

Hate and Happiness in Aristotle

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1. INTRODUCTION

On Aristotle's view, it is a central feature of virtue of character that one enjoys (*chairein*) and hates (*misein*) just the things that one should (objectively) enjoy and hate.¹ For example, it is only when one loves (*stergein*) what is fine or noble (*to kalon*) and hates (*misein*) and is disgusted (*duscherainein*) by what is shameful (*to aischron*), that one becomes capable of being persuaded by argument (*logos*). Without this ability, one would not be able to derive any benefit from moral and political education (*didachē*) (*NE* 10.9, 1179b22-31). Accordingly, it is entirely essential to virtue, from both the intellectual and the motivational point of view, that one develops one's capacities for love and hate in just the right way.

There are two crucial, even if rarely emphasized, aspects of this view. First, virtue does not involve merely enjoying or liking the right sort of things and, correspondingly, finding other things (the wrong ones) disagreeable. There are many things that people find enjoyable or disagreeable (and so even to a high degree) without being particularly motivated to pursue or avoid them, much less to organize their lives around them. In contrast, virtue is supposed to weave certain concerns deep into the fabric of one's life, effectively leading one to organize one's whole life around those concerns. It is no coincidence that Aristotle uses verbs that signal not only that one should enjoy (*chairein*) the right sorts of things (i.e., the fine ones) but also that one should develop a loving affection (*stergein*) for them. The virtuous person is a lover of virtue (*philaretos*) and a lover of the fine (*philokalos*) (*NE* 1.8, 1099a11-2), one who is always eager and ready (*spoudazein*) to engage in virtuous and fine actions (*NE* 6.8, 1168b25 and 1169a7). That is why virtuous people aim at the fine (*to kalon*) in *all* their actions, rather than alternating among many different goals, as ordinary people (who sometimes aim at pleasure, sometimes at honor, sometimes at health, and so on) do (*NE* 1.4, 1095a22-28). They do not merely enjoy or judge the fine to be good or best – they truly love it and live for it.²

¹ The development of virtue of character proceeds through habituation in pleasure and pain (*NE* 2.1., 1104b3-8). As Gavin Lawrence describes it: 'Habituation, in inculcating the human excellence, aims to bring us to enjoy and disenjoy the things we should, and this is a matter of coming to enjoy doing the fine and hating the base, because they are such' (Lawrence 2011, 262).

² There is a famous Platonic precedent for the importance of love for both virtue and knowledge in Diotima's account of the ascent and redirection (or rather true development) of erotic love (*erōs*) from particular people to true objects of knowledge, and in particular the fine or the beautiful (*to kalon*) (*Symposium* 209e-212c). The person who

Second, of the two forces that mold our relationship to the world, Aristotle sees love rather than hate as the primary motivational drive of a good and virtuous life. Not love, of course, for a particular person (whether erotic or other kind) but love – an affectionate attachment – nevertheless. Aristotle thinks that any reasonable person (and so also a virtuous person) should choose some particular goal for the fine life (*EE* 1.2, 1214b6-14), a goal that one targets (or takes into account) in all of one's actions:

...everyone capable of living according to their own decision should set [for themselves] some goal (*skopos*) for living finely (*kalōs*), whether it be honor or reputation or wealth or education, which they will look to in all their actions since not to have organized one's life in relation to some end (*telos*) is a mark of much foolishness. (*EE* 2.2, 1214b7-10)³

There are disputes concerning what Aristotle thinks this goal, which he says everybody agrees to call 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*), is.⁴ But it is a common assumption that it is something one desires in a positive way, something one loves and cares about. On Aristotle's view, a good life is one that is organized with reference to this goal and so a life in which one has oriented and committed one's whole being – both intellectually *and* affectionately – to its pursuit.

From this point of view, it is only understandable that scholarly discussions of habituation, varied as they are, have concentrated on the way in which one comes to enjoy or love something, in particular comes to love engaging in virtuous actions (or, at any rate, activities that constitute happiness) for themselves.⁵ Insofar as the opposite attitude – that of hate – is concerned, they have simply assumed a parallel process – just as the learner is habituated to love certain things, she is also habituated to hate other things.⁶ Despite their parallel development, however, it is love and not hate that takes the place of pride in

comes to know (*gignoskein*) (211c) to *kalon* and so develops 'true virtue' (212a) has, quite literally, reached the real goal of erotic love (210a).

³ Unless noted otherwise, the translations from Greek are mine.

⁴ There is no uncontroversial way to summarize the many different interpretations of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*. The main divide is between inclusive interpretations that view *eudaimonia* as a composite end that includes, at the very least, the exercise of practical virtues (of both character and intellect) and exclusive or dominant interpretations that see it as consisting or centering on a single activity of contemplation (*theōria*). For inclusive interpretations, see Irwin 1985, Cooper 1999, or Long 2011. For exclusive interpretations, see Kraut 1989, Kenny 1992, or Richardson Lear 2004.

⁵ To take but one example, Myles Burnyeat, in what is still probably the most widely recognized account of Aristotle's theory of habituation, concentrates entirely on the role of love (of the fine or noble) and pleasure, which he characterizes as 'a disposition of the feelings comparable in intensity, though not of course in every other respect, to the passion of a man who is crazy about horses' and so on the way one comes to love and, consequently, enjoy things (Burnyeat 1980, 267).

