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## THE OBJECT AND AFFECTS OF ENVY AND EMULATION

What Poet would not grieve to see,  
His Bretheren write as well as he?  
But rather than they should excel,  
He'd wish his Rivals all in Hell.

Her end when Emulation misses,  
She turns to Envy, Stings and Hisses:  
The strongest Friendship yields to Pride,  
Unless the Odds be on our Side.

Vain humankind! Fantastick Race!  
Thy various Follies, who can trace?  
- Jonathan Swift<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION: VIRTUOUS MASHUPS

From my title, this essay might seem an especially unlikely contribution to an already unlikely journal issue. Except maybe with regard to the differences between analytic and continental philosophy of science, I cannot think of a more unfathomable point in the canyon to characterize “the divide” between these two approaches to contemporary philosophical research than the philosophy of religion.<sup>2</sup> Though each is quite different in his and her own commitments, analytic philosophers of religion such as Brian Davies, Alvin Plantinga, and Eleanor Stump, differ much less from one another than they (collectively) differ from contemporary continental philosophers of religion such as John Caputo, Jean-Luc Marion, and Anthony Steinbock (each of whom differ less from each other than they (collectively) do from these analytic philosophers). Turning to the theme of this paper, the relevance of the objects and affects of envy and emulation to contemporary philosophy of religion seem so obvious as to be uninteresting at first glance. Western religious traditions have made their position on envy clear enough, and its warnings are sufficiently prudential that religiously and non-religiously minded folks heed them. Emulation, on the other hand, seems widely present in the Christian tradition broadly construed, for we’re encouraged to put on the mind of Christ, to walk in His way, to love as He loves, etc. So, it’s trivially true to say that both affective, emotional responses to the world are relevant to contemporary philosophy of religion, and although it might seem uninteresting to force a discussion about such divergent emotions, I am going to contend that there is much to be gained in doing so.

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<sup>1</sup> “Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift, D. S. P. D. Occasioned by Reading a Maxim in Rouchefoucault” (1731, 1739).

<sup>2</sup> On the differences between analytic and continental philosophy of science, see B. Babich, “Early Continental Philosophy of Science,” in *The New Century: Bergsonism, Phenomenology, and Responses to Modern Science* ed. K. Ansell-Pearson and A. Schrift (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 263-86.

As something of an analogy for bridging the methodological divide in philosophy more broadly, I want to note first that the relation between these two emotions is not so far apart as might be initially thought. When we consider these two emotions as modes of orientation toward the world, our neighbors, and our selves, the line between this “negative” and this “positive” emotion are not always clear. Each emotion may be a part of coveting or may reflect the right and wrong desires upon which they rest. Hence, like the commandments, perhaps these emotions, as Luther suggests, “are intended to teach man to know himself ... For example, the commandment, ‘you shall not covet’, is a command which proves us all to be sinners, for no one can avoid coveting no matter how much he may struggle against it.”<sup>3</sup> Given this aspirational nature of human beings and the vague but not uncommon motivations guiding human social life, Jonathan Swift seems right to contend that we are well served to reflect on such points of ambiguity.

This essay thus occurs in the general line of recent inquiries into the virtues (such as the Templeton project on intellectual humility) that seek among other ends to explore the virtues in order to think through the implications of right and wrong reflection on belief and practice. To begin, I shall return to Aristotle’s concern with possible confusions between these emotions and the potential mutual benefit of bringing analytical and continental resources to bear on identifying and perhaps resolving those points of ambiguity that arise when envy and emulation intersect. In particular, I shall try to complement Aristotle’s account of these two emotions by developing the subjective dimensions of these emotional reactions to the world. I hope that as I draw from the work of phenomenologists such as John J. Drummond and Robert Sokolowski and moral psychologists such as Robert Roberts and Robert Solomon that we will be able to see how reflection on the lived aspects of virtue might be a site where analytic and continental philosophy can be substantively and productively “mashed up.”

#### A THIN LINE BETWEEN (A) VIRTUE AND (A) VICE

The general consensus—in life as well as both ancient and contemporary philosophical accounts of certain emotions—is that envy is always and all bad while emulation is not. But who can trace such follies? Consider those not uncommon episodes in life when—like Leonard Blast from E. M. Foster’s *Howard’s End*—we can’t be sure that our emulous behavior is not in fact envy. Aristotle certainly recognized and worried about this very human problem. In his *Rhetoric* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle establishes the viciousness of envy (*phthonos*) by quarantining it from the two other emotions—indignation (*nemesis*) and emulation (*zēlos*)—that react in pain to the perception of, or belief about, another’s good fortune.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> M. Luther, *On Christian Liberty* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 12-3

<sup>4</sup> David Konstan has convincingly established Aristotle’s intention to and manner of quarantining envy from indignation in his *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006). Establishing Aristotle’s account of the full “badness” of envy, Konstan has mentioned to me in email correspondence, requires pursuing Aristotle’s further attempt to quarantine envy from emulation.

Aristotle attempts to distinguish these similar emotions by focusing on the object they intend. Specifically, his choice to focus on the object of the emotion is motivated in part because emotions such as envy, emulation, and indignation share identical affects—pain or distress—in response to this formal object—the good fortune of a neighbor that brings the neighbor “above” oneself.<sup>5</sup> Contemporary analytic literature on envy largely carries forward the Aristotelian view, distinguishing envy from indignation (in spite of their identical affective quality of pain) by examining a target within the object these emotions intend, i.e., examining whether the emotional agent considers the neighbor’s superior standing merited, or not, or is indifferent to the issue of deserts altogether. I’m not sure that Aristotle’s and such Aristotelian accounts always present the most persuasive philosophical guidance for sorting out the differences between envy and emulation. If these philosophical accounts of envy and emulation focus only on *what* these emotions are *about*—their intentional object—they cannot provide a distinction between these emotions that holds in all cases. The problem with such an approach is its tendency to focus on these emotions’ intentional object with its properties or qualities, the “other-assessing” or objectifying moment, at the expense of the whole situation that includes a self-assessing dimension in the emotions of envy and emulation (but not indignation).

