

PHILANTHROPIA IN THE POETICS

JOHN MOLES

IN AN INTERESTING AND INGENIOUS ARTICLE recently published in this journal,¹ Robert D. Lamberton argued that (a) fifth-century tragedy and comedy achieve their effect by denying the audience satisfaction of the emotion *φιλανθρωπία*, (b) in chapter 13 of the *Poetics* Aristotle correspondingly rejects *τὸ φιλόκωπον* as an aesthetic criterion of tragedy, associating it with defective audience taste, but (c) the New Comedy of Menander adopts a positive valuation of *φιλανθρωπία*. Aristotle's dismissal of *τὸ φιλόκωπον*, therefore, marks a significant turning-point in the evolution of dramatic taste, just before the final triumph of *φιλανθρωπία* in New Comedy.

Of the three basic contentions in Lamberton's case, (c) I take to be obviously true and (a) is too big a topic to treat here. My concern is with (b). In this paper I intend to show that, on the contrary, *τὸ φιλόκωπον* is an indispensable element of Aristotle's model of tragedy, and that this has important consequences for Aristotle's attitude to the moral aspect of tragedy. My arguments will, I hope, help to dispel some still current misconceptions about Aristotle's thinking on the relationship between morals and aesthetics. Close analysis of the text is necessary if we are fully to appreciate the function of *τὸ φιλόκωπον* in Aristotle's model, but I shall try to make my case as simply as possible without exploring all the complexities of *Poetics* 13. For, though recent research has greatly advanced our understanding of this key portion of the *Poetics*, some points remain controversial and either fall completely outside the scope of the present enquiry or else, while marginally relevant, would require such minute discussion as to obscure the more important general truths which I wish to establish.² My

¹"*Philanthropia* and the Evolution of Dramatic Taste," *Phoenix* 37 (1983) 95–103 (hereafter referred to as Lamberton).

²The modern commentaries of G. F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: the Argument* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), D. W. Lucas, *Aristotle: Poetics* (Oxford 1968), and R. Dupont-Roc and K. Lallot, *La Poétique* (Paris 1980)—a work to which I have had only limited access—all contain much of value. The best recent synthetic treatment of Aristotle's model of tragedy is perhaps that of T. C. W. Stinton, "*Hamartia* in Aristotle and Greek Tragedy," *CQ* 25 (1975) 221–254 (intellectually a very tough article); cf. also J. Moles, "Notes on Aristotle, *Poetics* 13 and 14," *CQ* 29 (1979) 77–94, and "Aristotle and Dido's *Hamartia*," *G&R* 31 (1984) 69–75. I do not accept the views of D. Armstrong and C. W. Peterson, "Rhetorical Balance in Aristotle's Definition of the Tragic Agent," *CQ* 30 (1980) 62–71, though their exposition is lucid and their position apparently attractive (cf. also n. 27 below). Else, Stinton, and Moles ("Notes . . .") will be cited hereafter by author's name alone.

Points I deliberately sidestep in the present discussion include the exact implications of *ὁμοίως* in *Poetics* 13.1453a5 (cf. n. 8 below) and the precise reference(s) of *ἀμαρτία* (cf. n. 27 below).

disagreement with Lamberton is profound, but I trust that it will be clear that the present paper is motivated by *φιλαλήθεια*, not *φιλονικία*.

Chapter 13 analyses possible plot structures from the point of view of the most efficient arousal of pity and fear. Tragedy concerns itself with a change of fortune (*μετάβασις*), a change either from bad to good fortune or vice versa. This *μετάβασις* is typically (though not invariably) that of a single central tragic figure. The character of this figure is conceived in moral terms, along the range *very good*³ to *very bad*. Thus Aristotle's analysis here basically works with two sets of polarities: (1) good and bad fortune; (2) very good and very bad men.⁴

So the following four main permutations seem theoretically possible:

A: very good man passes from good to bad fortune

B: very good man passes from bad to good fortune

C: very bad man passes from good to bad fortune

D: very bad man passes from bad to good fortune.⁵

In fact Aristotle does not mention B—presumably as being so obviously untragic as to be unworthy of consideration.⁶ The others he treats in the order A, D, C. After rejecting these three, he concludes that the best formulation, which we may designate E, is:

E: “in-between man” passes from good to bad fortune because of a *hamartia*.

