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## HYBRIS, DISHONOUR, AND THINKING BIG

THE focal point of this article is the detailed study of the concept of *hybris* recently published by N.R.E. Fisher,<sup>1</sup> and the differences of interpretation which exist between that study and other recent work on the concept.<sup>2</sup> Though I dispute much of what Fisher has to say about *hybris*, I also defend many of his most important insights, and readily admit that my own task has been made immeasurably lighter by his industry and integrity in the presentation of a wealth of valuable data. That I take issue with his thesis is no token of disesteem, rather a recognition that he has made a strong case for his interpretation and that disagreement with a study as well documented as his must rest on detailed discussion of individual passages.

### I

Fisher sees the essence of *hybris* in 'the committing of acts of intentional insult, of acts which deliberately inflict shame and dishonour on others'.<sup>3</sup> MacDowell, on the other hand, argues that *hybris* need not involve a victim, and so need not refer to dishonour; its essence, instead, lies in self-indulgent enjoyment of excess energy. Similarly, Dickie argues that *hybris* is essentially a disposition of over-confidence or presumption, as a result of which one fails to recognize the limitations and precariousness of one's human condition.<sup>4</sup> The dispute between Fisher and his opponents thus centres on the importance or otherwise of the subjective disposition of the *hybristês* in the definition of *hybris*.

The reference to intention in Fisher's definition indicates that he is aware of a certain dispositional aspect, and so his definition is not wholly 'behaviourist'—it does not focus only on external behaviour and its effects on others. He also recognizes that in some cases the dispositional aspect of *hybris* may be to the fore,<sup>5</sup> and that the word *hybris* can be used as a name for the disposition as well as for the act;<sup>6</sup> but he consistently locates the essence of the concept in the commission of concrete acts, and defines the disposition of *hybris* with reference to the commission of such acts, as merely the intention, desire, drive, or tendency to commit hybriistic acts.<sup>7</sup> Thus the act of *hybris* is prior to any dispositional aspect, and the intention which is part of the definition is necessarily an intention to perpetrate an act of dishonour on a particular victim.<sup>8</sup> My position is that this view must be modified; for I do not believe that

<sup>1</sup> *Hybris: a study in the values of honour and shame in ancient Greece* (Warminster 1992; henceforth 'Fisher'); for remarks preliminary to what follows, see my review in *CR* xlv (1994) 76-9.

<sup>2</sup> Especially D.M. MacDowell, *G&R* xxiii (1976) 14-31, *Demosthenes, Against Meidias* (Oration 21) (Oxford 1990) 18-22; A.N. Michelini, *HSCP* lxxxii (1978) 35-44; M.W. Dickie, in D.E. Gerber (ed.), *Greek poetry and philosophy: studies ... L. Woodbury* (Chico 1984) 83-109. J. T. Hooker (*Arch. f. Begriffsgesch.* xix [1975] 125-37) is misguided in his search for an original, neutral meaning, but he focuses on phenomena which are also important in MacDowell's account. In closest agreement with Fisher is E. Cantarella, in *Symposium 1979: Actes du IVe colloque international de droit grec et hellénistique* (Athens 1981) 85-96 = *Incontri Linguistici* vii (1982) 19-30. See also A.F. Garvie in A. Machin, L. Pernée (eds.), *Sophocle: le texte, les personnages* (Aix-en-Provence 1993) 243.

<sup>3</sup> Fisher 148; cf. 1.

<sup>4</sup> This, as Dickie is aware, has much in common with the 'traditional view' in opposition to which Fisher defines his own thesis; see Dickie (n. 2) 101-9, esp. 102; cf. Fisher 2-4 and *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> See 130, 133, 148, 173, 402.

<sup>6</sup> See 493; cf. 125, 242, 281.

<sup>7</sup> See esp. 1: '*Hybris* ... most often denotes specific acts or general behaviour directed against others, rather than attitudes; it may, though, on occasions ... denote the drive or the desire ... to engage in such behaviour directed against others.' Cf. 212-13, 229, 323, 393; also K. Latte, *Kleine Schriften* (Munich 1968) 13.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Fisher in P. Cartledge *et al.* (eds.), *Nomos: essays in Athenian law, politics, and society* (Cambridge 1990) 126 and n. 14.

the act is prior to the disposition in the definition of *hybris*, nor that *hybris* must be defined in terms of an intention to insult a specific victim.

## II

Fisher's definition of *hybris* takes its authority from Aristotle's treatment in the *Rhetoric*.<sup>9</sup> It is true that Aristotle does define *hybris* in terms of actions of verbal or physical affront, and that his references to the concept elsewhere in the *Rhetoric* and in other works are consistent with his definition. Nevertheless, it becomes clear from a closer examination of the relevant passages that Aristotle's definition places more emphasis on the dispositional element than Fisher's, and that the latter, despite the meticulousness of his research, has not quite succeeded in identifying the place of *hybris* in Aristotle's ethical theory.

Aristotle's definition of *hybris* in the *Rhetoric* falls within his discussion of the *pathos* of anger, and more specifically of its cause, *oligôria*, of which *hybris* is one of the three kinds (1378b13-15). The statement that *hybris* is a kind of *oligôria* is backed by a definition of the former: 'For *hybris* is doing and saying things<sup>10</sup> at which the victim incurs *aischynê*, not in order that the agent should obtain anything other than the performance of the act,<sup>11</sup> but in order to please himself' (1378b23-5). *Hybris*, we are then told, requires the initiation of harm, and the pleasure of *hybris* lies in the thought of one's own superiority (b25-30). Fisher is thus right to regard Aristotle as supporting him in referring *hybris* to acts (including speech acts), and it is also true that Aristotle lends support to his insistence that *hybris* is fundamentally a matter of causing dishonour (cf. 1378b29-30, 'Dishonour is part of *hybris*, for the one who dishonours slights'). Already, however, one can discern certain differences of emphasis; Fisher has said that *hybris* has more to do with specific acts than with attitudes, yet Aristotle begins by classifying *hybris* as a type of attitude (*oligôria*), albeit one which is necessarily manifested in word and deed. Similarly, Fisher has characterized his own approach as placing more emphasis on 'the intention specifically to insult and the effects of dishonour achieved';<sup>12</sup> whereas Aristotle regards the intention which is necessary for *hybris* not primarily as a wish to bring about a certain state of affairs or to affect a patient in a particular way, but as the desire to please oneself by demonstrating one's own superiority. It seems to me that Aristotle gives rather more prominence to the attitude and motivation of the agent than Fisher allows.