Two preliminary notes are in order regarding my agreement with the general success of Aristotle’s and Aristotelian accounts of emotion. First, from this target within the intended object that is the neighbor’s superior standing, we can distinguish successfully envy from indignation but we cannot distinguish envy from emulation in all cases; this is not surprising. Envy and emulation are closer to one another than either is to indignation for several reasons. The most obvious reason is that the question of justice seems irrelevant to envy and emulation (even if for different reasons). Envy and emulation are indifferent to the issue of merit or deserts (that is, it could be a concern or it could not be a concern for these emotional subjects) because status is the primary concern for both. Concerned as the envious and the emulous are with one’s standing vis-à-vis one’s neighbor, both emotions include a non-objectifying moment of self-assessment that is not an essential part of indignation. In envy and emulation, the emotional-subject experiences the pain of the self’s inferior standing vis-à-vis the neighbor’s merited or unmerited superior standing with respect to *some shared value that one deems significant for one’s self-worth and to which the agent*

<sup>5</sup> That some consider it questionable to read Aristotle’s discussion of the affects and emotions in his *Rhetoric* as a theory of the emotions does not bear upon the present thesis. My interest is in capturing the full experiential range of envy by relying on Aristotle’s discussion and description of these emotions. Aristotle’s discussion of envy in the *Rhetoric* nevertheless establishes this stigma attached to envy (which is very likely one well earned). Aristotle’s distinction between envy and indignation shows up in the precision of Cicero’s discussion of the topic – see R. Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint and Community in Ancient Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 84-103—and the error of Descartes’ treatment of envy—see *Passions of the Soul*, art. 182. Hence, whether Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* presents a theory of the emotions or even a theory of a particular emotion, his treatment of envy has had an enduring impact on western culture’s thought about envy. All references to Aristotle’s works are to *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941). For contemporary works not engaged below but nevertheless revelatory of the immense influence of Aristotle’s “theory” of envy, see G. Taylor, *Deadly Vices* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Luke Pursehouse, “Envy and Jealousy,” *Erkenntnis* 2010.

*responds in sorrow in seeing the good in question possessed by one's neighbor.*<sup>6</sup> If this turns out to be a fair description of the basis of envy and emulation, then both are also essentially comparative (interpersonally comparative) emotions unlike indignation.

Second, my sketch of envy and emulation suggests that each takes the same "object." As John Greco rightly reminded me in comments on an earlier draft of this essay, we should take care in spelling out just what this object is. Greco is right to note that in some instances it's quite clear that emulation "takes a person-level trait (for example, a virtue) as its intentional object, whereas envy can be directed at goods more generally. For example, S can envy T's wealth, or good looks." I largely agree with this point. As I have written elsewhere (and more carefully, if you can endure a quick self-critical ribbing) enviers envy things, traits, or capacities in the envied.<sup>7</sup> One can envy another's possessions (e.g., house, car, or money), her traits (e.g., fine hair, deep voice or accent, bronze skin-tone, grace, or reputation), or capacities (e.g., intellectual, artistic, or athletic prowess, or quick wit, cunning, or power). I think that envy and emulation take the same "object" that is a person-level trait in some instances or a capacity in all instances. That is, there are some traits emulation can take as its object and some it cannot, but emulation can take as its object any capacity of the other (however naïve it is for the emulous to believe he can cultivate it). Though one can envy them, one does not emulate another's possessions; this would be an odd way of speaking and we might mean that one imitates the behaviors or mannerisms of one with such a desired and valued possession (e.g., one wears a pinky ring and drives a Cadillac because one wants to be a "good fella"). Though one can envy them, one cannot emulate all of another's traits; again, this would be an odd way of speaking and we might mean that one imitates the desired and valued appearance by fabrication (dying one's hair or affecting a deep voice or accent).

In such cases, it is reasonable to think that we distinguish envy from emulation along the lines of the object each intends. While the hair, the voice, the accent, etc., can be approximated but not exactly incorporated into one's character, we can incorporate into our character a way of walking and talking and so reasonably be said to emulate such traits (as well as envy them). Finally, we can both envy and emulate a valued and desired capacity or virtue that we see in people who are like us. This overlap between envy and emulation along the lines of the same object that is a capacity of another will be more apparent in instances when the emotional-subject takes some capacity of the other that is a morally neutral, underdetermined, or questionable capacity (e.g., intellect or power). It's possible but uncommon to find instances of envying another's moral virtue. So, I'm stipulating that envy and emulation take the same (particular) object regarding certain traits and all capacities in the neighbor.

What I have to say in what follows thus will be less a criticism of Aristotle than an amendment. In these instances where the object to which the agent reacts in

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<sup>6</sup> As I shall discuss in more detail below, the intentional object of envy and emulation in some instances is the very same object perceived in the same way, namely, the neighbor's merited good fortune (even if envy proceeds to construe the neighbor's good-fortune as somehow undeserved).

