia his, quae non sunt in quaestione.*

or one's bottom? The Renaissance physician Laurent Joubert," he continues, "had an answer: 'because that action is ugly, yet not worthy of pity, it incites those who see it to laugh.'" Joubert held that nothing "could kill a good joke like pity. 'If someone were to come along and put a red-hot iron' on the exposed arse, for example, our 'laughter would give way to compassion.' But not every branding of an exposed buttock would provoke pity. When the hot iron was applied as the punishment for stupidity and coarseness," Grafton explains, "its touch would make the onlookers laugh even harder than the victim's bare arse had on its own." Poking fun at people's foibles, even at their egregious vices, raises a laugh, whereas exhibiting their underserved misery elicits a tear.

In his fifteenth satire, Juvenal celebrated the capacity to weep as the foundation of human sociability: "Nature, who gave us tears, declares that she gave to the human race the gentlest hearts. This is the finest part of our sensibility [*haec nostri pars optima sensus*]. That is what bids us weep at the case that a friend is pleading, and the wretched attire [*squalor*] of the defendant" (15.132-35). But pity has fled from the world, Juvenal declares, and he quickly reverts to a tone of indignant denunciation.

The only one spared the satirist's barbs is the reader, who is assumed to be a like-minded soul. Invective, on the contrary, is addressed to an antagonist rather than a sympathizer, although of course there is a public which reads, as it were, over the shoulder of the addressee. But the internal or implied audience is constituted in the second-person singular. Invective is thus essentially dialogic: it is an exercise in back-talk or retort, and it arises from an urge to get even. Satire, however, is fundamentally a descriptive genre: it shows what is the case in a corrupt world.

In status-conscious societies such as classical Greece and Rome, being put down or seeing others getting above themselves roused passions, and those passions acquired the names of anger and indignation. Other behaviors, such as wrongdoing in general, elicited other responses, whether the emotion of dislike or hatred (*misos*) or a more strictly cognitive kind of judgment, as in *psogos*. It was natural that literary forms too reflect this structure of feeling, in Raymond Williams' felicitious phrase, even if the categories overlapped and were blurred around the edges. I hope I have made a plausible case for such an interpretation.

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