Yet Aristotle does define *hybris* in terms of its actualization in word and deed, and Fisher can argue that his own reference to the intentions of the agent covers the subjective aspects to which I have drawn attention. The intention to please oneself and feel superior, after all, is only the obverse of the intention to dishonour another, as Aristotle himself makes clear at 1374b13-15—not every case of striking is a case of *hybris*, but only when one strikes for a reason, such as dishonouring the other person or pleasing oneself. Aristotle clearly regards the intention to dishonour as parallel to the intention to obtain the pleasure of feeling or appearing

<sup>9</sup> Fisher 7-11.

<sup>10</sup> Translating τὸ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν (A; Ross, Kassel), rather than τὸ βλέπειν καὶ λυπεῖν as in some later Mss. (and earlier eds.). MacDowell, *Meidias* (n. 2) 20 argues that this sentence is not an exhaustive definition of *hybris*, on the grounds that ὕβρις, minus the article, must be the complement and τὸ πράττειν κτλ. the subject. But the article is omitted with the subject, ὕβρις, as often with abstract nouns, esp. the names of virtues and vices, while its presence in τὸ πράττειν is explained by the need to mark the infinitive as substantival.

<sup>11</sup> I follow E.M. Cope (*The Rhetoric of Aristotle* ii [Cambridge 1877] 17) and Fisher (8) in the interpretation of the phrase, μὴ ἵνα τι γένηται αὐτῷ ἄλλο, ἢ ὅτι ἐγένετο; the alternative proposed by W.M.A. Grimaldi, *Aristotle: Rhetoric* ii (New York 1988) *ad loc.*, seems to me very unlikely.

<sup>12</sup> (n. 8) 126 n. 14.

superior,<sup>13</sup> and this seems to bring us back to Fisher's definition. In fact, however, close attention to the context of this passage reveals that Aristotle's view of *hybris* and Fisher's are somewhat different and that Fisher has failed to follow up certain leads which show precisely where *hybris* fits in Aristotle's ethical theory.

Aristotle's remarks on *hybris* belong in the context of a discussion of the forensic branch of oratory, which is concerned with acts involving an individual or a community as victim; thus Aristotle discusses the motives, conditions, and circumstances of injustice, and gives a short account of what injustice, the subject-matter of forensic oratory, consists in. Any ascription of injustice to an agent depends on an assessment of his motivation; a bare description of an action, in external terms, is insufficient. Thus some admit that they took but deny that they stole, or admit that they struck but deny that they committed *hybris*, and so on (1373b38-1374a6). These are disputes about what it is to be unjust or wicked and the opposite, and therefore about *prohairesis*, for wickedness and wrongdoing lie in the *prohairesis*, and terms such as *hybris* and *klopê* connote *prohairesis* (1374a6-13).

Fisher translates *prohairesis* here as 'intention',<sup>14</sup> but *prohairesis* is a technical term in Aristotle's ethical writings which signifies much more than intention.<sup>15</sup> It is important in both ethical treatises (and the *Magna Moralia*) in the discussion of the various states of character which are classified as excellences or defects, but is discussed in particular detail in *EN* iii 2-3 (cf. *EE* ii 10-11, *MM* 17-19) and vi 2.<sup>16</sup> From these and other passages we learn that all actions which result from *prohairesis* are voluntary, but not all voluntary actions result from *prohairesis* (thus *prohairesis* is already distinguished from mere intention),<sup>17</sup> and that *prohairesis* follows deliberation *qua* deliberative desire to perform actions which contribute to the ends set by one's rational desire for the good.<sup>18</sup> Thus it requires that concept of the end of one's conduct which is supplied by one's developed and settled state of character (*hexis*), be

<sup>13</sup> Fisher (10 n. 17; cf. 57 n. 71) is right to claim (against M. Gagarin in G. Bowersock *et al.* [eds.], *Arctouros* [Berlin and New York 1979] 231-2; MacDowell, *Meidias* [n. 2] 20) that the pleasure mentioned here is, as at 1378b26-8, that of demonstrating one's superiority, and so entails asserting one's own claim to honour at others' expense.

<sup>14</sup> Fisher 10.

<sup>15</sup> W.D. Ross, *Aristotle*<sup>5</sup> (London 1949) 200 distinguishes a 'technical sense' of *prohairesis* (relating to means) in *EN* iii 2 and vi 2 from its supposed use elsewhere to mean 'purpose' (relating to ends), but see R. Sorabji in A.O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1980) 202-4.

<sup>16</sup> For recent discussion of *prohairesis*, see esp. A. Kenny, *Aristotle's theory of the will* (London 1979) 69-107; D.S. Hutchinson, *The virtues of Aristotle* (London 1986) 88-107; N. Sherman, *The fabric of character* (Oxford 1989) 79-94, 106-16; cf. G.E.M. Anscombe in J. Barnes *et al.* (eds.), *Articles on Aristotle* ii (London 1977) 61-6; Sorabji (n. 15) 201-5; D. Wiggins in Rorty (n. 15) 222-7; D. Charles, *Aristotle's philosophy of action* (London 1984) 137-42, 151-5.