<sup>7</sup> Michael R. Kelly, "A Glimpse of Envy and its Intentional Structure," *New Yearbook Phenomenology* 2010, 283-302.

pain is a trait or capacity of the neighbor, I want to test the hypothesis that we more fully can tease these emotions apart only by considering the emotional subject's appraisal of his whole situation vis-à-vis the superior neighbor, paying special attention to how the affects in envy and emulation "indicate" something quite different. This will be something like a play on that passage from the end of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* and made more notable by Merleau-Ponty in his "Preface" to *Phenomenology of Perception*. If we try to make speak that dumb, mute experience of pain in the cases of envy and emulation, we may hear that the painful affect in the emotional subject "says" more about the agent's lived self-appraisal in and of the situation than it does about the intended object (the neighbor's good fortune).<sup>8</sup> The non-objectifying, subjective, and affective "quality" of envy, on Aristotle's account, indicates that the mute experience of envy *at least initially* always entails self-reproach; the affective pain characteristic of the mute experience of emulation, on the other hand, needn't entail self-reproach even though it indicates the self's inferiority to the neighbor, which inferiority is a matter of fact rather than the agent's self-appraisal. Correspondingly, then, we may arrive at the more familiar dimensions of each emotion, for envy diminishes the self and perhaps the other while emulation catalyzes the self, creates a *zeal* for self-improvement without diminishing the self or other. The difference between these self- and other-assessing, status-driven emotions revolves around the emotional subject's appraisal of his situation vis-à-vis the superior neighbor.

#### THE OBJECTIFYING MOMENT OF THE EXPERIENCE OF ENVY: ENVY AND NEMESIS

Contemporary analytical views of envy typically follow Aristotle's theory quite closely. In particular, they distinguish envy from its sibling emotions by identifying their (formal and particular) objects and they largely conclude that envy is a vice that is always bad, never benign, and always directed with bitter (and often vindictive) regard toward the other without concern for whether the other deserves her deserts.<sup>9</sup> Aristotle identifies a nest of the emotions characterized by "a disturbing pain excited by the prosperity of others."<sup>10</sup> Contrasting envy to indignation, he claims that what arouses envy is "... not ... the prosperity of the undeserving but ... that of people who are like us or equal to us."<sup>11</sup> Taking the envious agent's state of mind more precisely, he continues, the envious directs unwarranted and spiteful sentiments toward those envied "not with the idea of getting something for [himself] but because the other people have it."<sup>12</sup> The badness of envy on this view thus consists in its mistaken judgment—one indifferent to whether deserts are merited or unmerited—and its accompanying feelings of spite and hostility directed toward the more fortunate equal or rival precisely *because* he's the equal or rival.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The allusion, here, obviously is to Husserl's claim from his *Cartesian Meditations* that Merleau-Ponty famously references in the Preface to his *Phenomenology of Perception*.

<sup>9</sup> For an account of the acceptance of Aristotle's basic insight into envy, see J. D'Arms and A. D. Kerr, "Envy in the Philosophical Tradition," in *Envy: Theory and Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 38.

<sup>10</sup> *Rhetoric* 1386b19 (hereafter cited as *R*).

<sup>11</sup> *R* 1386b19.

<sup>12</sup> *R* 1387b23-5.

<sup>13</sup> J. D'Arms and D. Jacobson, "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' Emotions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. LXI, no. 1 (2000), 68. Since envy reflects poor judgment and a vicious character, Aristotle concludes at 1107a of his

The standard, contemporary view of envy follows Aristotle's definition and conclusion derived from his conceptual analysis at the level of (what in contemporary philosophy of emotion is called) the intentional focus of and the object intended by the emotional-subject.<sup>14</sup> This methodological approach further is indebted to and a good example of Aristotle's attempt to categorize pleasure and pain regarding the fortunes of others according to (1) the object they target and (2) how the emotional subject characterizes that object.<sup>15</sup> Aristotle approves of appropriately directed emotions, where this is understood as those instances when the emotional subject characterizes the object as it really is and those instances when the emotional subject is sensitive to—or concerns himself with—whether the other deserves (in the case of these particular emotions) her good fortunes. Accounts such as or influenced by Aristotle's are committed to the claim that pain is an appropriate response to something bad, pleasure to something good. In the normative sense, if the object's deserts are deserved, then the observing agent should experience pleasure. If the deserts are unmerited, however, then the observing agent is should feel pain as in the case of, say, indignation or pity.<sup>16</sup> Hence, Aristotle disapproves of emotions such as envy that are insensitive to deserts or respond inappropriately to them. Since the fortunes of others are good when they match their deserts, bad when they fail to do so, pain at the good fortune of an equal—precisely because he is an equal and not because of the thing the equal possesses—mischaracterizes what is bad about the equal's success and so the affective response cannot be said to "fit" (or be justified).

This object-intentionality analysis, consistent with Aristotle's broader "theory" of emotion, provides a conceptual framework from which philosophers can distinguish *envy* from *indignation*. The latter is always bad because it is wrong both in its judgment and its accompanying feeling of pain about an equal's or rival's merited good fortune. The former is always good because it is correct in its judgment regarding the other's underserved good fortune and its accompanying feeling of pain about the other's underserved good fortune. Despite their identical affects of pain stemming from a perception (or belief) that an apparent equal stands above them with respect to some good, envy and

*Nicomachean Ethics* that its very name implies "badness ... It is not possible ... ever to be right with regard to [it]; one must always be wrong."

<sup>14</sup> As Justin D'Arms recently claimed, "there is consensus in the philosophical tradition that envy is, roughly, a pain at another's good fortune" (J. D'Arms and A. D. Kerr, "Envy in the Philosophical Tradition," 39). More specifically, contemporary research into envy follows Aristotle's manner of individuating emotions according to their intentional focus or object.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, D. Farrell, "Jealousy," *The Philosophical Review* 89 (1980), 527-559; G. Taylor, *Deadly Vices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> J. D'Arms and D. Jacobson, "The Moralistic Fallacy: On the 'Appropriateness' Emotions." Despite D'Arms assessment of the enduring legacy of Aristotle's insights regarding envy, questions remain concerning the normative conclusions Aristotle and his inheritors draw concerning envy's 'badness'. As D'Arms and Jacobson have established in this influential essay, we cannot conclude from the unfittingness (the unwarranted or unjustified assessment of the state of affairs in Aristotle's sense) to the moral flaw or viciousness of envy. See also, for an account of how one assesses the justifiability or warrant of an emotion, Peter Goldie, "Emotion, Feeling, and Knowledge of the World," in R. Solomon, *Thinking about Feeling* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 91-107.