⁶ This is true even as scholars differ in their interpretations of the role of pleasure and pain in habituation. Whereas some (perhaps most) have maintained that pleasure plays the primary motivational role in habituation to virtuous actions (Burnyeat 1980), others have seen pain as the central factor (Curzer 2002). In the former case, the learner is supposed to (somehow) progress from engaging in virtuous actions for the sake of external rewards (and so external

the virtuous person's life. Hate seems to be a mere accompaniment of love, motivating not so much what one does but what one avoids doing.⁷ But why should that be so? Why privilege love over hate? Why could not hate rather than love be the driving force of one's pursuit of 'living finely'? After all, Aristotle thinks that the virtuous person will hate certain things and rightly so. In his world, there is a place for hate, just as there is a place for love: the virtuous person hates and is disgusted by shameful things. The way Aristotle puts it, one might well think that the virtuous person is not only personally eager and prepared to support virtuous things and engage in virtuous actions, but also eager and ready to prevent shameful ones. It is not only avoidance but also the removal of evils that Aristotle counts among the things that are good and to be pursued (*Rhet.* 1.10, 1366b23-25). And yet, Aristotle never suggests that one should center one's life around actively seeking and removing what one considers evil. In fact, the role of hate is rather subdued in his writings, even as he stresses that as one should love what is fine, one should also hate what is shameful.

But one might well wonder, given Aristotle's claims, why hate should be so subdued. Why could it not play a more significant and active role? In fact, why could a good or virtuous life not be organized around something one hates (rather than loves) and aimed at the eradication of what one considers shameful and evil? Why could not hate, rather than love, be the primary motivational force of one's good life? This is the main question of this paper. It seems to me that the emphasis on the positive ethical character of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* (happiness) and his (in the context of Ancient Greek philosophy, uncharacteristic) acceptance of the positive role of emotions in a good life, might obscure the ways in which he thinks emotions also present an obstacle or even danger to such a life. My target in this paper is thus not the way in which hate can or does have bad or harmful consequences on others but, rather, the way in which hate – should it be allowed to flourish and motivate one's life – would influence one's own well-being and the ability to lead a good life. As I hope to show, there are good reasons why hate does not play a more active role in Aristotle's conception of a good life.

The idea of a life driven by hate is not entirely alien. We are all familiar with fictional characters whose lives are organized precisely in this way. Whether one thinks of Captain Ahab's hate for Moby Dick, Iago's hate for Othello, The Monster's hate for Dr. Frankenstein, Edmond Dantès' hate for Fernand Mondego, or Khan's hate for Captain Kirk, fiction is replete with examples of lives driven by hate. And it need not be a hate for a particular person: Tybalt's hate was aimed at all those associated with the

pleasures) to finding the actions pleasant as such. In the latter case, the learner is guided by pain and punishment (and ensuing feelings of fear) to steer away from vicious actions and in that way come to realize the value of actions that are virtuous. On both views, however, the virtuous person develops love for the right sorts of things by the same process as she develops hate for the right sorts of things.

⁷ Aristotle often speaks of avoidance (*eulabeia*) or fleeing away (*pheugein*) from what is disgraceful or shameful (e.g., 1121b23-4; 1127b5) or from wickedness and evil (e.g., 1166b27).

Montagues, while Voldemort's hate for those of not pure blood aimed at eradication of not just them but of all that they created and stood for. But although the idea might not be alien, it is unpalatable. We generally do not regard hate as the kind of emotion that we should embrace. There is a very strong tendency to see hate in a negative way, if for no other reason than because of its association with groups that advocate hostility or even direct violence towards members of various social groups, whether based on religion, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, and so on (i.e., hate groups). Hence even if hate is not to be eschewed altogether, it is treated at best as a necessary accompaniment of love insofar as one is expected to hate things that directly threaten or actively harm those things or people that one loves.

And yet, even among the fictional characters mentioned above, there are some whose hate seems justified and whose character is not evil (Edmond Dantès), or whose moral status is unclear or subject to debate (Captain Ahab or Frankenstein's Monster). Accordingly, in imagining a life driven mainly by hate and organized around its object, I will not presuppose that hate is always unjustified or that its goal is morally wrong. In fact, I will be primarily interested in the virtuous agent who presumably hates the right things. The question can be posed, then, in the following way. If Aristotle thinks that in order to live a good life people should set for themselves some goal around which they organize their lives, why could that goal not be something to which one is driven by hate? For example, why could it not be a life which is focused on disabling, destroying or otherwise removing from life something one considers (and passionately so) evil rather than a life in which one's focus is to promote and engage in something one loves? Or, in Aristotle's words, why could it not be a life in which one aims to destroy the shameful rather than to promote the fine? On the face of it, such a life seems a decent candidate for a good life. For example, it could be a life in which one would exercise virtues, such temperance, courage, and justice. It could also be a life which could offer a rather concrete goal and prospect of success (the eradication of whatever one deems evil). Why, then, should we avoid achieving *eudaimonia* in this hate-propelled way?