<sup>17</sup> *EN* 1112a14-15, 1135b8-11, *EE* 1223b38-1224a7, 1226b34-6; cf. Anscombe (n. 16) 61, 66, 69-70; T.H. Irwin in Rorty (n. 15) 127-33, id., *Aristotle's first principles* (Oxford 1988) 340-2; Sherman (n. 16) 67.

<sup>18</sup> Follows deliberation: *EN* 1112a15-1113a14, *EE* 1226a20-b30, 1227a5-18; deliberative desire: *EN* 1113a10-11, 1139a22-b5, *EE* 1226b2-20; chooses τὰ πρὸς τὰ τέλη: *EN* 1112b11-1113a14, 1113b3-4, *EE* 1226a7-13, 1226b9-20, 1227a5-18; telos set by *boulêsis*: *EN* 1113a15-b3, *EE* 1226a13-17, *EE* 1227a28-31, 1227b37-1228a2; cf. *EN* 1142b28-33 on *euboulia*. For detailed discussion of *prohairesis*, deliberation, practical wisdom, and their relationship to means and ends, see L.H.G. Greenwood, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics. Book 6* (Cambridge 1909) 46-7; D.J. Allan in Barnes *et al.* (n. 16) 72-8; J.M. Cooper, *Reason and human good in Aristotle* (Cambridge Mass. 1975) ch. 1 *passim*; W.F.R. Hardie, *Aristotle's ethical theory*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford 1980) 160-81, 212-39; Sorabji (n. 15) 201-14; Wiggins (n. 16) 222-7; Sherman (n. 16) 70-1. Despite passages such as *EN* 1111b9-10, 1135b8-11, *EE* 1224a4, not every action that is with *prohairesis* need follow *actual* deliberation: see *EN* 1117a17-22; Cooper 6-10; W.W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on emotion* (London 1975) 70-5; Sorabji (n. 15) 204-5; Charles (n. 16) 187; Irwin, *Principles* (n. 17) 344; Sherman (n. 16) 82.



it virtuous or vicious;<sup>19</sup> in order, therefore, for a *prohairesis* to be good, the agent must possess excellence of character,<sup>20</sup> and, by the same token, excellence of character requires the exercise of *prohairesis* (the choice of the specific moral action for its own sake in the light of one's overall conception of the end).<sup>21</sup> It is in the *prohairesis* that we see virtue or vice, and the praise and blame which presence or absence of virtue rightly attracts respond not to the act but to the *prohairesis*.<sup>22</sup>

Certain aspects of this picture are particularly relevant to the account of *hybris* in *Rhetoric* i 13 and ii 2. First, the *Rhetoric* agrees with the *Ethics* that *prohairesis* is the mark of virtue or vice: 'Wickedness and wrongdoing [μοχθηρὰ καὶ τὸ ἄδικεῖν] lie in the *prohairesis*, and such terms (e.g. *hybris* and theft) connote the *prohairesis*' (1374a11-13). Secondly, *hybris* was defined as gratuitous insult, motivated by a desire not to achieve any ulterior purpose, but to obtain the intrinsic pleasure of demonstrating one's own superiority through the dishonouring of another (1378b23-8; cf. 1374a13-15). *Hybris*, then, is explicitly said to be a kind of action performed for its own sake, one which implies a *prohairesis*, and if the summary indications given in the relevant passages of the *Rhetoric* presuppose the developed framework of the *Ethics*, then the *prohairesis* which *hybris* connotes is much more than an intention.

That the reference to *prohairesis* at *Rhetoric* 1374a11-13 does presuppose the technical sense of that term is apparent from the context in which it occurs, for the entire discussion of *adikia* in i 10-13 is clearly related to that of justice and injustice in *EN* v.<sup>23</sup> Thus τὸ ἄδικεῖν is defined as voluntary injury in contravention of the law (1368b6-7), the criteria of the voluntary are summarily rehearsed (b9-10; cf. *EN* 1135a15-b8), and voluntary action is distinguished from action on *prohairesis* (b10-12; cf. *EN* 1135b8-11), which is a sign of vice. Injustice in the fullest sense exists when the agent acts on *prohairesis*, and this is a sign of the possession of a vicious *hexis* (1374a9-13; cf. 1374b13-16); but acts of injustice may also be committed by those who do not possess this *hexis*, for example by those who act in anger (1373b33-8); and acts which harm others may be committed unintentionally, though ignorance of some relevant particular, or by pure accident (1374b4-10).<sup>24</sup> This is clearly a simplified version of *EN* v's distinction between *atychēmata*, *hamartēmata*, *adikēmata*, and 'being an unjust person' (1135a5-1136a5). The important point for our purposes is that it is only in the last case that the

<sup>19</sup> Requires *hexis*: *EN* 1139a33-5; see Cooper (n. 18) 48 n. 59; D.J. Furley in Barnes *et al.* (n. 16) 59; Anscombe (n. 16) 64-6; Kenny (n. 16) 97-9; T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Aristotle's theory of moral insight* (Oxford 1983) 166; N.O. Dahl, *Practical wisdom, Aristotle, and weakness of the will* (Minneapolis 1984) 36; Hutchinson (n. 16) 88-92, 100-7. Charles (n. 16) 151-5 disputes the idea (see Anscombe [n. 16] 64) that every *prohairesis* requires a state of character and a grasp of the end of human action (cf. Engberg-Pedersen 21 n. 27); but see Irwin, *Principles* (n. 17) 598 n. 22.

<sup>20</sup> Excellence of character makes the *prohairesis* right: *EN* 1144a20; cf. 1145a4-5, *EE* 1227b34-1228a2.