indignation differ with respect to the objects they intend—except in those instances where an envier might envy a person who does not merit her good fortune, and perhaps especially so. We should note here what Aristotle is and is not saying about envy. He is saying that we can feel envy toward those who enjoy good fortune; he is not specifying whether that good fortune is merited or unmerited. It remains open whether the neighbor may be *believed* deserving or undeserving, for this assessment is irrelevant to the envier; envy may arise whether the envier believes the envied deserves or does not deserve some mark of good fortune. Hence, an exclusively object oriented analysis blurs the lines along which Aristotle draws a distinction between indignation and envy.<sup>17</sup>

The badness of envy, then, rests less in its mistaken judgment—though it sometimes does—and more in its misframed judgment, a judgment blurred by the sole concern over whether or not someone whom he perceives to be his equal surpasses him by virtue of good fortune (whether merited or not). The envier is concerned with—or puts emphasis on—the wrong issue. And although Aristotle himself does not say this, it seems to me that indignation focuses on the other with his unmerited good fortune, while the envier's concerns, which produces a construal of the situation in a misframed way, focuses on the self's status or comparative relative standing vis-à-vis the other with his good fortune whether merited or unmerited.

An analysis of only the intentional focus of envy—an object-intentionality or other-assessing focus—thus neither captures the full phenomenological content of Aristotle's view of *envy* nor enables us to adequately distinguish envy in all cases from its sibling emotions. Aristotle's broader theory of the justifiability of emotions based on pleasure and pain relative to merited and unmerited fortunes creates a tension in his attempt to distinguish envy from emulation. While indignation doesn't contain a self-assessing moment correlative to its other assessing moment, the lived-experience of both envy and emulation contains moments of self- and other-assessment. The pain one feels in indignation is “about” the injustice and not the self; it's not the self in that situation over which the indignant agent is pained but the situation (as an unjust one) itself as it is being assessed. In envy and emulation, the pain one feels is “about” the self—i.e., discloses or reveals something to the self about itself even if not in a fully reflective gesture. The envier or the emulous, that is, does not “know” himself as such, does not take himself in a proposition or judgment, as it were. Rather it is the situation *precisely as* it involves the self's involvement in that situation as part of that which is being assessed. In an instance when the emotional subject both acknowledges that the neighbor merits his good fortune and yet still feels pained over the neighbor's good fortune, namely emulation, an object-intentionality analysis will not distinguish the latter from envy for at least two reasons. First, we cannot rule out an instance of envy that matches this description of emulation. Second, the pain characteristic of emulation, like envy, is self-directed at the non-objectifying level, a pain about the self's current condition vis-à-vis the neighbor's superior status with respect to some valued and desired good. To distinguish envy from emulation, we shall have to examine the non-objectifying

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<sup>17</sup> I'm indebted to Gretchen Gusich for pushing me to be more conclusive on this point, and for suggesting the formulation the problem with envy isn't so much its mistaken judgment but its mis-framed judgment.

and affective axis of these emotion-experiences and how the emotional subject characterizes the pain that arises in seeing one's equal or rival ahead of oneself.<sup>18</sup>

#### AN INADEQUACY OF A STRICTLY OBJECT-INTENTIONALITY ACCOUNT OF ENVY: ENVY AND EMULATION

Aristotle characterizes envy and emulation both as a pain caused by perceiving the good fortune or possessions of those similar to or like ourselves, our equals or neighbors.<sup>19</sup> The object or intentional focus of envy and emulation is the neighbor with her good fortune or those we believe resemble us (such that we reasonably can compare ourselves with them). In both emotions, the affective reaction to our neighbor's perceived superiority is pain (distress or dissatisfaction). As E. M. Cope notes, both agents feel pain due to an unfulfilled desire for superiority that amounts to the aspiration or reflects the unfulfilled desire to be equal once more to a neighbor perceived superior.<sup>20</sup> In both envy and emulation the neighbor is perceived as having a good (trait or capacity) that the envious or emulous values and desires but lacks. One should expect, then, that Aristotle would deem both of these emotions unjustified, since pain isn't an appropriate response to the perception of merited good fortune. Yet this is not his conclusion with respect to emulation.

Given the identical affect of pain characteristic of both emotions, Aristotle tries (as he did with envy and indignation) to distinguish them according to their intentional focus or the object they intend. Agents experiencing emulation feel pain "not because others have these goods but because [they] have not got them [themselves]." The envying agent, on the other hand, feels pain not because he desires the good in question "but because the other people have it" or "others have these goods."<sup>21</sup> Envy thus differs from emulation on Aristotle's account insofar as envy desires that his neighbor simply not possess some particular good, whereas emulation does not spite the neighbor and simply is "rearing" (to go) to eliminate the disparity between himself and his neighbor who has the good (and thus superior status) that the emulous values and desires but lacks.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the envious endeavors to destroy and minimize the neighbor, while the emulous endeavors only to improve the self.<sup>23</sup> Envy diminishes the other while emulation elevates the other. Hence, Aristotle declares the former vicious

<sup>18</sup> As noted in the introduction, perhaps we shall see too, through this analysis of then non-objectifying, the implications of another understated concern in Aristotle's descriptive account of the emotions in the *Rhetoric*, namely how emotions "may be ... dissipated" (R 1388b30). And this description of how one dissipates envy as opposed to *zēlos* at the non-objectifying level, moreover, will return us in a surprising way to how the broadly noetic dimension of envy leads the agent (however mistakenly) to indignation such that Aristotle admits, "envy is closely akin to indignation" (R 1386b17).