Aristotle excludes A because *οὐ . . . φοβερὸν οὐδέ ἐλκεῖν τὸ τοῦτο ἀλλὰ μαρὸν ἐστίν* (1452b35–36). At first sight it seems surprising that A is not “pitiable,” since pity, as Aristotle tells us later in the chapter (1453a4), is aroused by *undeserved* suffering (*περὶ τὸν ἀνάξιόν ἐστίν δυστυχοῦντα*). The explanation is that our sense of moral outrage (*τὸ μαρὸν*) at the downfall of a very good man erases the pity we normally feel at undeserved misfortune. Aris-

³*ἐπιεικὲς* in 1452b34 *must* denote “very good,” since its polar opposite is *σφόδρα πονηρὸν* (1453a1) and the “in-between man” is fixed in relation to the polarities *ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ δικαιοσύνη* and *κακίαν καὶ μοχθηρίαν* (1453a8–9), even though this is not a normal or natural meaning of *ἐπιεικής*: on this see Stinton 237. (I wonder if Aristotle is perhaps thinking of the tripartite division of mankind found in Plat. *Phaedo* 90a *τοὺς μὲν χρηστοὺς καὶ πονηροὺς σφόδρα ὀλίγους εἶναι ἐκατέρους, τοὺς δὲ μεταξὺ πλειστοὺς*, and if his use of *ἐπιεικὲς* reflects the “displaced” use of *σφόδρα* in Plato? Note also that when Plutarch paraphrases the Platonic division in *Non posse* 1104a he refers to the class of the very good as *τὸ τῶν ἐπιεικῶν καὶ νοῦν ἔχόντων*. Is he in turn thinking of *Poetics* 13, as well as *Phaedo* 90a?) Lamberton misses the force of *ἐπιεικὲς*, though the point is fundamental.

⁴As we shall see, a third polarity is also important—that between *τὸ μαρὸν* and *τὸ φιλόανθρωπον*, but this requires detailed discussion (below).

⁵I use the same lettering as Else (367) for the convenience of readers who wish to refer to his discussion.

⁶In chapter 14, discussing the best way of handling the *πάθος*, Aristotle actually prefers a scheme similar to B (1454a4–9). This represents (I believe) a clear change of mind from chapter 13. On the possible reasons see Moles 82–92.

totle's view on this point is well illustrated by his discussions of "justified indignation" (τὸ νευμεσᾶν) in *Rhet.* 2.9.1386b8–1387b21, *EN* 2.7.1108a35–b6, and *EE* 3.7.1233b23–27. This emotion has three basic aspects: (1) pain at the undeserved misfortune of the good; (2) pain at the undeserved good fortune of the bad; (3) pleasure at the deserved misfortune of the bad (the clearest statement is *EE* 3.7.1233b24–26). The arousal of "justified indignation" expels pity (*Rhet.* 2.9.1387a2). Hence, while up to a certain point undeserved suffering is pitiable, when a *very good* man passes to bad fortune, as in scheme A, we feel "justified indignation," not pity.⁷ The failure of this scheme to arouse fear can also be sufficiently explained in the same way.⁸

Before proceeding with our analysis, we should note here two points of cardinal importance for the correct interpretation of *Poetics* 13:

(1) the extreme casualness with which Aristotle introduces the key concept τὸ μισαρόν. Though the concept is fundamental to his discussion not only of the best plot structure in chapter 13 but also of the best *pathos* (πάθος) in chapter 14,⁹ he does not give us so much as a word of explanation for it.

(2) In Aristotle's model of tragedy the successful arousal of pity and fear depends on the satisfaction (more or less)¹⁰ of the audience's moral sense: if it is flouted, as in scheme A, pity and fear are ousted by τὸ μισαρόν and the tragic effect is lost.

Aristotle stigmatizes D as ἀτραγωδοτάτον . . . πάντων, οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔχει ὧν δεῖ, οὔτε γὰρ φιλόανθρωπον οὔτε ἐλεεινὸν οὔτε φοβερόν ἐστίν (1452b37–39). Here we have the first allusion in the *Poetics* to the concept τὸ φιλόανθρωπον, which, like τὸ μισαρόν, is introduced completely out of the blue. Scheme D produces neither pity—because there is no suffering, still less any *undeserved* suffering, nor fear—because (again) there is no suffering, and also the very bad man is by definition not "like us" (ὅμοιος), and fear, Aristotle states later in the chapter (1453a5), is only felt περὶ τὸν ὅμοιον.