<sup>21</sup> Virtue requires *prohairesis*: *EN* 1106a3-4, 1110b31, 1111b5, 1117a5, 1127b14, 1134a17-23, 1135b25, 1139a22-6, 1144a13-22, 1145a2-6, 1157b30, 1163a22, 1178a34-b1, *EE* 1227b1-5; vice also requires *prohairesis*: *EN* 1110b31, 1135b25, 1146a32, 1146b22-3, 1148a4-17, 1150a19-21, 1150b29-30, 1151a6-7, 1152a4-6. Not only virtue (*EN* 1105a32, 1144a13-20), but also vice involves choosing the action for its own sake in the light of one's view of *eudaimonia*. See, e.g., 1127a26-b17 (with Hutchinson [n. 16] 103-4).

<sup>22</sup> *EN* 1111b6, *EE* 1228a2-18.

<sup>23</sup> Cope (*An introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric* [Cambridge 1867] 176, 182-5, etc.) exaggerates the extent to which use of important concepts of Aristotelian ethics and politics in *Rhet.* is to be distinguished from more technical applications in the *Ethics* and *Pol.*, but even he (188-93, esp. 189 and n. 1) recognizes that *Rhet.* i 10-13 presupposes the account of justice in *EN* v. The *Rhet.* does avoid detailed discussion of problems appropriate to more specialized contexts, but its assumptions in many aspects of politics, ethics, and psychology are those of the treatises devoted to those subjects. See (e.g.) Fortenbaugh (n. 18) 16, *id.* in Barnes *et al.* (eds.), *Articles on Aristotle* iv (London 1979) 133-53 (followed by Fisher 9).

<sup>24</sup> That the treatment of justice and injustice is concluded by a discussion of *epieikeia* (1374a26-b23; cf. *EN* 1137a31-1138a3) is another sign that the framework of the *EN* is being applied.

agent acts with *prohairesis*; this has the consequence that one can actually commit an unjust act, and commit it intentionally, and yet still not be an unjust person—one can steal and yet not be a thief, commit adultery and yet not be an adulterer (1134a17-23);<sup>25</sup> in order to be a thief or an adulterer (etc.) one must possess a settled disposition to choose such vicious acts for their own sake, *qua* acts of injustice.<sup>26</sup> Thus if the act of *hybris* is to connote *prohairesis* it will demand more than an intention to dishonour another, for such an intention is possible even in cases where no *prohairesis* is present.

That Aristotle's first expression of his view of *hybris* occurs in the context of a discussion of justice and injustice already suggests that he sees *hybris* as a form of injustice,<sup>27</sup> and that the *hexis* from which *hybris* springs is that which is identified in *EN* v (1129a31-b10, 1130a14-b18, b30-1132b20, and *passim*) as 'particular injustice' (ἡ ἐν μέρει/κατὰ μέρος ἀδικία). This is confirmed when we see that the characteristics of particular injustice match those of *hybris* very closely. First, particular injustice is concerned with *pleonexia*, with wanting more of some external good (1129a32-b11); this greed, however, is not purely material, as it covers desire not just for money, but also for *timê*, safety, and other things of that type (1130b2-4).<sup>28</sup> This kind of injustice can be manifested in the distribution of goods, but also in the context of 'involuntary transactions' in which an agent creates an unfair inequality between himself and a patient in respect of some good, whether by stealth or by force (*EN* 1131a1-9). Thus particular injustice can be concerned with honour, requires a specific victim, and can be manifested in words or in deeds, by physical assault (*aikēia*, 1131a8) or by verbal insult (*propêlakismos*, 1131a9;<sup>29</sup> with all this, cf. *Rhet.* 1374a13-15, 1378b23-8). Just as the *hybristês* is motivated by desire for a particular kind of pleasure (*Rhet.*, *ibid.*, cf. 1380b4-5, also *EN* 1149b21), so particular injustice seeks the pleasure that comes from the *kerdos* (*EN* 1130b4);<sup>30</sup> particular injustice also requires the initiation of wrongdoing, and is not found in

<sup>25</sup> As in *Rhet.* 1373b33-8, the sign of 'doing injustice' as opposed to 'being unjust' is action in the grip of a *pathos*, typically anger; cf. 1135b20-9. (The remarks at 1134a17-23 are clearly out of place; Gauthier-Jolif, *L'Éthique à Nicomacque* ii 1 [Louvain 1959] 385-6, 406, and Irwin, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* [Indianapolis 1985] 335, would transpose the whole section, 1133b29-1134a23; Irwin's transposition *post* 1135a5 seems better than Gauthier-Jolif's *post* 1136a9.)

<sup>26</sup> For the distinction between 'doing injustice' and 'being unjust', cf. 1134a32-3, 1137a4-9, 17-26. It may seem that this is ignored in the passage of the *Rhet.* under discussion; the point of 1373b38-1374a18, after all, is not that of *EN* 1134a17-23 (the former distinguishes between [e.g.] theft and justifiable removal, the latter between [e.g.] being a thief and committing a theft), and at 1374a11-12 τὸ ἀδικεῖν, in apparent contradiction of the *EN*, is said to lie in *prohairesis*; similarly, 1374b4-10 fails to distinguish between *adikēmata* and 'being unjust', attributing *adikēmata* to *ponēria*. Thus Cope (n. 11) i 257-8 argues that the *EN*'s distinction between 'doing injustice' and 'being unjust' is not operative in the *Rhet.*; but, as Grimaldi observes (*Aristotle: Rhetoric* i [New York 1980] 293-4, 304), precisely that distinction is made at 1373b35-6. There may be no real problem here: perhaps τὸ ἀδικεῖν at 1374a12 and ἀδικήματα at 1374b8-9 are used in a non-technical sense, of the unjust actions of an unjust character, and we might say that the refinement of the schema, introducing non-prohaeretic *adikēmata* as a category distinct from possession of a vicious character, though presupposed, is not explicitly activated; but if instead we prefer to see inconsistency, it will be an inconsistency within the *Rhet.* passage itself, not between *Rhet.* and *EN*.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the explicit references to *hybris* as a type of unjust act at *Rhet.* 1373a34-5, 1374a11-12, 1389b7-8, 1391a18-19; cf. also [Arist.] *De Virt.* 1251a30-6 and [Pl.] *Def.* 415e12 (Fisher 11).