<sup>19</sup> R 1387b23, 1388a31.

<sup>20</sup> E. M. Cope, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle with a Commentary: Volume II* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1877), 131.

<sup>21</sup> R 1388a33, 1387b24, 1387b32.

<sup>22</sup> As Cope renders Aristotle's claim, the emulous feel pain "not because another has [the goods in question] which is envy but because we ourselves have them not (and so, feeling the *want*, are anxious to obtain them, in order to raise ourselves to the level of our assumed rival)," 133.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

and unjustified, the latter virtuous and justified, though neither rejects the value of the possessed object (certain trait or capacity) as a perceived good that would reflect the higher status these emotional subjects desire.

I don't think his argument holds up for three reasons. For starters, the cause of the pain characteristic of emulation is, at the objectifying level, the "neighbor's possession of some good" that the agent values, desires, and believes he deserves yet lacks. And, by such a formal account, emulation looks quite like envy (if the former takes a trait or capacity of the neighbor as its object). Aristotle's "object-intentionality" analysis of emulation thus ends with the peculiar conclusion that emulation (unlike envy) is a good emotion, one justified despite feeling pain upon perceiving a neighbor's merited good fortune. Aristotelian accounts, recall, are committed to the claim that pain is an appropriate response to something bad, pleasure to something good.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, Aristotle's attempts to distinguish emulation from envy seem successful only if we accept his implicitly stipulated distinctions between the possessor and the possessed good object.<sup>24</sup> What I want to highlight is that Aristotle's distinction between envy and emulation at the level of object-intentionality rests on stipulating a specific target, as it were, within the broader object that is the neighbor's perceived good fortune—whether merited or not—to which the envious and the emulous alike react in pain. The target within the object of *envy* is the possessor with whatever he possesses (because envy targets the person, the equal or neighbor or rival with his possession, trait or capacity). The target within the object of emulation, by contrast, is supposedly the possession itself (i.e., the trait or capacity the agent values and desires but lacks). But Aristotle's definition of emulation doesn't seem to admit this distinction between the target and the broader object (of the neighbor's superiority), i.e., this distinction between the possessor and her possessed good. As Aristotle writes, "emulation is pain caused by seeing the presence, in persons whose nature is like our own, of good things."<sup>25</sup> If the neighbor were divorced from the object and the object in the neighbor's absence were to become the focus of the agent, then we would seem to have an emotions more like covetousness or perhaps longing but not emulation. It is the neighbor *with* his or her merited or unmerited trait or capacity that motivates emulation.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, concerning this person whose nature is like ours, Aristotle writes, "we feel it [zēlos] about anything for which ... relatives, personal friends, [and] race are ... honored, looking upon that thing as really our own, and therefore feeling that we deserve to have it."<sup>27</sup>

But—and this is my third point—as Clint Eastwood's William Munny said to Little Bill in the climax to "Unforgiven," "Deserves got nothing to do with it."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> I'm not objecting, here, to the difference between an intended object and a target within that object (such that a parent, for example, loves a child but hates the child's tattoo).

<sup>25</sup> R 1388a31-2.

<sup>26</sup> When one looks closely at what Aristotle identifies at the second cause of *zēlos*, moreover, the desire for the possessed good seems reasonable insofar as the good is tied to the possessor.

<sup>27</sup> R 1388b8-9.

<sup>28</sup> C. Eastwood, *The Unforgiven*, directed by Clint Eastwood (Los Angeles: Warner Brothers, 1992).

What I mean is that the envious and the emulous alike are indifferent to deserts when deserts are spelled out along the lines of what is just or unjust, merited or unmerited. Although Aristotle holds that emulation is a “good feeling felt by good persons,”<sup>29</sup> there’s no reason to accept this limitation on how we construe the emulous. As the classicist David Konstan has established regarding Aristotle’s account of envy, Aristotle ascribes a moral dignity to indignation and emulation that he denies to envy.<sup>30</sup> But like the Kid in “Unforgiven” who at first wants to be like the murderous and drunken reprobate that was the younger and reputed (feared) Will Munny, the emulous cares about what he deserves where deserves must be spelled out here in light of what he desires or cares about. That is, the emulous cares about his status in light of what he values and what people like him who share his values and interests possess whether that emulated other is wicked and unjust or not.

An exclusively object-intentionality analysis of these emotions, then, does not seem successfully to distinguish envy and emulation insofar as they target the same object in important instances as noted in section one. One of the primary difficulties in distinguishing envy and emulation along the lines of the intended object is that the intentional object of the envious is not the enviable thing but its possessor with his goods and, likewise, the intentional object of the emulous is not the desired object possessed but the possessor. As the envious targets the envied and the emulous targets the estimable, both emotional-subjects take as their target one who possesses some desirable good (certain trait or capacity) that the agent lacks.<sup>31</sup> One may want to defend this object-intentionality analysis by noting that on Aristotle’s account the envious wishes the envied not have that good in question while the emulous does not share this wish. This move is not without its problems. Very plausible cases exist where envy is milder and gets resolved by getting what the neighbor has rather than ridding the neighbor of his possession. Likewise, one may want to defend this object-intentionality analysis by noting that on Aristotle’s account the emulous (unlike the envious) person believes and is correct in his belief that the neighbor deserves his good fortune. Even if we were to grant this condition, this move too is not without its difficulties. Very plausible cases exist when an envier believes the envied deserves his good and yet still begrudges the envied his having that good while the envier does not.<sup>32</sup>

Since an object-intentionality analysis of envy and emulation seems unable to distinguish them, we are left to turn to the non-objectifying dimension of the emotional situation described in Aristotle’s view of envy and emulation. I am proposing that we look more closely at the non-objectifying or subjective

<sup>29</sup> R 1388a32.