The case of hate I have in mind needs to be distinguished from cases in which 'hate' signifies merely an expression of dissatisfaction over the state of something one likes. For example, Fred Rogers famously hated the television programs of his day so much that he exerted great effort to change them, creating *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* to offer children a worthwhile alternative. Although it was hate and anger at television and what it was doing to children that initially propelled him to take action, Fred Rogers' life was not one centered on something he hated. He did not hate television and did not try to erase it from existence. Rather, he hated the way its true potential was squandered and made harmful instead of beneficial to children. The idea I have in mind is more akin to that of senator Joseph McCarthy whose political life centered and aimed at the eradication of communists and homosexuals from the public sphere. However, my primary concern will be the virtuous person who, unlike McCarthy, would presumably not aim at eradication of particular people (or even particular kinds of people) but, rather, at

eradication of the various ways in which what she considers evil or shameful expresses itself – whether it be actions, customs, or institutions.

The plan of the paper is simple. In the next section, I will look at Aristotle’s account of hate in the *Rhetoric* and, with some help from Plato, try to reconstruct the way in which hate develops not as a mere (necessary) accompaniment of love (i.e., as a derivative negative attitude towards things that would harm what one has come to love) but in its own right. In section III, I will apply the results of this inquiry to the questions raised in the introduction. As I will argue, there are at least two reasons that disqualify hate from being the primary motivational drive of a good life, as Aristotle conceives of it. First, hate cannot maintain and can even undermine the right relationship between the rational and the non-rational part of the soul. Second, hate does not support acquisition of knowledge and in fact essentially involves or presupposes ignorance. In sum, although it might indeed be possible to organize one’s life around something one hates, such life cannot be a good life.

II

Aristotle classifies hate as a feeling or emotion (*pathos*) (e.g., *NE* 2.5, 1105b21-23). Accordingly, his most extensive description of hate occurs in the discussion of emotions in *Rhetoric* Book 2. Since emotions exercise powerful influence over people’s judgments, they are of particular importance for an orator and Aristotle aims to provide the means that would enable an orator to command them in his or her audience. The possible limitations of this context for Aristotle’s discussion of emotions have been extensively discussed in the scholarship. The debates have centered on two related controversies: (a) the extent to which Aristotle’s discussion of emotions in the *Rhetoric* reflects his own theoretical (or scientific) views about their nature; and (b) the presence (or lack thereof) of a systematic, unified treatment or theory of emotions in the *Rhetoric*.⁸ Fortunately, as our focus is on hate in particular and especially on the ways it differs from love relative to the issue raised in the previous section, we can set (b) aside. Insofar as (a) is concerned, the worry might be that if Aristotle’s discussion of emotions amounts to ‘a preliminary, purely dialectical investigation that clarifies [some of] the phenomena in question’⁹, it might not allow us to draw any firm conclusions about hate and its role in a good life. However, the debates concerning (a), focused as they are on scientific account of the nature of emotions, involve questions such as whether Aristotle thinks that emotions are or merely involve desires (and of what kind), whether they involve cognitive states (and of what kind), and so on. Our question, however, is about the way in which hate, should it become one’s primary motivational force, could or would influence

⁸ For a brief overview of the controversy, see Dow 2015, 145-155. For a comprehensive discussion of Aristotle’s treatment of emotions in the *Rhetoric*, see Rapp 2002 (vol. 2), 543-583.

⁹ Cooper 1996, 239.

one's ability to lead a good life. From this point of view, it is precisely the *phenomena* of hate (i.e., the various ways in which it is experienced in life) that are of interest rather than the scientific account of its precise psychological nature.¹⁰

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle distinguishes three different ways in which a speech (*logos*) can affect persuasion: it can make the speaker's character appear good and trustworthy; it can stir emotions in the audience in such a way that they become favorably disposed to the speaker's cause; and it can persuade through argument by showing how something is or is not the case (*Rhet.* 1.2, 1356a1-4). It is in the second of these three ways that hate plays a prominent role since 'we do not pass the same judgments when distressed or pleased, or when loving or hating' (*Rhet.* 1.2, 1356a14-16). From this point of view, it is perhaps surprising that Aristotle does not spend more time on hate – it is by far the most briefly discussed emotion and, along with his discussion of *philia* (love or friendly feeling) in the *Rhetoric*, presents special difficulties for those trying to fit them into the larger framework of his discussion.¹¹ Fortunately, for our purposes, we can set these worries aside and go directly to the passage in which he discusses hate:

Concerning enmity (*ekhthra*) and hating (*misein*), it is clear that they are to be studied (*theorein*) from their opposites. Enmity may be produced by anger (*orgē*), spite (*epēreasmos*), or slander (*diabolē*). But whereas anger arises from things [done] against oneself, enmity also arises without things [done] against oneself since if we take someone to be a certain kind of person, we hate them. And anger is also always concerned with individuals, such as Callias or Socrates, but hate (*misos*) is also directed towards kinds (*pros ta genē*) – everyone hates a thief (*kleptēs*) or an informer (*sukophantēs*). Anger is also curable by time, but hate is incurable. Anger also seeks to inflict pain [to its object], whereas hate seeks harm or evil (*kakon*). An angry person wishes to perceive [their revenge] but for someone who hates this makes no difference.¹² Painful things are all perceptible, but the greatest evils, injustice (*adikia*) and folly (*aphrosunē*), are the least perceptible since the presence of vice (*kakia*) does not cause pain. And anger involves pain but hate does not. An angry person is pained, but one who hates is not. An angry person may also feel pity if many things happen [to those at who they are angry], but one who hates never does. For an angry person wishes that those