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle is aware that he is using *pleonexia* in an extended sense (cf. 1132a7-14, b11-18), and so it is no objection to the interpretation of *hybris* as a kind of particular injustice/*pleonexia* that elsewhere *hybris* and *pleonexia* are distinguished (e.g. *Pol.* 1302b5-9; Fisher 22-4).

<sup>29</sup> According to Ammonius (*De Adfin. Vocab. Diff.* 20; cf. Fisher 53 n. 52) *hybreis* are distinguished from *aikēiai* by the fact that *propêlakismos* is necessary for the former; on *propêlakismos* and *hybris*, cf. Fisher 44 n. 31, 48, 93, 107.

<sup>30</sup> *Kerdos* is to be understood here not as gain *per se*, but as that gain at another's expense which is characteristic of particular injustice; the *pleonexia* in which particular injustice consists is essentially comparative; cf. Irwin, *Principles* (n. 17) 426, 429 and 624 nn. 4-6. This notion of comparison is, as we shall see, also fundamental to *hybris*.

retaliation (1138a20-2; cf. on *hybris*, *Rhet.* 1378b23-8 once more, also 1379a30-5, 1402a1-5). Both *hybris* and particular injustice, then, involve taking the initiative in exalting oneself at the expense of others, for no other motive than the pleasure of the offence itself.<sup>31</sup> That the characteristics of *hybris* are those of a form of particular injustice seems to me indisputable.<sup>32</sup>

If *hybris* is a type of conduct which results from the vicious *hexis* of particular injustice, then Fisher has not only failed to identify the place of *hybris* in Aristotle's scheme, he has also underestimated the extent to which Aristotle's remarks on *hybris* form part of a systematic ethical theory, which, while it starts from the opinions of the many (and the wise), not infrequently has to revise the significance of popular terms in order to accommodate them.<sup>33</sup> The main upshot of this is that Fisher places too little emphasis on the dispositional aspect of the concept. Aristotle would probably have allowed that, just as one can commit an unjust act without being an unjust person, so one can commit an act of *hybris* without possessing the *hexis* necessary for action with *prohairesis*; and he is as capable as other authors of using *hybris*-words in 'behaviourist' senses (less with reference to the motivation of the agent than to the objective infliction of dishonour on a patient);<sup>34</sup> but in the paradigm case, in which *hybris* connotes vice and requires *prohairesis*, it requires a specific sort of motivation rooted deeply in a developed and settled state of character, a state of character which, in the sphere of honour, leads one to enjoy unfairly pressing one's own claims in the face of the legitimate claims of others. This, the disposition which is necessary for *hybris*, is something rather more than a simple intention or tendency to act, and thus Aristotle's definition in terms of *prohairesis* differs markedly from Fisher's in terms of intention; at the same time, Fisher's stress on the actual infliction of dishonour and its effects on the patient underestimates Aristotle's emphasis on the agent's attitude to his own honour, which is both apparent in the definition at *Rhet.* 1378b23-8, and necessary if *hybris* is to be a form of injustice, of the *pleonexia* which seeks more for oneself at the expense of others. The comparative nature of the concept of *pleonexia*/particular injustice in *EN* v isolates what I shall argue to be a fundamental feature of *hybris*—that as a way of going wrong about one's own claim to honour it inevitably involves going wrong about the claims to honour of others (and *vice versa*).

True, Aristotle does define *hybris* in terms of acts, but even though *hybris* is, for him, always a particular way of treating another person, it is not the nature of the act or the effect on the

<sup>31</sup> *Hybris* thus meets the criteria for vicious action in the fullest sense—it springs from a settled disposition to choose the vicious course for its own sake, in so far as it is pleasant. This also answers to a typical feature of *hybris* in ordinary usage, in which to say that someone acted 'not out of *hybris*, but ... [for some further motive]' is to deny acting 'just for badness', as a demonstration of one's insolent disregard for law or convention; see (e.g.) Lys. vii 13; cf. Thuc. iv 95.8, Xen. *Anab.* v 5.16, Dem. xxi 181-2; Fisher 49, 98, 103.

<sup>32</sup> This helps explain why Aristotle imagines that *hybris* must always have a victim—all forms of injustice are necessarily *πρὸς ἑτέρον* (*EN* 1129b25-1130a13; cf. 1130b20; 1130b1-5), and, as a form of particular injustice, *hybris* must occur in 'involuntary transactions' involving two parties. Aristotle's discussion of 'involuntary transactions', moreover, focuses on cases where correction will be forthcoming from a judicial source (1130b33-1131a9, 1131b25-1132b20); likewise in the *Rhet.* the reference to *hybris* in i 13 (1373b38-1374a18) is specifically related to the needs of the forensic orator (esp. 1374a7-9). The account of *hybris* in ii 2 (1378b13-34) forms part of a discussion of the *pathê* which frequently goes far beyond these needs, but even there *hybris* is discussed *qua* form of *oligôria* and cause of anger, and so the context demands concentration on affronts involving an agent and a patient; it should thus be no surprise that forms of *hybris* which would be unlikely to form the basis of a court action or at least of a dispute between two parties are not considered in Aristotle's definition. Cf. MacDowell (n. 2) *G&R* 28, *Meidias* 20, against Fisher 9. This is not to say that Aristotle is defining a distinct 'legal' sense of *hybris*, merely that apparently victimless cases do not occur to him, given the contexts in which he expresses his views on *hybris*.