Why is D not φιλόανθρωπον? This question needs very precise consideration. To begin with, there is no warrant for downplaying the importance of

⁷For clear expositions of the role of τὸ μισαρόν see M. E. Hubbard in D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom, *Ancient Literary Criticism* (Oxford 1972) 106–107 n. 2; Stinton 238 and n. 2; Else (368) grasps the essential point without citing the relevant τὸ νευμεσᾶν discussions.

⁸It *may* also be the case that fear cannot be felt for a "very good man" because he is *by definition* not ὅμοιος, but this raises the difficult question of the exact implications of ὅμοιος (for discussion see Moles 92–93), which for present purposes I wish to avoid. ὅμοιος certainly implies "not very bad" (1453a1–6); whether it also implies "not very good" is hard to decide but relatively unimportant to the present argument.

⁹*Poetics* 14.1453b39, 1454a3 (discussion in Moles 84).

¹⁰The qualification is important, because, as we shall see, Aristotle's model requires that this satisfaction should be less than total.

the criterion τὸ φιλόανθρωπον, as Lamberton does (“φιλόανθρωπον belongs in this list only as a concession to contemporary bad taste” 97). For Aristotle is absolutely explicit about the necessity of satisfying this criterion (οὐδέν . . . ὦν δει, οὔτε . . . οὔτε . . . οὔτε . . .). The mere fact that he does “not discuss it at length” does not, *pace* Lamberton, entitle us to regard it as relatively unimportant. The *Poetics* is a highly condensed text, probably in lecture note form, and Aristotle throughout is tantalizingly economical in his allusions to key concepts (κάθαρσις gets one word, ἁμαρτία one word—or two, if we include the comic ἁμαρτήμα, τὸ μισαρόν, as we have seen, gets no discussion, etc.).¹¹ We must therefore try to give the criterion τὸ φιλόανθρωπον full value in Aristotle’s model of tragedy, and any interpretation of it, like Lamberton’s, which tries to avoid doing so can be ruled out.

τὸ φιλόανθρωπον has been taken in two different ways as denoting either (1) a general feeling of sympathy with our fellow men, which comes into operation at the downfall of *any* human being, no matter whether his suffering is deserved or undeserved (being in this respect distinct from pity),¹² or (2) moral sense—that sense of natural justice which finds satisfaction in deserved suffering or deserved prosperity.¹³ Here Lamberton actually uses the term “poetic justice.” This is too specific. “Poetic justice” occurs when somebody is punished (or, occasionally, rewarded) in a way that seems *particularly fitting* to his character or behaviour (as, for example, in the story that the bibulous Anacreon choked to death on a grape pip). It is therefore a special kind of justice. “Moral sense” is something much broader than the sense of “poetic justice,” though the latter may be an aspect of the former,¹⁴ and this is indeed relevant to Aristotle’s discussion of τὸ φιλόανθρωπον in chapter 18, as I shall show below.

We must be careful in our approach to this problem or any definitional problem of the exact “meaning” of a word. The *basic meaning* of φιλοανθρωπία / τὸ φιλόανθρωπον is clear: “love” or “regard for” (the φιλ- prefix does not necessarily imply emotional warmth) “human beings.” But this basic meaning may have different *applications* in different contexts.¹⁵ The ques-

¹¹*Poetics* 6.1449b28, 13.1453a10, 16, 5.1449a34–35, 13.1452b36.

¹²So, for example, A. Gudeman, *Aristoteles Περί Ποιητικῆς* (Berlin 1934) 239–240; Else 369–371; R. Stark *Aristotelesstudien*² (Munich 1972) 98.

¹³So, for example, Hubbard (above, n. 7) 106–107 n. 2; Stinton 238 and n. 2, and many others including Twining and Schadewaldt. Some scholars, including Lamberton 97, M. Pohlenz, *Hermes* 84 (1956) 58–59, and Lucas (above, n. 2) 142, have tried to reconcile the two opposing views of τὸ φιλόανθρωπον. My arguments below will show that this compromise is untenable.

¹⁴Stinton (238 and 241) argues this, but his arguments are unconvincing. In particular, his contention (241) that “the principle of poetic justice . . . can do nothing for tragedy but trivialize it” overlooks the fact that in Aristotle’s model τὸ φιλόανθρωπον is not, and *must not* be, fully satisfied.