<sup>30</sup> D. Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks*, 128.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Roberts makes a similar point about envy in his “Emotions and the Cannons of Evaluation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, ed. Peter Goldie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 575.

<sup>32</sup> It is worth mentioning, too, that we must remove too Aristotle’s unsubstantiated qualifier that emulation is emulation only “on the assumption that they ought to be good men” (R 1388b5); Aristotle does not argue for this position and experience attests that emulation is not restricted to the good.

moment of the emotional situation as the self ‘takes’ himself in that situation, which ‘taking’ the affect of pain discloses.<sup>33</sup>

#### A NON-OBJECTIFYING MOMENT “INDICATIVE” OF A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ENVY AND EMULATION

While there may be good reasons, which we cannot pursue here, to reject the association of emulation with pain,<sup>34</sup> the affective quality of pain in both envy and emulation is such that the self undergoes it in the form of a negative experience, namely, the apprehension of his inferiority vis-à-vis his neighbor. To remark briefly and incompletely on a concern that John Greco has expressed with this claim, my point is not that the envious or emulous agent believes necessarily that he is inferior to the neighbor. Indeed, it cannot mean this since it is the emotional-subject’s sense of his equal worth to the neighbor that motivates and sustains the pain. Instead, I want to say that the envious or emulous simply recognizes that he is less well off than his neighbor by lacking that desirable good that the neighbor possess. Hence, he is “inferior” in this respect that leads, in turn, to a negative-self assessment that may or may not (and often does not) endure. Whether in envy or emulation the pain Aristotle seems to have in mind is the sense of being “put down” by or “put below” the one the envier envies or the emulous emulates. The pain follows from the perception, belief, or recognition that an apparent equal is above me in some respect. It seems, then, that both envy and emulation entail a negative self-assessment – at least at the outset – one triggered by the perception of a neighbor in a superior position and characterized by the pain of inferiority pre-reflectively apprehended. But there are at least two possible senses of “negative self-assessment” at play, here.

If X desires Y and Z has Y while X does not, then at a value-neutral level (which Husserl believes would be a false abstraction)<sup>35</sup> X experiences this state of affairs as one of inferiority; at an axiological level as disclosed by the affective reaction and emotions founded on the moment of cognitive apprehension, X lives-through the experience of inferiority in a negative self-assessment. It is dissatisfying for X to lack Y and it is a negative for X to be below Z, and it is negative for X to lack the Y that would, if possessed, equate X to Z once more. The emulous and envying agent will share the dissatisfying experience of lacking the desirable Y. Yet, they also will share the interpersonal feeling of frustration at wanting the good thing that they believe will make them like (equal to) their

<sup>33</sup> That Aristotle’s treatment of emotions in his *Rhetoric* examines the affective dimension of an audience that a speaker must learn to manipulate in order to sway or not incite the audience seems sufficient evidence to justify the move to look more closely at the non-objectifying or subjective moment of the emotional situation as the self “takes” himself in it.

<sup>34</sup> One thinks, for instance, of the emulation that occurs when a child, after watching a conquering sports hero virtuoso performance, runs from the house with a ball to imitate the athlete’s moves, his stance and swing, his follow through and homerun trot. The affective quality of this experience seemingly veers more toward pleasure than pain. Indeed, in Cope’s analysis of Aristotle’s account, his discussion of the stoic distinction between two types of emulation makes a similar point. See, E. M. Cope, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle with a Commentary: Volume II*, 132.

<sup>35</sup> See J. Drummond, “Feelings, Emotions, *Wertnehmungen*,” online: <http://faculty.fordham.edu/drummond/Feelings%20Emotions%20Wertnehmungen.pdf>. Accessed January 9, 2015.

neighbor). To the extent that each ascertains that his neighbor has something (trait or capacity) he desires but lacks, the envying agent is unique insofar as his negative self-assessment, at least at the outset, tends to take the form of self-castigation. The envious, we might say, emphasizes the lack rather than the promise, the disappointment rather than the motivation, so to speak, in seeing his neighbor ahead of him.

The lived-through pain of emulation and envy indicate, in the phenomenological sense, very different attitudes, desires, and outlooks in these agents as they “take” themselves in this situation, which outlooks motivate very different possible behaviors. In a somewhat obvious sense, the pain in *zēlos* seems to say, “I want to be as good as her” or “I deserve to be as good as her,” whereas the pain in envy seems to say, “I don’t want her to be better than me” or “I deserve such good fortune or at least she does not deserve it especially when I haven’t gotten it.” Aristotle captures the outcome or pursuant action of these affected agents but not the affective moment itself when he notes, “emulation makes us take steps to secure the good things in question, envy makes us take steps to stop our neighbor having them.”<sup>36</sup> But the whisper of the pain of *zēlos* and envy speak more of the sentiments of active power and passive impotence in these agents, respectively.

The envying agent’s pain, his negative self-evaluation, unlike that of the emulous agent’s pain, is self-castigating—at least from the outset. The envying agent grasps the facts as they stand for the moment: he is lower than his neighbor and thus he must acknowledge that—at least momentarily and whether he believes he deserves to be or not—his neighbor surpasses him such that the neighbor’s “possession of or success in a thing is a *reproach to us*.” The envier realizes, more specifically in Aristotle’s words, that “it is clear that *it is [his] own fault* [he has] missed the good thing in question.”<sup>37</sup> Since X views Z as roughly an equal, it

<sup>36</sup> R 1388a35.