<sup>33</sup> See (e.g.) his account of *nemesis*, *Rhet.* 1386b9-1387b20; cf. n. 35 below.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. *hybris* of homosexual practices thought objectively to involve the dishonour of the passive partner, regardless of the motive of the agent or of the partner's consent; *EN* 1129b22, 1148b31, *Rhet.* 1384a18-19. Cf. Fisher 13-14, 109-10; D. Cohen, *Law, violence and community in classical Athens* (Cambridge 1995) 147-51, 155-6.



honour of the patient which makes an act hybriatic, but the motive; and that motive is a *prohairesis*, a particular choice of a developed character. Aristotle does not explicitly (unlike other authors)<sup>35</sup> refer to this state of character as *hybris*,<sup>36</sup> but he does have a name for it, since by virtue of the possession of such a state one is called a *hybristês*. Now, the term *hybristês* is derived from *hybris*, and thus the latter is prior in definition to the former; but we can be sure that to be a *hybristês* for Aristotle is not just to be liable to commit hybriatic acts; *qua* unjust acts manifesting *prohairesis*, hybriatic acts must be defined as those which the possessor of a particular *hexis* would perform. The *hexis* from which *hybris* springs is that of injustice in its narrower sense. That in itself allows us to adumbrate the typical characteristics of the hybriatic agent to a certain extent. But other contexts provide further help in narrowing down the precise nature of the disposition to choose from which *hybris* results.

Our best evidence comes in a handful of passages in which Aristotle discusses *hybris* as typical of particular character types. The *Rhetoric*'s discussions of pity and fear, for example, consider not only the dispositions which give rise to these emotions (ὡς διακείμενοι αὐτοὶ φοβοῦνται, 1382b29), but also those which do not. Both pity and fear require the notion of one's own vulnerability to misfortune; by contrast, those who believe that their current good fortune renders them invulnerable to reversal are disposed not to pity or to fear, but, being *hybristai* (1383a2), and 'in a hybriatic condition (*diathesis*)' (1385b30-1), to *hybrizein* (1385b21). Even if *hybrizein* here does imply the expression of contempt for the unfortunate in word or deed,<sup>37</sup> Aristotle can refer to a hybriatic disposition from which such concrete expressions spring, a disposition which entails a blind over-valuation of oneself caused by the experience or the illusion of excessive prosperity. All the stress in these passages is on the subjective attitude of the *hybristês*;<sup>38</sup> in these accounts of people who are disposed to manifest *hybris* it is the agent's sense of his own superiority that is emphasized, rather than its expression in acts which affect others. Clearly, dishonouring others is the obverse of over-valuing oneself, but these passages provide further evidence that the latter side of the coin figures more prominently in Aristotle's concept of *hybris* than the former, and they should be used to emphasize the element of the sense of one's own superiority in the definitions of *hybris* at the expense of the mere intention to cause a diminution of honour in others.

The sketches of the characteristics of the young, the rich, and the powerful in the *Rhetoric* and *Politics* also consistently attribute the *hybris* of those groups to their failure to form an appropriate conception of their own worth *vis-à-vis* that of others. The characterization of the young at *Rhet.* 1389a2-b12, for example, stresses their naiveté, their inexperience of misfortune, and their acute attachment to *timê*.<sup>39</sup> When *hybris* enters this picture, it is with specific reference to acts of insult or mockery (their acts of injustice tend more towards *hybris* than to petty wrongdoing, and they are witty, since wit is educated *hybris*, b7-12), but these acts spring from a particular type of character, one which lacks the experience which should set limits to one's self-confidence and self-assertion.

Being hybriatic and arrogant is likewise one of the 'characters' (*êthê*, 1390b32) which attend wealth, and the acquisition of wealth creates the illusion that one possesses all good things,

<sup>35</sup> As Fisher (493) admits. Cf. above, n. 6. Aristotle's account of *hybris* thus resembles his discussions of *aidôs* in failing to recognize that *hybris*, like *aidôs*, can be the name of a disposition; see my *Aidôs* (Oxford 1993) 393-431.

<sup>36</sup> The only instance I can find in the Aristotelian corpus of *hybris* used as the name of a character trait is in the spurious *Oec.* (1344a35-b1).

<sup>37</sup> I am not sure that we need follow Fisher (19-20) in thus limiting the reference of the verb; on his treatment of transitive and absolute uses of *hybrizein*, see below, nn. 48, 69.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. D. Armstrong and C.W. Peterson, *CQ* xxx (1980) 69; Dickie (n. 2) 97-8, 102.

<sup>39</sup> Several of these points emerge again by contrast in the characterization of the old at 1389b13-1390a28.

which is the basis of the disposition of being *hybristai* and *hyperêphanoi* (1390b34-1391a1). As a result of this error, the rich have a false idea of their own worth and a misplaced confidence in their own good fortune (1391a1-14).<sup>40</sup> The *Politics* also recognizes the tendency of the excessively fortunate to become *hybristai* and commit *hybris* (1295b6-11); again, the specific reference of the noun, *hybris*, is to a type of unjust act (b10-11), but one which springs from a mistaken belief that one's particular good fortune entitles one to a greater share of honour than it should. Similarly, at 1334a25-8 we read that war compels men to be just and to *sôphronein*, whereas enjoyment of good fortune and leisure in time of peace makes them *hybristai*. All the terms here are dispositional; war fosters a disposition of modesty and self-restraint, prosperity and peace one of over-confidence and self-assertion;<sup>41</sup> to be sure, these are dispositions to act, but still this passage resembles the others cited in making it clear that to possess the disposition which is necessary for *hybris* is to have a particular mistaken view of oneself and one's lot in life.

In *Pol.* 1295b8-9 it is the absence of reason which explains the mistaken attitude to good or bad fortune. The same point is made at *EN* 1124a26-b6; the *megalopsychos* has the right attitude to *timê* and the goods for which one receives *timê*; others who enjoy the same external advantages, but lack virtue, are wrong in thinking themselves worthy of great things and should not be called *megalopsychoi*. These people instead become supercilious (*hyperoptai*) and *hybristai*, because without *aretê* it is hard to deal appropriately with good fortune; unable to bear their good fortune and thinking themselves superior they despise others and do whatever they please. In this they resemble the *megalopsychos*, but his contempt for others is rational where theirs is not. It could not be made clearer that one's attitude to oneself and one's own worth is for Aristotle a more important constituent of *hybris* than one's attitude to others; to be a *hybristês* one's contempt for others must be based on a mistaken conception of one's own worth.