¹⁵φιλόανθρωπος can denote, for example, according to context, “nice,” “courteous,” “kindly,” “public-spirited,” “merciful,” etc. Cf. *LSJ* s.v.

tion we must therefore face is: what is the precise application both in the immediate context and elsewhere in the *Poetics*? When the question is posed in this way, it immediately becomes obvious that the citation of "parallels" for either interpretation is of limited value. Parallels can be cited on both sides;¹⁶ this does not help to resolve the particular problem. What, then, does the context require?

On the face of it, both interpretations seem to fit the immediate context. Scheme D could be οὐ φιλόανθρωπον in sense (1), because there is no downfall and hence no suffering of any kind, deserved or undeserved, or in sense (2), because it is unjust that a bad man should prosper. Nevertheless, preference should be given to the second interpretation on two grounds: (a) it is in fact truer to the spirit of the context as a whole; (b) in the second discussion of τὸ φιλόανθρωπον at 1456a Aristotle clearly has in mind "moral sense" rather than "general sympathy."

(a) φιλόανθρωπον in sense (1) would be an intrusive element in Aristotle's tightly knit analysis in chapter 13. Why should Aristotle bother with the satisfaction of an emotion which is both trivial in itself and unrelated to the tragic emotions, pity and fear? By contrast, φιλόανθρωπον in sense (2) would be *subsidiary* to pity and fear, being, in effect, a prerequisite of their arousal, and functioning analogously to the avoidance of τὸ μισρόν. From the very beginning of Aristotle's analysis of the possible plot structures satisfaction, or non-satisfaction, of the audience's moral sense has been a basic criterion for assessing the merits of the various schemes. Pity is aroused by undeserved misfortune: the audience has to make a judgement that the sufferings of the central figure are undeserved. Fear is felt for someone who is "like ourselves" (ὁμοίος): we have to locate the central figure somewhere on a scale of virtue so that we may regard him as "like us." The downfall of a very good man is "morally revolting" (μισρόν). Against this general background, we should expect φιλόανθρωπον to be a criterion appealing to our moral sense, especially when the statement that the *prosperity* of a *very bad* man is οὐ φιλόανθρωπον is immediately preceded by the statement that the *downfall* of a *very good* man is "morally revolting." μισρόν and οὐ φιλόανθρωπον both seem to refer to the flouting of the audience's moral sense. τὸ μισρόν and τὸ φιλόανθρωπον seem therefore to be opposites.¹⁷ Aristotle's thinking in scheme D, so interpreted, again finds apt illustration in the discussion of "just indignation" in *Rhet.* 2.9, where we learn that "we ought

¹⁶For φιλόανθρωπος in sense (1) cf., for example, Else 370. For φιλόανθρωπος in association with justice see Lamberton 100–102 and J. de Romilly, *La douceur dans la pensée grecque* (Paris 1979) 49–52. Else (369–370) denies that this sense is found in Aristotle, but the discussion of φιλία in *EN* 8.1.1155a16–31 certainly contains the general implication.

¹⁷So, for example, Hubbard (above, n. 7) 107 (n. 2 from 106); Stinton 238 and n. 2. Else (369) argues that τὸ μισρόν and τὸ φιλόανθρωπον cannot be opposites because φιλόανθρωπον must be implicit in scheme A, but A is explicitly μισρόν. This argument is wholly misconceived: what is implicit in A. is οὐ φιλόανθρωπον, which is tantamount to μισρόν.

to be indignant *with those who prosper undeservedly*." Thus scheme D, like scheme A, arouses "just indignation," which is detrimental to the arousal of pity and fear. D in fact is even worse than A (*ἀτραγωδοτάτον . . . πάντων*) because in D pity is, as it were, *doubly* erased, not only by the lack of suffering, but also by the intervention of *οὐ φιλόανθρωπον*, whereas A does at least have an *ἀνάξιος δυστυχῶν*.