¹⁰ Aristotle makes a similar move in relation to the division of the soul into the rational and the non-rational part with which he operates in both *NE* (1.13, 1102a28) and *EE* (2.1, 1220a8-11). As he tells us, it is a functional division which captures a distinction that is relevant for ethical and political purposes. In both works, he sets the precise scientific account of this distinction aside.

¹¹ For an overview of the interpretative problems, see Cooper 1996, 243-4.

¹² An alternative translation goes as follows: An angry person wishes [that their revenge] is perceived [by those at whom the anger is directed] but for someone who hates this makes no difference.

they are angry at to suffer (*antipathein*), but one who hates [wishes] that they do not exist (*mē einai*). (*Rhet.* 2.4, 1382a1-14)

There are two preliminary questions that need to be dealt with before tackling the content of the passage. First, in the opening line Aristotle mentions not only hate but also enmity. Although the passage treats the two terms as equivalent, one might reasonably wonder whether there is an important distinction at play. Here, David Konstan's admirable analysis provides an answer: 'Aristotle seems clearly to treat *ekhthia* as the counterpart to *philia* just as *to misein* or hating answers to *to philein*. Hating is the simple emotion, whereas enmity represents the state of affairs that obtains when people regard each other with mutual hatred' (Konstan 2006, 194). For our purposes, then, we can treat the notions as synonymous unless something Aristotle says clearly applies only to the case of mutual hate relationship (i.e., enmity).

Second, why does Aristotle not follow his own advice to study hate by contrasting it with what he regards as its opposite, namely love? Instead, as is obvious, he proceeds to contrast it with anger which he describes not as the opposite of hate but something that can give rise to it. It is difficult to explain, at least in any reliable way, why Aristotle does not do something. There is little question that, in the ancient rhetorical context, anger is one of the most important emotions and so for a number of reasons. To begin with, it is easy to provoke it in an audience. For Aristotle, anger is a basic emotional reaction¹³ induced whenever something appears in some way threatening or diminishing something one cares about, including, of course, oneself. As he notes, in order to make a person angry at someone, all one needs to do is to show (or make it look as if) that that someone in some way (whether directly or indirectly) obstructs or hinders one from achieving something one wants or that she or he merely does not assist one in achieving it (*Rhet.* 2.2, 1379a12-23). In fact, the bar can be set even lower since anger can be induced by a mere suggestion that someone dislikes or speaks badly about something one cares about (*Rhet.* 2.2, 1379a30-b2). As Aristotle further notes, anger is a quick and intense emotion that does not need to be developed and established over a lengthy period of time (*NE* 7.6, 1149a24-b3). This makes it particularly suitable for rhetorical contexts in which time and timing is of the essence. Finally, unlike many other emotions, anger does not require any pre-existing emotional connection – positive or negative – to the person or people at which it becomes directed, even if such connection might be especially conducive to it.

As we shall see, there is a close but complex relationship between hate and anger which might lead one to confuse them (or their expressions). An orator who wants to persuade her audience about something by appealing to negative emotions would do well to be aware of the relevant differences. For

¹³ It is famously available even to people who do not have more complex or nuanced emotions (such as psychopaths) or do not have them yet (i.e., children). For psychopathy, see Blair, Mitchell and Blair 2005, 47-66.

example, one might try to persuade the Athenian assembly about taking a punitive but merely preventive action against Sparta (i.e., one that would not result and perhaps even prevent any further escalation). A person who is angry at Sparta might agree with the measure (regarding it as justified) but a person who hates could very well react differently. For example, they might think that the measure needs to be more severe since they do not really care about deterring Sparta from engaging in further hostilities, but they do care about harming it. It might then be that the contrast between hate and love is more useful for scientific purposes, whereas the one with anger applies more directly to the rhetorical context. As Aristotle says, his advice or recommendation to contrast love with hate applies to those who wish to study hate theoretically (*theorein*) rather than, we might conjecture, those who wish to know about hate for the purposes of manipulating the emotion in order to effect persuasion.

These issues having been set aside, it is time to tackle the passage. Aristotle lists several features of hate and it will be useful to list them:

1. Enmity may be produced by anger, spite, or slander.
2. As opposed to anger, hate is directed not only towards individuals but also towards kinds of people – if we take someone to be a certain kind of person, we hate them.
3. As opposed to anger, hate is incurable by time.
4. As opposed to anger, which seeks to inflict pain, hate seeks to inflict harm or evil.
5. An angry person cares about perceiving the revenge and pain she inflicts, but one who hates does not care if she perceives the harm being inflicted.
6. An angry person is pained, but one who hates is not pained.
7. An angry person wishes that those they are angry at to suffer, but one who hates wishes that they do not exist.
8. An angry person can feel pity, but one who hates never does.