It cannot be said that Fisher ignores such passages;<sup>42</sup> but he uses them simply to establish what he sees as the conditions or causes of *hybris*, which properly consists in intentional acts of affront. But Aristotle's definitions of *hybris* presuppose a reference to a source of motivation which provides the crucial criterion for differentiating a hybriatic act from an apparently similar non-hybriatic act; hence these dispositional factors are not mere concomitants or causes, but characteristics of the *hexis* which is necessary for *hybris*. To be a *hybristês* is not just to possess a drive, tendency, or intention to commit hybriatic acts, but to entertain a misguided and inflated conception of oneself and one's place in the world. Aristotle's sketches of hybriatic character-types concentrate much more on the subject's excessive concern for his own honour than on his assaults on the honour of others.

### III

Aristotle's view of *hybris* thus diverges from Fisher's at precisely the point where Fisher and his modern critics also differ, on the importance of the disposition of the hybriatic agent. Yet Aristotle and Fisher remain close in that they both believe that *hybris* is essentially a way of behaving towards other people. Aristotle may place more emphasis on the dispositional aspect,

<sup>40</sup> The same misapprehension which makes the rich *hybristai* and *hyperêphanoi* makes the powerful *hyperêphanoterai* at 1391a33-b1; it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the adj. *hyperêphanos* reinforces the connotation of *hybristês* at 1390b33. Cf. Armstrong and Peterson (n. 38) 69.

<sup>41</sup> The frequent opposition between *hybris* and *sôphrosynê* (see Fisher, Index, s.v.) contrasts two ways of coping with one's self-assertive urges, and reinforces my contention that the element of over-valuation of one's own honour in *hybris* is more important than Fisher allows. Fisher (111) argues that *sôphrosynê* is an antonym of *hybris* only in so far as it restrains that desire to wrong others which *hybris* primarily denotes, but the falsity of this follows from that of the view of *hybris* it employs.

<sup>42</sup> See Fisher 12, 19-25.

but he agrees with Fisher in so far as he gives no explicit indication of believing that the word *hybris* may be used as the name of a disposition which need not issue in acts infringing the *timê* of a particular victim. Our task now is to decide whether this restriction of the reference of *hybris* applies across the board.

First we shall look at some passages in which it seems to me that the dispositional aspect is decisive for the application of the *hybris*-term; these are passages in which either specific acts or victims are not mentioned or else the effects of acts on victims are not constitutive of the *hybris* described. My focus here is partly on the requirement that *hybris* entails a conscious intention to dishonour, partly on Fisher's dictum that 'in almost all cases the victim of *hybris* is patently present in the context; where it can or has been doubted [*sic*] that there is a victim, in all cases it can be plausibly argued that one is supposed by the argument' (148). Both these requirements, it seems to me, need to be relaxed.

Several of the relevant passages come from Fisher's general discussion of the links between luxury (*tryphê*) and *hybris* (113-17). At Demosthenes xxxvi 42 the *hybris* envisaged is that of Apollodorus: if the Athenians turn the disputed sums over to him they will see his opponent, Phormio, in extreme need, while Apollodorus behaves with *hybris* and spends money on the things he usually spends it on. For Fisher (113), the verb *hybrizein* here is not merely a condemnation of Apollodorus' 'extravagant and dissolute behaviour', but signals that such behaviour would constitute an affront against the unjustly defeated Phormio. I agree that the contrast between Apollodorus and Phormio is emphasized in the text, and thus that Apollodorus' reaction to his success at Phormio's expense is an important part of the meaning of *hybrizein* in the passage, but there is little warrant for believing that Apollodorus is to be imagined as *deliberately* spending his ill-gotten gains on luxuries and depravities with the specific intention of further dishonouring his defeated opponent; rather, those who witness his extravagant behaviour are invited to construe it as *hybris* on the grounds that it manifests a shameless self-absorption which others, especially those who have suffered at Apollodorus' hands, will find offensive. The affront to Phormio and others is not Apollodorus' intention in enjoying his luxurious lifestyle in his usual way; rather, his behaviour constitutes an implicit affront to those at whose expense he carouses and those whose claim to honour he ignores. If *hybrizein* may refer to excessive self-assertion which dishonours others simply by failing to take their claims into account, then there is no specific intention to commit a particular act of dishonour, and this case does not fit Fisher's definition of *hybris*.<sup>43</sup>

Two passages in Euripides' *Troades* demonstrate that, while *hybris* (*qua* luxuriating in a misplaced sense of one's own superiority) can be construed as an affront to a particular group of other people (because they have more reason than others to resent the agent's self-assertion), it can also be seen as an attitude which affronts other people in general. At 993-7 there is no hint that the *hybris* of which Hecuba accuses Helen was intended by the latter to dishonour anyone in particular; Fisher's suggestion, that in οὐδ' ἦν ἱκανά σοι τὰ Μενέλεω / μέλαθρα ταῖς σαῖς ἐγκαθυβρτίζειν τρυφαῖς (996-7) Hecuba refers to a kind of 'extravagance and dominant "queening it" [which] would be felt to involve an assertiveness against a husband, characteristic of foreign queens',<sup>44</sup> is a rather desperate attempt to maintain his schema—Helen's

<sup>43</sup> [D.] xlviii 55 (Fisher 114; *cf.* 440-1) is an even clearer example of the same thing. Here again *hybrizein* is a matter of excessive enjoyment of (illegitimately acquired) prosperity and again there is an element of comparison, between Olympiodorus' *hetaira* and the women of the speaker's own household; there is no implication that the former does or says anything which is specifically designed to bring disgrace on the latter. Rather, they are imagined as 'taking it personally' that she should lay claim to a greater degree of honour than is felt appropriate for a person in her position.