(b) *Poetics* 18.1456a19–25 runs as follows in Kassel's *OCT*:

ἐν δὲ ταῖς περιπετείαις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀπλοῖς πράγμασι στοχάζονται ὡν βούλονται θαυμαστῶς· τραγικὸν γὰρ τοῦτο καὶ φιλόανθρωπον. ἔστιν δὲ τοῦτο, ὅταν ὁ σοφὸς μὲν μετὰ πονηρίας δ' ἐξαπατηθῇ, ὥσπερ Σίσυφος, καὶ ὁ ἀνδρείος μὲν ἄδικος δὲ ἡττηθῇ. ἔστιν δὲ τοῦτο καὶ εἰκὸς ὥσπερ Ἀγάθων λέγει, εἰκὸς γὰρ γίνεσθαι πολλὰ καὶ παρὰ τὸ εἰκός.

Lamberton, following Gudeman and Else, argues that this passage presents various oddities and also contradicts chapter 13, hence that it cannot "constitute a basis on which to incorporate a positive valuation of *τὸ φιλόανθρωπον* into Aristotle's esthetics of drama." But the oddities have been much exaggerated. Aristotle is here obviously talking about the function of surprise in tragedy,¹⁸ which he reconciles with the requirement that things should happen in accordance with the criterion of *εἰκός* by the characteristically paradoxical observation "this is . . . likely in the way described by Agathon, when he said that it is likely that many things should happen contrary to likelihood."¹⁹ It is *surprising* that a *clever* man should be *deceived* or that a *courageous* man should be worsted.²⁰ The easy change from *θαυμαστῶς* to *τῷ θαυμαστῷ* (Castelvetro) therefore solves the textual difficulty in 1456a20. The argument then goes: "In *peripeteiai* and also in simple plots poets aim at the effects they want by means of surprise, as surprise is tragic and *φιλόανθρωπον*. This happens when a clever scoundrel is deceived, like Sisyphus, and a courageous wrongdoer worsted." The statement that surprise is "tragic" causes no great difficulty, since Aristotle has already devoted a whole section to surprise as a requirement of tragedy and in his discussions of *περιπέτεια* and *ἀναγνώρισις* he also emphasizes the role of surprise (*ἐκπληξίς, τὸ θαυμαστόν*) in stimulating audience emotion.²¹ It is true that in these other discussions he sees surprise not as a thing of value in

¹⁸Much of Else's perplexity stems from his mistaken efforts to link 1456a19–25 with the preceding discussion of the selection of tragic material, but these are, quite simply, different topics: see the lucid analysis of Aristotle's arrangement of his material in Hubbard (above, n. 7) 111–116.

¹⁹For the thought cf. *Poetics* 9.1452a1–9.

²⁰*ἡττηθῇ* in context must imply "in physical combat" or the like.

²¹Surprise as a general requirement: *Poetics* 9.1452a1–11; surprise in connexion with *ἀναγνώρισις* and *περιπέτεια*: *Poetics* 11.1152a32–33, 14.1454a4 (discussion in Moles 84 ff.).

itself but rather as a facilitator of the arousal of pity and fear, which does not seem to apply in the present context. "Tragic" here therefore does not mean "conducive to pity and fear," but just "tragic" in the weaker sense "surprise is a useful technique in tragedy." But this is a perfectly reasonable thing for Aristotle to say²² and we do not have to force this general statement into exact conformity with the other discussions of surprise.

In what way are the deception of a clever wicked man and the worsting of a courageous unjust man *φιλόανθρωπον*? As in chapter 13 *φιλόανθρωπον* in sense (1) offers a barely acceptable meaning: something bad befalls a human being and since *τὸ φιλόανθρωπον* in sense (1) can be felt for the downfall of *any* man, it can come into play here. Yet this gives extraordinarily weak sense—Aristotle seems to be thinking of something much more concrete. His first example is a man who is not only *σοφός* (so that his downfall is *θαυμαστόν*) but also *μετὰ πονηρίας*. His second example is a man who is not only *ἀνδρείος* (so that his being worsted is *θαυμαστόν*) but also *ἄδικος*.²³ What Aristotle has in mind here is surely "poetic justice"—it is *peculiarly fitting* that a *clever* bad man should meet his comeuppance by *deception* or that a *courageous* unjust man should be *worsted*. The sense of "poetic justice" is, as I have already argued, an aspect of *τὸ φιλόανθρωπον* in sense (2). There is nothing remotely "Platonic, if not Christian" about this way of thinking, as Else, in his efforts to discredit the sentence, alleges. The attitude is again wholly in line with *Rhet.* 2.9, where we are told that "he who is pained at the sight of those who are undeservedly unfortunate will rejoice or will at least not be pained at the sight of those who are deservedly so; for instance, no good man would be pained at seeing parricides or assassins punished; we should rather rejoice at their lot" (1386b26–30). So much for the alleged oddities of this passage.