We can start by noting the tension between (1) and (2). In (1) we learn that hate does (or at least can) originate in anger.¹⁴ Anger, as Aristotle portrays it in the *Rhetoric*, arises out of some action or speech of those that one thinks should treat one well but that one instead perceives as showing contempt (*Rhet.* 2.2, 1378a31-3). It is thus, as confirmed in (2), directed at particular people, namely those that one took to have shown the contempt. If hate, then, arises out of anger, it would be rather natural to take it to arise in relation to those who made one angry. In (2), however, we learn that all it takes to come to hate

¹⁴ Since spite and slander are, along with wanton aggression, among the causes of anger (*Rhet.* 2.2, 1378b14), I do not treat them separately here.

someone is that one takes them to be of a certain sort, for example to be thieves, independently of whether or not, in relation to those particular people, we were at any point angry.

Although (1) and (2) are in tension, they are not necessarily contradictory. In particular, one might think that hate need not always arise from anger. For the moment, however, it will be useful to explore the way it might arise from it. When Aristotle outlines reasons for political change in tyrannies in the *Politics*, he tells us that people always hate tyrants (*Pol.* 5.10, 1312b20). He then goes on to contrast hate with anger insofar as angry people are more prone to (immediate) action than those who hate because, unlike hate, anger makes no use of reasoning (*logismos*). The reason is that anger involves pain which makes reasoning difficult, whereas hate does not (*Pol.* 5.10, 1312b32-33). Although this passage in the *Politics* largely echoes *Rhet.* 2.4 1382a1-14 translated above, it also gives us an example of an (inevitable) object of hate, namely, tyrants. In this connection, we learn two interesting details. First, anger *excludes* fear. As Aristotle says, ‘it is impossible to be both angry and afraid’ (*Rhet.* 2.3, 1380a32). Second, hate involves or presupposes fear (*Pol.* 5.11, 1315b7-8). And, as we (luckily) learn in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica*, people hate *and* fear tyrants – hate because they treat them wrong and with injustice (*Oecon.* 3.1) and fear because (presumably) they exercise (unlimited) control over their lives.

These passages suggest that anger can transform into hatred in cases in which one is not in a position to act on one’s anger, that is, in cases in which one fears those who gave one the cause to be angry. Aristotle also gives us a clue as to why this might mean that one comes to hate not only the particular person that caused one the offence but anybody who falls under some relevant general description (what this is I will explain as I go on). As he tells us in the *Rhetoric*, anger can be partially or temporarily alleviated by being acted on in relation to someone else than the person one is angry with (*Rhet.* 2.3, 1380b5-10). Hence, if one cannot act on one’s anger towards the person who caused it, and so relieve one’s anger in the usual way (*NE* 4.5, 1126a20-3), one might find temporary relief by acting that way towards someone else who is, in some relevant respect, like the original offender. Presumably, the range of what counts as being ‘like’ here is very broad and would largely depend on the way one has (subjectively) perceived the offense. Still, in general, if hate is (at least in some cases) transformed anger, this could explain why it can give rise to repeated bouts of angry actions towards people who themselves might not have given one any particular cause for being angry but might have some, however vague or (objectively) random, commonality with the original offender. It is also of no small importance that one’s actions towards those other people presuppose that one does not fear them or that one does not fear them to the extent that one would shrink from the desired (vengeful) action. Hence hate’s tendency to motivate angry or harmful actions in relation to people who are (ostensibly) weaker (less powerful, more

vulnerable, and so on). We thus have not only the possibility of anger transforming into hate but also the possibility of hate giving rise to outbursts of anger (or angry actions).¹⁵

Although the connection between anger and hate seems plausible, it is not this connection *per se* that I am interested in. Rather, it is the following two observations. First, although hate might involve (or appear to involve) a rational judgment or attitude (as Aristotle says, it is without pain and capable of using reasoning), it nevertheless involves a (non-rational) and painful affection of spirit (*thumos*),¹⁶ whether in its origin (e.g., anger) or as its element or accompaniment (e.g., fear). Second, although hate's origins might be traced to a particular (negative) experience, it tends to involve generalization that transfers the negative attitude from a particular person or experience to a kind of people or things.

I start with the first point. As Aristotle tells us (point 7), hate involves a rational desire – a wish – of a particular kind, namely one that aims for its object to cease to exist (rather than merely to suffer). Why should hate involve this particular kind of wish? Although Aristotle highlights anger as a (possible) origin of hate, it is presumably not just any anger but a frustrated (or failed) one. On Aristotle's view, anger is due to spirit (*thumos*) rather than appetite (*epithumia*). A painful experience related to appetite (which is, in general, a desire for bodily pleasure) leads to avoidance of the source of the pain. If we find some food or activity painful, we avoid it. Spirit, on the other hand, tends to react with action. It aims to remove or otherwise neutralize the source of a perceived threat or harm whether to oneself or to others one cares about. Consequently, it calls for action as long as the threat or harm is perceived to exist. This is important because in the case of anger that leads to hate, the agent could *not* act in the way in which her spirit (in becoming angry) urged her to act. Hence, the perceived threat or harm was not (and could not be) removed. From the point of view of spirit, this is not a situation in relation to which one can simply move on (as one often can in the case of appetite since its particular desires, such as for something sweet, tend to be fleeting). If it is the task of spirit to preserve the sense of one's own safety, integrity and self-esteem, then any situation that results from a failure in or inability to carry out that task, continues to call for remedy.

