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Rhetoric, Book II, Part 2

Foucault argues that the Greek ethical substance (the part of oneself or one's behavior that is the central locus of moral concern) focused primarily on *aphrodisia*, various acts linked to pleasure and desire. The mode of subjection (the way in which people are invited to recognize their moral obligation) was seen by the Greeks in the production of the most beautiful form of life possible, a self characterized by peace and harmony--an aesthetics of existence. Obligations are not laid out as rules, but if one wants to have a beautiful existence, a good reputation, and be able to rule, one must act in certain ways. The elaboration of ethical work (the means by which one changes oneself into an ethical subject) was a set of ways by which one could exercise moderation or continence (*enkrateia*). Finally, the *telos* of Greek ethics (the kind of being to which one aspired by behaving morally) was self-mastery and self-sufficiency. Thus, according to the Greeks, "to form oneself as a virtuous and moderate subject in the use he makes of pleasures, the individual has to construct a relationship with the self that is of the 'domination-submission,' 'command-obedience,' 'master-docility' type."⁶ What is mastered, however, is always an aspect of the self, whether the body or a less rational part of the soul.⁷

Aristotle's discussions of anger, I think, fit this paradigm. He defines anger as a

desire accompanied by pain, for a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight at the hands of men who have no call to slight oneself or one's friends...It must always be attended by a certain pleasure--that which arises from the expectation of revenge. (*Rhetoric* II.2 1377b31).

We can, I think, take this conception of anger to be normative for Aristotle, as stating the rule that describes the "man who is angry at the right things and with the right people, and, further, as he ought, when he ought, and as long as he ought" (*Nicomachean Ethics* IV.5 1125b28; hereafter *NE*). While anger is a passion (*NE* IV.5 1125b27), the virtuous man is not passive in respect to it, but actively masters his desire for revenge directing it only to its proper objects and in the proper manner with the attendant pleasure. This economy of desire and pleasure that functions in anger is consonant with the ethical substance that Foucault attributes to the Greeks.

Aristotle fills in the details of proper anger in the following ways. The right objects of anger are particular individuals who have conspicuously slighted oneself or one's friends and have no call to do so. Slighting can be either contempt, spite, or insolence (*Rhetoric* II.2 1378b10ff.). Those showing contempt consider one unimportant or inferior; those showing spite prevent one from attaining something that is wanted; and those showing insolence do and say things to cause one shame in order to derive pleasure and a sense of superiority. Being the object of justifiable revenge cannot be an occasion for anger even though revenge involves some form of slight (cf. 1378b25-6). Nor can anger be appropriate when an action is done because it is profitable (1378a31).

The right manner in which a person is angry is by having a desire for conspicuous revenge (against the proper objects of that anger). Revenge involves some form of retaliation which (at least in some cases), if performed merely for pleasure would count as insolence (*Rhetoric* II.2 1378b25, 1379a31). Thus revenge can be taken by doing or saying things to shame another such as laughing, mocking, jeering, or otherwise injuring (1379a29-31). By implication, revenge might be manifest in punishment, having another humble himself and admit his inferiority, or causing someone to pray and beg for mercy (II.3 1380a15-16, 22-24, 28).

Foucault suggests that *moderation* is the key means by which ethical behavior is practiced in the Greek system. This certainly comports with Aristotle's elaboration of the good-tempered man in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. One exhibits a deficiency ("unirascibility") if he fails to be angered at the proper objects in the right way or at the right time since "to endure being insulted and put up with insult to one's friends is slavish" (IV.5 1126a4ff). On the other hand, a number of types of people exhibit an excess in respect to anger: the hot-tempered are quick to anger at wrong objects but not for a long time, the choleric are easily angered by anything, the sulky are slow to calm, and the bad-tempered are angry at wrong objects and won't be appeased but by vengeance (1126a12ff). Says Aristotle, the middle state is praiseworthy--that in virtue of which we are angry with the right people, at the right things, in the right way, and so on, while the excesses and defects are blameworthy...we must cling to the middle state. (1126b3ff)