Lamberton, Else, and others also claim a contradiction between the passage and the analysis in chapter 13, in two respects:

(1) Whereas here Aristotle seems to accept the portrayal in tragedy of *πονηροί* and *ἄδικοι*, in chapter 13 he argues (or assumes) that we cannot identify at all with the bad or very bad.

²²Cf. the equally general observation about surprise in *Poetics* 24.1460a11–12 *δεῖ . . . ἐν ταῖς τραγωδίαις ποιεῖν τὸ θαυμαστόν*. In our passage I take *τραγικός* to mean "appropriate to tragedy" (sc. as a form of literature). This "weak" use of *τραγικός* is very common (*LSJ* s.v.). Of course Aristotle elsewhere uses *τραγικός* in the stronger sense "conducive to pity and fear" (e.g., *Poetics* 13.1453a27–30, 14.1453b39), but this stronger sense is brought out by *context*: it is not necessary (and it is indeed untrue to Aristotle's often casual use of terminology) to suppose that *τραγικός* should have exactly the same reference in every case.

²³Lamberton (96) misunderstands these examples when he writes of "devious or criminal characters endowed with *some redeeming positive quality*" (my italics). The point is that the two villains have different kinds of *competence* (*σοφία*, *ἀνδρεία*) and then meet their downfalls in areas where one would have expected their competence to save them.

(2) In chapter 13 Aristotle rejects plot scheme C (very bad man passes to bad fortune), yet this seems to correspond to the two examples cited here.

These contradictions, however, are unreal. As for (1), one could argue that in chapter 13 Aristotle is only setting out in *general* terms the *broad* conditions for audience identification with the stage figures and therefore that, although he there excludes the possibility of identification with a very bad man, he could nevertheless conceive that under certain circumstances such identification might be possible. It is interesting to note that in *Poetics* 15.1454a29 and 25.1461b21 he censures Euripides' portrayal of Menelaus in the *Orestes* not because Menelaus is *πονηρός* but because he is *unnecessarily* *πονηρός*.²⁴ If this argument is unacceptable, one might instead suggest, as Lucas does,²⁵ that perhaps in 18.1456a Aristotle is not thinking of the *σοφός μετὰ πονηρίας* or the *ἀνδρείος ἄδικος* as the *central* tragic figure in the change of fortune. But the really important point, which meets both difficulties, is that in chapter 18 all Aristotle is trying to illustrate is the effectiveness of *τὸ θαυμαστόν* and the way in which it may be combined with *τὸ φιλόνηθρον*. His illustrations are specific and restricted in scope and he need not be taken to be endorsing a whole plot structure of tragedy. After all, the example he cites of the *σοφός μετὰ πονηρίας* is Sisyphus, a figure of satyric drama!²⁶ In similar fashion he goes outside tragedy in chapter 15 to illustrate failure to satisfy the requirement "the appropriate" (*τὸ ἀρμόδιον*), by citing Odysseus' lament in Timotheus' *Scylla*—a dithyramb.

The oddities and contradictions, then, which scholars have found in this passage are of no consequence. Rather, both the chapter 18 examples and scheme C in chapter 13 share the salient characteristic of being *φιλόνηθρον* in that the downfall of a *πονηρός* is just. In chapter 18 *φιλόνηθρον* clearly denotes "our sense of poetic justice" and this supports the interpretation of *τὸ φιλόνηθρον* in chapter 13 as "our moral sense," the sense of "poetic justice" being a particular manifestation of that broader moral sense.

To return to chapter 13, scheme C, according to Aristotle, *τὸ . . . φιλόνηθρον ἔχει ἂν ἀλλ' οὔτε ἔλεον οὔτε φόβον* (1453a2–4). It is *φιλόνηθρον* in satisfying our moral sense, but does not inspire pity—since the very bad man suffers *justly*, nor fear—since the very bad man is not "like us" (*ὅμοιος*). In being *φιλόνηθρον*, it fits the analysis of *τὸ νεμεσᾶν* in *Rhet.* 2.9, for *τὸ*

²⁴Of course Menelaus is not the central figure of the *Orestes*, but the theory of audience identification in chapter 13 requires the audience to calculate the virtue of the central figure and the justice or injustice of his fate and this necessarily involves similar calculations about other major figures in the drama (Orestes' "case" must be assessed against that of Menelaus and others). But I do not wish to press this point, if only because Aristotle himself has not developed it.