It is here that the second observation becomes relevant since it is not just any kind of generalization that characterizes hate. Rather, it is a matter of forming the view that the source or cause of one's harm or hurt is of no or even negative value – it is something that one believes should *not* continue to exist. The transformation of anger into hate is a peculiar way in which one deals with the consequences

¹⁵ It is in this respect that anger and hate might be easily confused. They can both give rise to angry (vengeful) actions even as the motivational state behind them can be different.

¹⁶ Spirit is one of two non-rational kinds of desire that Aristotle recognizes, the other being appetite (*epithumia*). Whereas appetite is primarily concerned with bodily pleasures and pains (esp. those related to food, drink, and sex), spirit concerns matters that are broadly related to (one's) safety and well-being, self-esteem, and self-respect. For an overview, see Pearson 2012, 111-139.

of a frustrated spirited affection or desire. It involves negating the significance of one's failure or inability to act by *devaluing* the source or origin of the perceived harm or offense. If one becomes angry at people because, for example, one expects more or differently from them, in forming hate towards them one gives up on any such expectations – the (contemptible) way they acted becomes precisely the (only) way one could expect them to act. The generalization provides one with a ready-made explanation of the action and its consequences – they acted as they did because acting in that way belongs to (or is in) their bad nature (rather than, for example, because of mistake, ignorance, frustration, despair, and so on). It is this bad or negative feature of the world (one that should not exist) that is responsible for the harm one has incurred or continues incurring. The task then (dictated by hate rather than anger) becomes not to exact vengeance on the particular person that gave one the cause to be angry but, rather, to remove the negative feature, whatever and wherever it is, from the world. Even if one cannot act in relation to the original experience or event, one can still do so in relation to all other such things. If anger still leaves space for (and often in fact arises because of) an attachment to those that one is angry at (*Rhet.* 2.2, 1379b2ff), hate makes any such attachment irrational by rendering its objects worthless (or only worthy of destruction). Hate arises by turning one's own failure into the failure of the world.

This elaboration of Aristotle's remarks finds strong supporting evidence in Plato's description of the rise of *misologia* (hate of arguments) and misanthropy in the *Phaedo*. In the case of misanthropy, Plato emphasizes that it is not simply a matter of forming, after experiencing repeated disappointment, an unfavorable view of people. Rather, it is a failure (a lack of knowledge) on the part of the agent that both prepares the ground for the disappointment (for example, by causing the agent to have unrealistic expectations) and later leads to concluding that the fault must lie with people as such rather than with the agent herself:

Misanthropy comes when a man without knowledge or skill has placed great trust in someone and believes him to be altogether truthful, sound and trustworthy; then, a short time afterwards he finds him to be wicked and unreliable, and then this happens in another case; when one has frequently had that experience, especially with those whom one believed to be one's closest friends, then, in the end, after many such blows, one comes to hate all men and to believe that no one is sound in any way at all. (*Phaed.* 89d-e)¹⁷

¹⁷ The translations of the passage from the *Republic* are those of C. D. C. Reeve in Reeve 2004.

Similarly, *misologia* arises when someone who lacks knowledge or skill in arguments experiences repeated disappointment or frustration in dealing with them and so, as a result, shifts the blame from oneself to the nature of arguments as such:

...it is as when one who lacks skill in arguments puts his trust in an argument as being true, then shortly afterwards believes it to be false—as sometimes it is and sometimes it is not—and so with another argument and then another. You know how those in particular who spend their time studying contradiction in the end believe themselves to have become very wise and that they alone have understood that there is no soundness or reliability in any object or in any argument, but that all that exists simply fluctuates up and down as if it were in the Euripus and does not remain in the same place for any time at all.

What you say, I said, is certainly true.

It would be pitiable, Phaedo, he said, when there is a true and reliable argument and one that can be understood, if a man who has dealt with such arguments as appear at one time true, at another time untrue, should not blame himself or his own lack of skill but, because of his distress, in the end gladly shift the blame away from himself to the arguments, and spend the rest of his life hating and reviling reasonable discussion and so be deprived of truth and knowledge of reality. (*Phaed.* 89d-90d).

These passages show that the process of generalization involved in the formation of hate is targeting precisely the feature in relation to which the agent was lacking and suffered loss. By forming a negative (hateful) view or relation to things that exhibit that feature (people, arguments, etc.), the agent not only devalues those things (wishing them not to exist) but also (at least seemingly) negates the significance of his or her own lack or loss. If there is no soundness and reliability found in either arguments or people, then it is not only the case that one's lack of success in dealing with them is not unsurprising and not one's fault but also that one's lack (or ignorance) that those failures revealed is not really a lack (or ignorance). There is, after all, nothing there (no knowledge) worth having.