<sup>37</sup> R 1388a18-20. Aristotle not only did not overlook the envying agent, he noted that envy is a pain that the agent feels in light of the envied’s superiority, a pain, he argued in the *Rhetoric*, that stems from the comparative assessment that “those whose possession of or success in a thing is a *reproach to us* ...” (R 1388a7). As the aforementioned passage from Solomon notes (in a way stronger than Aristotle but still inadequately) envy involves a negative self-evaluation. Such claims—and Aristotle’s passage itself—allude to but passes quickly over the self-assessing moment of envy entailed in its painful feelings. But the context surrounding this passage—Aristotle’s quoting of Hesiod’s claim that potter envies potter—clarifies the cause of this reproach. Aristotle quotes Hesiod in this context to establish first that we envy “those who follow the same ends as ourselves ... our neighbors and equals” (R 1388a12). Following Hesiod’s claim beyond Aristotle’s use of it we see that envy is a reproach not only to oneself, but also of oneself. Since we follow the same ends and As Hesiod writes, “if you plough at the right time, when spring comes you will not cast envious eyes on others ... if you plough late, however, you will end up with very little and few will envy you.” Envy thus appears a reproach to oneself insofar as one will have denied oneself the opportunity to be enviable or failed to avoid feeling envious of other. And this too is Aristotle’s conclusion that “it is our own fault that we have missed the good thing in question” (R 1388a19). It is not only—or even primarily—that envy is bad for the envied, but also—and perhaps primarily—because envy is bad for the envier. There is a moment of envy that “flogs itself,” as Chaucer noted, that ‘rots the bones’, as Proverbs warns. Aristotle’s elision of Hesiod’s understanding of envy is particularly interesting, for it is precisely after quoting Hesiod that Aristotle alludes to the negative self-evaluation in envy in favor of emphasizing the envier’s hostile regard of the

must be the case that X has some shortcoming or underserved misfortune that Z does not have or has not suffered such that Z was able to acquire Y while X was not. It is perhaps less the neighbor's superiority and the inequality and disparity that characterizes envy and more the realization of X's shortcomings or underserved misfortune that causes the pain. This affective moment then discloses two possibilities—neither of which is essential but contingent upon whether or not the envier is diffident about his deservingness and/or ability to acquire the desired good.

On the one hand, X will attack Z as underserving when in fact this is not true of Z, i.e., X will find some way to explain Z's good fortune as unmerited. Or, X simply may attack himself and remain in the moment of self-reprove or reproach as Aristotle put it. In any event, self-castigation and impotence characterize envy. Indeed, they are its dumb "expression," for in neither case does the envier believe he himself capable of achieving the desired good even if X is capable of minimizing it in Z (psychically or in reality).<sup>38</sup> If the pain at the non-objective or subjective level of envy is an annoyance that generates a passivity reflective of the envier's diffidence, the pain at the non-objectifying level of emulation reflects a discomfort that generates ambition and striving toward the desired but lacked "good."<sup>39</sup> The emulous realizes the disparity between himself and his neighbor and yet attempts to rectify his inferior standing because the emulous does not construe the disparity in any way as a reflection of a profound or permanent defect of character or misfortune. Rather, the emulous, who believes he is deserving of the good in question because he is like those who possess it, processes the disparity as a temporary yet dissatisfying inferiority that can be remedied. If envy takes as its companion despair and diffidence, then emulation takes as its companion hope and confidence. These are beliefs—beliefs about realizing our cares—that are built into our cares and care for self.

On Aristotle's account of envy, moreover, the painful feelings can manifest in three ways but dissipate in only two. As a pain caused by the good fortune of our neighbors with respect to this good in question, all envy begins from the perception and recognition of the envier's inferiority vis-à-vis his neighbor. All envy entails this moment, however fleeting and suppressed, of self-reproach, at

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envied. Aristotle's text reads as follows: "Hence the saying: Potter against potter. We also envy those whose possession of or success in a thing is a reproach to us: these are our neighbors and equals for it is clear that it is our own fault that we have missed the good thing in question; this annoys us, and excites envy in us. We also envy those who have what we ought to have, or have got what we did have once. Hence old men envy younger men, and those who have spent much envy those who have spent little on the same thing. And men who have not got a thing or not got it yet envy those who have got it quickly" (R 1388a17-22). At the very least, envy is not *all* bad, according to Hesiod, for one's hard and timely work will produce the fruits that make one the object of envy (cited in P. Walcot, *Envy and the Greeks* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1978), 9. H. Schoeck, *Envy: A Theory of Social Behavior*, trans. M. Glenny and B. Ross (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.), 156). See also Proverbs 14:30 for another understanding of envy's implications.

<sup>38</sup> If X self-castigates, then self-loathing is embraced because X does not believe himself capable of securing Y. And the same is true if X deems Z undeserving of Y because this is the weakest way for X to reestablish equality of some sort between himself and Z on the assumption that X cannot secure Y and equality through his own actions.

<sup>39</sup> Perhaps we could say that this is the pain of the Boston Red Sox to the Yankees prior to 2004; the pain of Peyton Manning to Tom Brady is emulation.

least at the outset. The experience of self-reprove in envy may manifest itself in the least productive way in further emotional self-lacerating, a kind of debilitating fault-finding. This behavior cannot dissipate envy. It may translate into self-pity at some point when the envied is not present (in memory or imagination or before us in person) but it will lay dormant ready to manifest when the envied is present to us (in person or some other type of absence).

Alternatively, this self-reprove of envy may manifest in the most malicious and dramatic way, as seen in the case of Iago and Cassio, when the envious agent bypasses the moment of self-reprove and finds fault not with himself but with his neighbor, thus desiring, as Aristotle puts it, to "take steps to stop our neighbor having [said good]."<sup>40</sup> This behavior perhaps dissipates envy if it succeeds in its malicious quest. While this is the most recognized form of envy because it is dramatic, it is likely the mode least likely to occur and even then least likely to succeed.<sup>41</sup> Or, again, the perhaps most popular expression of the self-castigating pain of *envy* and the most effective form of dissipation is the transformation of envy into indignation. In this case, although the envious agent recognizes his inferiority vis-à-vis his neighbor, the pain of self-reprove cannot remain, the admission of fault and responsibility (for his present inferiority) cannot be countenanced, the envying agent reacts toward the neighbor in a fit of "indignation," moral outrage in order to protect his good view of himself and rationalize his inferiority vis-à-vis his neighbor as illegitimate! The envious agent masks his envy by, to use Sartre's expression, magically transforming the world, i.e., changing his belief about the world and while changing neither the world nor himself.<sup>42</sup> As such, this is the easiest form because it requires the least effort.