²⁵(above, n. 2) 192.

²⁶Documentation in Else 548 n. 105, Lucas (above, n. 2) 192–193.

νεμεσᾶν involves a feeling of satisfaction at the just punishment of the bad (above).

Thus we can see that Aristotle's exclusion of all three schemes, A, D, and C, depends to a considerable extent on the kind of analysis that he gives in *Rhet.* 2.9 (and the other two discussions of τὸ νεμεσᾶν in *EN* 2.7 and *EE* 3.7), designed to show how the arousal of emotion is affected by our moral sense.

Let us now briefly consider his analysis of scheme E: the case of the "in-between man" who passes from good to bad fortune because of a *hamartia*—briefly, because I do not wish to obfuscate the τὸ φιλόανθρωπον question by becoming embroiled in the notorious problem of the correct interpretation of *hamartia*.²⁷

From the argument so far in chapter 13 it is required that scheme E should satisfy our moral sense (τὸ φιλόανθρωπον) and avoid moral outrage at the downfall of a very good man (τὸ μιαιρόν). But it must also of course arouse pity and fear, and pity is aroused by undeserved misfortune. From the moral point of view, therefore, the best plot must strike a balance somewhere between "moral outrage" at one extreme and exact retribution at the other. "Moral outrage" erases pity and so does exact retribution, pity depending on undeserved suffering. The need to arouse fear also affects the moral equation, fear being felt for someone "like us" and "like us" entailing "not very bad" (and perhaps also "not very good").²⁸ Hence scheme E satisfies all the various requirements. In so far as the central figure is "between" the polarities "very good" and "very bad," (a) we can identify with him, because, in not being very bad (and perhaps also in not being very good), he is "like us," (b) his downfall is not morally outraging, since he is not very good, and (c) his downfall does, however, arouse pity, since he is not very bad. (Indeed Aristotle later adjusts the point μεταξύ upwards on the scale of virtue, to increase the arousal of pity: 1453a16–17 βελτίονος μᾶλλον ἢ χειρόνος.) In so far as his change of fortune goes from good to bad, not the other way round, pity and fear are aroused (other conditions having been satisfied). In so far as he commits a *hamartia*, he is to some extent responsible for his fate—it is not arbitrary or gratuitous—hence moral outrage is avoided, but his action is also venial to some extent: it is not characterized by vice or depravity, so pity is aroused.

²⁷Recent discussion in Stinton, whose arguments I accept in essentials, Moles, who offers some slight modifications of Stinton's analysis, and D. Armstrong and C. W. Peterson (above, n. 2), who (I believe) misconceive the function of the phrase τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ δόξῃ ὄντων καὶ εὐτυχίᾳ (1453a10). If Stinton's analysis were universally accepted, I could show in greater detail how moral considerations affect the working of Aristotle's model of tragedy, but as it is not, and the great ἀμαρτία debate shows no signs of exhaustion, it is better to leave the problem out of consideration here.

²⁸Arguable—cf. n. 8, above.

In short, the plot of tragedy must broadly satisfy our moral sense, but there must be some imbalance between the tragic figure's actions and his fate, to arouse our pity.²⁹ To sum up so far: τὸ φιλόανθρωπον is absolutely crucial to Aristotle's analysis of the best plot in *Poetics* 13, it means "moral sense," and the tragedian must take it into account if he is successfully to arouse pity and fear. τὸ φιλόανθρωπον is not an independent criterion: its function, though indispensable, is subsidiary to the proper arousal of pity and fear. Thus when Lamberton writes: "τὸ φιλόανθρωπον . . . is the *antithesis* of the tragic," "Aristotle gives us *no sure basis* for distinguishing between the extreme type in which a good man goes from good to bad fortune, and the ideal type, where a better-than-average man goes from good to bad fortune," and "these passages underline the *radical separation* Aristotle maintains between moral and esthetic demands" (my italics), he has, I believe, failed to come to grips with Aristotle's subtle and complex analysis of the nature of tragedy.