The generalization involved in the formation of hate thus brings about a particular cognitive closure – once something is characterized by the bad or negative (i.e., hated) feature, it automatically becomes not only an object of one's hate but also something that is, in general, not worth knowing anything further about. For example, if one truly *hates* liars and discovers that someone is a liar, one could quickly conclude that that is all one needs (and wants) to know about that person. Their being a liar

now explains whatever that person did, does or might do since whatever other qualities they might have, they are all rendered insignificant by the fact that they are a liar.

If my argument has been along the right lines, Aristotle's conception of hate involves several crucial features: (a) frustrated non-rational (spirited) affection and desires; (b) negating the (perceived) value of the source of a perceived threat or harm; (c) diminishing the (perceived) significance of any (original) failure to act on the agent's side to remove the threat; and (d) negating any (perceived) value of knowing about things or people that exhibit the feature that one came to blame for the perceived evil (or harm or threat). It is time to turn to the question raised in the beginning of the paper.

III

On Aristotle's view, it is not possible to lead a good life unless one achieves a virtuous disposition of character. This disposition involves harmonizing the two parts of the soul that Aristotle recognizes – the rational part (or reason) and the non-rational part which houses non-rational desires (*NE* 1.13, 1102a28; *EE* 2.1, 1220a8-11) – in such a way that they become unified with respect to actions and feelings: they are supposed to 'chime together' (*homophonei*) (*NE* 1.13, 1102b29-30). The idea is that the non-rational part, once properly habituated, comes to accept and obey reason's commands or prescriptions (*NE* 5.11, 1138b11). As Aristotle tells us, in the virtuous agent the non-rational part lives according to reason in the same way in which children live according to their fathers or tutors (*NE* 1.13, 1102b31-32; 3.12, 1119b12-1). The virtuous agent guides and directs her actions and desires by reason in a distinct way so that her whole soul aims at the right things (e.g., *NE* 3.5, 1114b26-28; 3.12, 1119b15-17; 3.7, 1115b11-12).

As I have argued elsewhere (Müller 2019), Aristotle thinks that the reason-ruled harmonization of the soul is possible because of the way in which a virtuous agent relates to her true inner self – she is a self-lover insofar as she is a lover of reason and its activities (*NE* 9.4, 1168b31-5). In this way, the virtuous person not only comes to guide her life (both in terms of actions and feelings) by reason but also to organize and direct it towards the kind of concerns that characterize excellent (exercises of) reason – whether in the theoretical sphere (i.e., truth and knowledge) or practical sphere (i.e., virtue and the fine) – rather than towards the kind of concerns that characterize her non-rational part, such as bodily pleasure (e.g., *NE* 3.8, 1117a6-9; 4.1, 1121a30-b10). It is this possibility of forming an attachment, a loving affection for reason, knowledge, truth, and the fine that allows the virtuous person to pursue the right 'goal for living finely' in such a way that she can be said to live a life of *eudaimonia* ('happiness').

One problem with hate, should it come to be the primary drive of one's life, is that, unlike love, it makes reason act in the service of non-rational desires (in particular, spirit), rather than the other way round. If hate is formed in its own right or as a primary emotion (i.e., not merely as a derivative

accompaniment of love), it involves a particular kind of generalization, one that directs one's negative attitudes or desires towards things that are (or can be) characterized by features that the agent has come to judge as bad- or worthless-making. The origin of this judgment, and so also of the wish that such things cease to exist, is however not found in the fact that those things are contrary to what is truly fine or noble (as it would be in an agent that is driven by love of the fine). Rather, it is found in the agent's frustrated or otherwise hindered non-rational desires, such as anger or fear. In developing hate, one transforms one's emotional distress or frustration into an ethical outlook. This outlook not only devalues the origin of the emotional frustration by making it bad or worthless in nature, but also makes the eradication of all things that are characterized by such nature a worthwhile achievement, one deserving of attachment. Although a person driven by hate thus might appear to be acting on the basis of rational or moral judgment or policy, her actions remain driven by the concerns of her non-rational part.

If this argument is along the right lines, then a person driven by hate – at least by hate formed in view of frustrated or hindered emotions – cannot have a virtuous character since hate relegates reason to a subordinate and (normatively) unnatural role, one that jeopardizes its function of issuing commands to the non-rational part. Hence, a virtuous person's life cannot be primarily driven by hate, independently of whether or not the objects of her hate correspond to the things that are truly evil or shameful. A more general conclusion can be reached by considering the fact that hate promotes detachment since it involves seeing and judging things that it is directed at as having no or negative value. A person who hates is, insofar as she hates, at best only attached to things that promote the eradication of the things she hates. But beyond that, hate does not involve seeing things as worthwhile of care, devotion, or admiration. Accordingly, someone who develops in such a way that hate (rather than love) becomes their primary motivational drive cannot hope to develop the right sort of relationship to oneself and, hence, cannot achieve the ideal, virtuous state of character. Her attachments, such as they are, would remain instrumental (i.e., directed towards things useful for satisfying her hate) and the overall orientation of her non-rational desires would remain anchored or oriented toward external things (the objects of her hate) rather than towards her true inner self (i.e., reason).