This explains why it is the desire for revenge that is privileged over the acts of vengeance themselves, since it is through the mastery of pleasurable desires (their coerced regulation, production, maintenance, not their suppression or eradication) that moderation of action is achieved.⁸

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* - <http://www.san.beck.org/EC22-Aristotle.html#3>

Aristotle defined rhetoric as the art of persuasion. Rhetoric can arouse emotions which may not be related to the essential facts; thus many courts forbid discussion of what is not essential to the case, because it is not right to pervert the jury by moving them to anger or envy or pity. To the argument that rhetoric can be used unjustly, Aristotle answered that this is true of any art and of all good things except virtue. Aristotle described the three modes of persuasion as the personal character of the speaker, the frame of mind of the audience, and the argument of the speech. First, people of good character are more readily believed than others. Second, when the audience is pleased, their judgments are affected. Third, the speech may prove the truth by reasoning. Thus the abilities needed to persuade are logical reasoning, understanding human character and goodness, and understanding emotions. Statements can be persuasive, because they are self-evident or by using the inductive reasoning of examples or deductive syllogisms.

Aristotle divided oratory into three parts. Persuading members of the assembly about a future action is political; convincing jurors about a past action is forensic; and winning a speaking contest is ceremonial. Political speakers argue to do or not do something; forensic speakers prosecute or defend someone; and ceremonial orators either praise or censure. In political oratory the debate is whether the proposal is good or harmful; trial lawyers argue over what is just or unjust; and display oratory deals with honor and shame. Political speakers in arguing for what is expedient may ignore whether it is just or not. Litigants may not deny that something has happened or that it has caused harm, but they will not admit their client is guilty of injustice. Rhetorical propositions may be complete proofs, probabilities, or signs.

Political oratory combines logic and the ethical branch of politics. Aristotle described the five main subjects of political oratory as ways and means, war and peace, national defense, trade, and legislation. Thus the speaker should know the following: the state's sources of revenue and its expenditures; the military strength of the country and its enemies; the means and installations of defense; the needs and sources of the food supply and imports and exports, making sure his country does not offend strong states and trading partners; the constitution and the laws of the state, internal developments, and in knowing the customs of other states history is useful.

One must know the aim of life, which is happiness, defined as prosperity combined with virtue, independence, security, pleasure, and the good condition of one's body and property. Aristotle noted that half of life among the Lacedaemonians is spoiled, because the state of the women is bad. Doing good means preserving life and the good things of life, namely health, wealth, and friends. Good is what is chosen for itself or for the sake of something else, such as the virtues of the soul: justice, courage, moderation, magnanimity, etc. Faculties of speech and action as well as arts and sciences are also productive of what is good. The political speaker will argue relatively that good will be increased and harm decreased. Knowing the form of government, the political speaker will appeal to the interests of the rulers. The end of democracy is freedom, of oligarchy wealth, of aristocracy education and institutions, and of tyranny protection of the tyrant.

In prosecution and defense Aristotle discussed the incentives to wrong-doing, the state of mind of wrong-doers, and the kind of people and condition of those who do wrong. Aristotle defined wrong-doing as injury voluntarily inflicted contrary to law. Law may be specific written laws or universal laws based on unwritten principles. The causes of wrong actions are vice and lack of self-control, and the wrong reflects a fault in one's character. Such actions may be due to habits or desires. Rational desires are for some wish; irrational desires come from appetites and anger. Aristotle differentiated revenge from punishment: punishment is inflicted for the sake of the person punished, but revenge is to satisfy the punisher's feelings. Irrational desires are for food, drink, or sex. Rational

desires are for pleasure, what one consciously believes is good, and may be for revenge, winning, reputation, friends, change, learning, and so on.