Before I conclude with some general remarks about Aristotle's views on the relationship between morals and aesthetics, let us see exactly why he rejects the so called "double plot," in which the good are rewarded and the bad punished (1453a30–36), and which, he says, poets only use to gratify the poor taste of the audience (τὴν τῶν θεάτρων ἀσθένειαν 1453a34). By his criteria, it falls down in three respects: (1) because of the dissipation of emotional effect arising from the "double" story-line; (2) because it has a "happy ending"—so that pity and fear are aroused but poorly; (3) because it satisfies τὸ φιλόανθρωπον too much: there is no tragic imbalance between fault and fate to arouse our pity.

Let us now draw some general conclusions from this discussion. In chapter 13, as in the rest of the *Poetics*, what Aristotle is concerned with is the arousal of pity and fear. This is an aesthetic purpose, which in itself has nothing to do with morality. But human beings naturally possess "moral sense," which dramatists have to take account of when they construct their plots. So, although Aristotle in chapter 13 does indeed discuss moral issues, his position is fundamentally different from that of a moralist like Plato. Aristotle does not say: "tragedy should improve morals;" what he says is: "if the plot of a tragedy outrages our moral sense, it will not do its proper job, which is to arouse pity and fear, but it has to disturb our moral sense to some extent, so as to arouse our pity." Many modern discussions of Aristotle's views on the relationship between aesthetics and morality in *Poetics* 13 have been thoroughly misconceived. Some scholars have emphasized that the terminology used in chapter 13—ἐπιεικής, μακρόν, μοχθηρός, ἀρετή, κακία, etc.—is moral terminology, and inferred from this that Aristotle

²⁹Stinton, admirable though his discussion is in general, does not do full justice to this vitally important requirement in Aristotle's model.

regards tragedy as having a moral purpose.³⁰ Others have denied that the terminology is properly moral at all.³¹ Both positions are wrong, but in different ways. The terminology quite obviously is moral, but, as we have seen, this does not entail Aristotle taking a moral attitude to the purpose of tragedy.

What, then, of Aristotle's contention that *μίμησις* is educative (*Poetics* 4.1448b13–14), his doctrine of *κάθαρσις* (*Poetics* 6.1449b27–28), and his argument that poetry is concerned with “universal truths” (*Poetics* 9.1451a36–1452a11)? In all these cases, he is of course, to some extent at least, concerned to rebut the moralistic attacks on tragedy of Plato. But none of these commits him to the proposition that tragedy should be morally improving and that this is its purpose. He is quite explicit that “the poet’s job is to produce the pleasure arising from pity and fear via *mimesis*” (14.1453b11–13) and that “correctness in poetry is not the same thing as correctness in morals” (24.1460b23). Nevertheless, he does not deny, indeed he asserts, what is obviously true, that tragedy in fact has moral effect, but he then argues that this moral effect is beneficial. Tragedy does arouse emotions, but, *pace* Plato, this is a good thing because the emotions thus aroused are brought into a better and more healthy balance (*κάθαρσις*). Tragedy is indeed a form of *mimesis*, but, *pace* Plato, *mimesis* is educative. And, again *pace* Plato, poetry, while apparently dealing with untruth, is actually concerned with truth at a very high level—much more significant than the mere “literal” truth of the historian.

In sum, then, Aristotle's position is as follows: (1) the purpose of the tragedian is to arouse the emotions of pity and fear. This involves taking into account our natural moral feelings but does not imply that the tragedian is a moralist in the sense that he seeks to improve morals: satisfaction of *τὸ φιλόανθρωπον* is only a means to the end, that of the arousal of pity and fear, and in any case the satisfaction cannot be total, or pity is not aroused. (2) Of course in practice tragedy, of all forms of art, does have moral effect, so that to that extent the moralists are right to be worried about it. In the final analysis, therefore, it is not sufficient to rebut moralists' objections with the statement that art is a matter of aesthetics, not morals. But the moral effect of tragedy is, on the whole, contrary to the views of Plato, for various reasons beneficial. Thus tragedy can be defended against the attacks of moralists even, as it were, on their own ground, despite the fact that its primary purpose is aesthetic, not moral. Obviously, whether or not we agree with this position is ultimately up to us as individuals, but we should recognize that Aristotle's views on this subject, as on practically all others, are at least well thought out and eminently reasonable.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF NORTH WALES, BANGOR

³⁰For example, G. M. A. Grube, *The Greek and Roman Critics* (London 1965) 80.

³¹For example, W. J. Verdenius, *Mnemosyne* 36 (1983) 37.