If hate cannot sustain virtue, it seems obvious that it cannot support a good life (*eudaimonia*). The analysis in section II offers at least two additional reasons for thinking so. First, if one's life is primarily driven by hate, it is not oriented towards an activity (of one's own) but, rather, towards the cessation of an activity (typically, someone else's). This means that, unlike love, hate aims at an end that is distinct from the activities that it gives rise to (*NE* 1.1, 1094a1-5). If love can keep one engaged in certain activities (those that one loves) for their own sake, hate can only aim at cessation of those things one hates. If *eudaimonia* is supposed to lie in some sort of (best) activity of the soul (i.e., in an activity that is an end in itself) in which one engages for its own sake, then it cannot be achieved by activities fueled by hate since

they are not of the right sort (i.e., are not ends themselves). Moreover, although it might be that the goal (or product) of one's hate is valuable instrumentally (one could, after all, manage to remove a great evil from the world), once the goal is achieved, any further engagement in the kind of activities that led one to that goal is rendered pointless. Hence, should a person whose life is primarily driven by hate succeed, their success would render their further life bereft of a 'goal for living finely' and, to that extent and from that point on, foolish (*EE* 2.2, 1214b7-10).¹⁸

The second point is this. As we have seen, a life primarily driven by hate is a life marked by (selective) cognitive closure towards things one hates. There is little controversy concerning Aristotle's views about the role of knowledge in a good life. Whether one adopts the inclusive or the dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia*, it is fairly clear that Aristotle thinks that a good life essentially includes, if not outright aims at, knowledge and understanding. It is a precondition for such a life that one becomes capable of appreciating the beauty of nature and finding not just any but the highest form of pleasure in understanding its workings and complexities (*PA* 1.5, 644b22-45a25). It is only then that one becomes capable of pursuing scientific knowledge, that is of seeking true explanations and causes of things. This concerns not only theoretical but also practical matters. As Aristotle often warns us, truth is in a way harder to determine in practical contexts since practical situations are, as a rule, too complex to be grasped and evaluated by and in view of universal rules or generalizations (esp., *NE* 1.3). It is, then, even more important in practical than in theoretical contexts that one becomes a lover of truth and of what is fine and beautiful. The pursuit of knowledge or understanding of human nature and behavior requires that one comes to see and marvel at beauty in in things that exhibit an unusually high degree of luck and randomness (and so lack beauty) rather than of functional (teleological) organization and unity.

The problem is that hate promotes exactly the opposite attitude. It operates as if it already knew and determined, once and for all, what the nature of its objects is. Once it becomes attached to some feature as responsible for (or directly constituting) the harm or threat that one abhors, it makes it the primary or essential feature of all objects that exhibit it. It is because of *that* feature that those objects lose value and deserve to be eradicated. For a person who hates, once something can be categorized as belonging to the hated kind, there are no further questions to be asked or truths to be grasped. One problem is that what led one to pick the feature that turned things into objects of one's hate were (frustrated) non-rational desires (which could, of course, be accompanied by sophisticated rationalization),¹⁹ rather than any reasoned inquiry. Hence, there is no guarantee that what one hates really is something that deserves to be hated. More importantly, from the point of view of the possibility of leading a good life, this means that one who

¹⁸ Of course, one could find a new object for one's hate and thus avoid the situation in which one is left without a goal or direction in one's life. But this leads to a dilemma of hate – either one succeeds and is left with a life that lacks any 'goal for living finely', or one never reaches the goal and so never satisfies one's hate.

¹⁹ On the (possible) role of rationalization in Aristotle's account of vice see Barney 2020.

hates becomes disinclined to see and understand the complexities of human behavior that Aristotle so often alludes to. Hate requires one to see human beings and their behavior as explicable by simple rules and generalizations (i.e., as either falling or not falling into the hated category) since it is only when they are perceived in such a way that they can be seen as only worthy of hate. Hence, in relation to those things one hates (and to the extent to which one hates), one becomes incapable of seeing any value, fineness or beauty in the world and in human beings in particular.

IV

Why, then, should we avoid achieving *eudaimonia* in a hate-propelled way? As I have argued, for Aristotle there are (or could be) at least two reasons for doing so. First, it would undermine the right relationship between the rational and the non-rational part of the soul. If virtue involves establishing the right kind of internal ordering of one's soul, then this cannot be done if one's primary motivational drive is hate rather than love. Second, hate has negative cognitive effects insofar as it renders one essentially insensitive to the beauty of human nature and behavior and actively precludes one from acquiring knowledge and understanding. Accordingly, if a good life is a life that involves virtue and knowledge (and so full and ideal development of one's motivational and cognitive capacities), a life fueled by hate cannot but fall short of that ideal.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that it remains true that Aristotle recognizes that hate – understood as a general negative attitude towards evil – plays an important role in the virtuous life. The interesting fact is, however, that he does not recommend that this negative attitude be nurtured in its own right. Rather, virtuous hate is an attitude that one develops towards things that endanger what one has come to love and care about in the first place. Above, I have tried to outline some reasons for his holding this view, reasons that do not appeal to the consequences (and possible harmful effects) of hate on others but, rather, to one's own well-being and the ability to lead a good life as Aristotle conceives of it.

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