The state of mind of wrong-doers is that they believe the thing can be done by them either, without being found out, or believing they could escape punishment if found out, or that it would be worth the punishment. Wrong is also done to people who have what the person wants, who are accessible or in a place safe from being caught or prosecuted, or who are not likely to fight back or prosecute, or those who are vulnerable, or those considered enemies or wrong themselves. Aristotle divided unjust actions into those that affected the community and those affecting individuals. The victim must suffer actual harm and against one's will. Criminal guilt depends on a deliberate purpose. Aristotle recommended equity as follows:

Equity bids us be merciful to the weakness of human nature;
to think less about the laws
than about the person who framed them,
and less about what one said than about what one meant;
not to consider the actions of the accused
so much as the intentions,
nor this or that detail so much as the whole story;
to ask not what a person is now
but what one has always or usually been.
It bids us remember benefits rather than injuries,
and benefits received rather than benefits conferred;
to be patient when we are wronged;
to settle a dispute by negotiation and not by force;
to prefer arbitration to litigation---
for an arbitrator goes by the equity of a case,
a judge by the strict law,
and arbitration was invented with the express purpose
of securing full power for equity.⁴

Aristotle described the unskilled means of persuasion as laws, witnesses, contracts, torture, and oaths. One may argue that the written law is unjust and must give way to a higher principle. Aristotle considered testimony under torture as unreliable, because tough people can endure the pain while cowards may speak falsely to avoid it.

Aristotle noted that the character of the speaker is particularly important in political oratory, while the mood of the jury is more significant in lawsuits. The orator may inspire confidence with good sense, good moral character, and goodwill. Aristotle defined emotions as those feelings attended by pleasure or pain that change people so as to affect their judgments. Anger is a pleasurable impulse accompanied by pain directed for conspicuous revenge because of what concerns oneself or one's friends. Anger can be used in slighting as in contempt, spite, and insolence. People vexed by others, sickness, poverty, love, thirst or unsatisfied desires are easily aroused to anger against those who slight their distress. An orator may manipulate the listeners into a frame of mind disposed to anger toward the adversaries. The opposite of anger is becoming calm, which may be caused by the object of anger admitting fault and being sorry. Aristotle discussed friendship and differentiated hatred from anger, the latter being colder and more lasting. Fear is defined as a pain due to a mental picture or expectation of some evil in the future.

Aristotle defined shame as pain or disturbance in regard to bad things which seem likely to discredit one such as cowardice, licentiousness, greed, meanness, begging, flattery, effeminacy, and boastfulness. People feel shame before those whose opinions matter to them. Kindness is helpfulness toward someone in need for the sake of the person helped, not for any advantage or a return. Pity is a feeling of pain caused by some evil which befalls one who does not deserve it and which we believe might befall us or our friends. We pity most those we know or who are close to us or like us. We feel indignation at unmerited prosperity. The negative expressions of these are delight at others' misfortunes and envy of any prosperity; such feelings can be used to neutralize an appeal to pity. The positive expression of this is emulation, which takes steps to secure the good, which envy may try to stop someone from enjoying.

The types of human character Aristotle discussed are the young, the old, those in their prime, those of noble birth, the wealthy, and the powerful. The young have strong passions, are hot-tempered, love victory, but don't yet love money, not yet having learned what it is to be without it. The youthful trust others easily, because they have not yet been cheated much; they are hopeful, confident, and seek what is noble. Their mistakes tend to be from doing things excessively and vehemently. The elderly have the opposite characteristics; tending to do too little, they can be cynical and small-minded, because they have been humbled by life. They are less generous, because life has taught them how difficult it is to get money and how easy it is to lose it. They care more about what is useful than what is noble, and their passions are weak and often concentrated on the love of gain. Aristotle believed that those in their prime have the best qualities of the young and old in moderation. Those of good birth are ambitious; the wealthy are arrogant, luxurious, and ostentatious; the powerful are ambitious, dignified, and made serious by their responsibilities.

Aristotle analyzed the inductive arguments using examples and the syllogistic reasoning he called enthymeme, in which he included the use of maxims which display the moral character of the speaker. He noted that the uneducated, arguing from common knowledge and drawing obvious conclusions, often are more persuasive than the educated, who argue from general principles. Unlike dialectic, rhetorical arguments can be based on probabilities as well as on certainties. Aristotle also described how arguments may be refuted by using counter-syllogisms and objections. Speeches need an introduction, must state the case, and prove it. Prejudices must be removed; interrogation can be used; and the conclusion tends to end in short sentences.