

Aristotle on Emotions toward Inequality

Takeshi Hamaoka

In *Politics* V. 2, Aristotle says that seeing others receive more (some justly, some unjustly) sometimes leads to conflict among people. Emotions like anger or envy, which result from finding oneself belittled or unable to get something good that others get, can have psychological effects that lead to political conflict—something that politicians must be cautious about. On the other hand, emotions such as righteous indignation, which result from seeing underserved good fortune, supposedly, direct attention to social justice. Aristotle does not explain these emotions in detail in *Politics*, which we can find in *Rhetoric* II.

In *Rhetoric* II. 9-11, Aristotle explains righteous indignation ($\nu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\sigma\hat{\alpha}\nu$), envy ($\phi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$), and emulation ($\zeta\eta\lambda\omicron\varsigma$). All those who hold any of these emotions face similar situations, but each one focuses on a different aspect of it. A righteously indignant person is concerned mainly with the merit of prosperous people at whom he is indignant: in other words, he evaluates whether their fortune is commensurate with their merit. Even if they succeed through just means, he may be indignant at them. According to Aristotle, an indignant person thinks of himself to be deserving of fortune and, unlike envious, does not complain about his misfortune. Therefore, Aristotle's idea of righteous indignation is narrower than ours.

On the other hand, an envious person takes into account the fact that others like him seem to be getting the things that he wished he had. Unlike people who yearn for things that they do not have yet, such as emulative ones, an envious person hardly makes any efforts to attain the things by himself, and instead wishes that others are deprived of them, because he is discomforted by his inferiority to people who he considers to be equal to him. Envy is considered to be a kind of vice, the excess contrary to righteous indignation as the mean, and poses a threat to social stability, but it is difficult to eliminate. In *Politics* V, therefore, Aristotle suggests that it is necessary to devise a way to alleviate people's sense of inferiority.