Regarding these three ways of dissipating envy, the self-directed pain experienced by the emulous agent in response to very same state of affairs is quite different.<sup>43</sup> Emulation will not rationalize the superior neighbor's good fortune as illegitimately won (at his expense); it will not attack the neighbor in order to return the relationship to a more equitable balance; and it will not devolve into self-castigating. And yet there is a final way an envying agent may dissipate his envy. I have in mind those instances where the agent undertakes successful effort to secure the lacked good when possible (i.e., going out and buying that new watch or having others recognize our intelligence or skill set). Here, however, envy and emulation converge once more such that it is indeed important to describe them so that we can be aware of and on our guard against confusing their differences.

## CONCLUSION

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<sup>40</sup> R 1388a36-7.

<sup>41</sup> If this is perhaps the most dramatic, well-known, and feared product of envy, it is likely also the least common form of envy (perhaps because "it is usually ineffective"). R. Solomon, *True to our Feelings*, 101-03.

<sup>42</sup> J. P. Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of Emotions*, trans., P. Mairet (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 60, 56-7.

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle's observation contains a phenomenological insight in one contemporary sense of a phenomenology of the emotions insofar as it fits the Sartrean understanding of all emotions as "ineffactual" "magical transformations" – granting, of course, many salient and irreconcilable differences in Aristotle and Sartre's sketch of the emotions. J. P. Sartre, *Sketch for a Theory of Emotions*, 60, 56-7.

What caused the pain in envy and emulation is the same state of affairs, the same intentional object, which is not the thing possessed but the possessor with the good in question. How these emotional-subjects experience the resultant affect of pain and how that affect gets exacerbated or dissipated is critically different. In envy, the agent non-objectively grasps his "fault," however momentarily and earnestly, in the apprehension of his present inferiority; the envying agent thus dislikes both his standing and himself. In emulation, the agent non-objectively apprehends a desire to improve in the apprehension of his present inferiority. Though the emulous agent does not begrudge his superior neighbor or dislike himself or feel diffident, he does, at least for the moment and until the disparity can be eliminated, dislike his standing. Might we say that the envier is a wisher and the emulous is a doer? Aristotle's description of these apparently similar dumb experiences reveals a phenomenological sensitivity to these differences at what we have called the subjective and affective level—how these agents experience their feelings of pain and propose to cope with them or make them dissipate. We thus can confirm an Aristotelian conviction that, contra emulation in this case, "envy ... involves a negative self-evaluation [and]... lacks the dignity of a moral sense."<sup>44</sup>

If this is so, then perhaps reason exists to consider some small points of methodological disagreement between phenomenology and certain analytical moral psychologists working on the philosophy of emotions. Robert Roberts, for example, I believe would find that my argument contains a confusion about the nature of an intentional object. As he's communicated to me, my account misses his view that the intentional object is not just an aspect of what the subject perceives, but the whole thing or situation with and in all its connections. To put that in the context of this paper, while the envier may focus on the rival (one might call this the "target" of the emotion), the intentional object is the entire situation as the subject intends it. For Roberts, envy will be a perceptual synthesis of self, rival, the issue on which the self is construed as inferior to the rival, etc., and, very importantly, the concern on which the whole construal is based. On Roberts' view, the concern is taken up in the perception of the emotional object construed as the situation. Thus the intentional object of envy cannot be the same as that of emulation. The affective coloring that on my account distinguishes the two emotion types is thus on Roberts' concern-based construal account already in the intentional object. An emotion is a concern-based construal, and the concern does not remain separate from some supposed cognitive or factual object.<sup>45</sup>

I think this last claim brings phenomenology and Roberts' views quite close together. My reservations would be minor and would have to do with a worry about placing the subjective element of the experience *in* the intentional object. The self with its concerns is not an object and is not "known" to itself in a propositional judgment but accompanies its apprehension of the situation (as believed or imagined or perceived or judged). By broadening the intentional object to include the whole situation, as Roberts' theory puts it, we exacerbate the inability to locate the difference between envy and emulation. In particular, whenever we see this instance of envy dissipated by means of the agent securing for himself the good thing (trait or capacity) we run the risk of introducing

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<sup>44</sup>R. Solomon, *True to Our Feelings* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 101-03.

<sup>45</sup>Personal email communication of September 2013.

notions such as benign envy and thus conflating benign envy with emulation insofar as both emotional subjects will feel pain at the other's superiority but not hostility toward the other. One problem with these alternatives to Aristotle's account is perhaps that their view of intentionality fails to capture what these emotions say about the self's self-assessment, for on my view it is the self's self-assessment conditioned by a concern with status rather than merit that colors its assessment of the other – the rival or neighbor who enjoys a superior standing regardless of merit. Roberts (and Gabrielle Taylor in different ways) takes account of the concern of the agent but such a view of intentionality packages the subjective, affective dimension of these emotions with the intended object, treating the agent's hostilely or zealously rivalrous regard for the other as if it were a part of the intended object itself, which I think it is not.

Maybe these methodological points of distinction detract from the more important focus on the strength of description and eidetic or conceptual analysis. Maybe, then, we could best distinguish envy from emulation by doing a phenomenology of what it means to want to be emulated and what it would mean to want to be envied.<sup>46</sup> Hopefully this essay will motivate such “mashup” work in the future.

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