<sup>44</sup> Fisher 114.

*hybris* does consist in extravagant 'queening it', but there is no reference to a specific victim. Instead, Hecuba represents Helen's behaviour as signifying an excessive claim to honour which entails an implicit lack of regard for the honour of anyone in Helen's group or vicinity.<sup>45</sup>

The occurrence of *hybrizein* in Eumaeus' denunciation of Melanthius at *Od.* xvii 244-6 is comparable.<sup>46</sup> Eumaeus prays that Odysseus will return and put an end to the *aglaiai*, the 'splendour' or 'ostentation', with which the goatherd, behaving with *hybris* (ὕβριζων), now conducts himself. Fisher sees Melanthius' deliberate insult in his disobedience towards his masters, and possibly also his specific acts of violence and abuse towards his fellow servants and their guests, but the reference of the participle is clearly to the goatherd's ostentatious behaviour and demeanour;<sup>47</sup> this is an insult to anyone who has reason to resent such presumption, but the reference of the *hybris*-word is once again to a misplaced exaltation of the agent's own honour which only implicitly constitutes an attack on the honour of others. Those who may feel themselves dishonoured by the goatherd's conduct do not figure in the thoughts of the agent at all; the dishonour to them consists precisely in his focusing on his own honour to the exclusion of theirs.<sup>48</sup>

In all these passages<sup>49</sup> the relevant *hybris*-word refers to a particular attitude to one's own prosperity or good fortune. The emphasis is on the disposition of the agent, but this is a disposition which inevitably has implications for the relationship between the agent and other people; this seems to me to answer very well to the emphases of the Aristotelian passages considered above, where it was clear that both the disposition of the agent (involving a feeling of superiority and a confidence that one is invulnerable to the misfortunes which plague others) and the effects on the honour of the patient must be given due weight in any discussion of *hybris*. *Hybris* is a concept to which both one's own and others' honour are relevant, and this not merely in the sense that specific acts of insult are typically intended to increase one's own prestige at others' expense.

#### IV

At this point it may seem that Fisher and I are not terribly far apart; with regard to the passages just discussed, we agree that the behaviour described as *hybris* can be construed as an insult against someone. But whereas Fisher demands a conscious intention deliberately to insult a particular victim, I argue that *hybris* may be a subjective attitude or disposition which can be construed as an implicit affront. My emphasis is on that element of *hybris* which relates to one's

<sup>45</sup> Equally, at 1019-22 the *hybris* manifested in Helen's enjoyment of barbarian *proskynêsis* involves no intention to insult anyone in particular, but an excessive conceit of her own worth, implicitly insulting to all those who do not accept that Helen's honour is superior to their own. It is this lack of a proper appreciation of the interplay between her own and others' honour that Hecuba misses in Helen at 1025-8 (Cairns [n. 35] 298).

<sup>46</sup> Fisher 171.

<sup>47</sup> Pompous ostentation (rather than deliberate insult) is the sense of *hybris* at Athen. 522c (a rejected motive for the wearing of Persian dress); cf. *hybrismenos* of clothing at Xen. *Cyr.* ii 4.5 and (negatively) of a shield-device at E. *Pho.* 1111-12; also of excessively expensive and ostentatious hospitality at Ael. *VH* i 31 (on all these, see Fisher 116-17). In the passages which Fisher (*ibid.*) cites from Clearchus (*frr.* 43a, 46, 47, 48 Wehrli), *hybris* is a consequence of luxury, and most of the applications of *hybris*-words refer to concrete acts of dishonour; but in 43a the phrase, καὶ πόρρω προάγοντες ὕβρεως, which links the *tryphê* of the Lydians' gardens and their gross acts of *hybris* against others' womenfolk, must indicate that the former as well as the latter involve *hybris*.

<sup>48</sup> In this passage, as in the others quoted above (this section), Fisher takes an absolute use of the verb *hybrizein* as equivalent to a transitive. But my interpretation suggests that the distinction made by LSJ s.v. between transitive and absolute uses is wholly warranted, even if in some instances it is impossible to be sure whether an unstated object is to be assumed.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Theopompus, *FGrH* 115 F 213 (Fisher 115).



own honour, and I argue that the state of mind which over-values one's own honour is decisive for *hybris*, even though *hybris* regularly involves an assault on the honour of others, and even though over-valuation of one's own honour virtually always constitutes at least a potential affront. This may still not seem like much of a difference, and it may look as though Fisher could accommodate my criticisms without drastically altering his overall thesis; but the real distance between our positions will emerge in this section, when we look at Fisher's arguments for excluding the disposition of 'thinking big', pride, or presumption from his definition. Terms such as *mega phronein* are, I shall argue, ways of referring to the subjective, dispositional aspect of *hybris*, and thus, since *hybris*-words can be used in purely dispositional senses, *hybris* and 'thinking big' can amount to the same thing. Fisher repeatedly denies this;<sup>50</sup> even when the two ideas occur in close proximity with reference to the behaviour of the same agent, they remain (he maintains) conceptually distinct.

Many passages in which the relevant locutions occur are too general to provide much help in settling the matter; whether we distinguish or associate 'thinking big' and *hybris* in these cases will depend on our interpretation of passages which offer more hope of establishing the relationship between the two sets of terms. The most obvious of these is to be found in Sophocles' *Ajax*,<sup>51</sup> at the end of the speech in which Menelaus, justifying his prohibition of burial, attempts to set Ajax's behaviour in the context of the norms of military and civic discipline. He concludes: 'These things go by turns. Previously he was a flagrant *hybristês*, now it is my turn to think big. And I forbid you to bury this corpse, or else you yourself will meet an early grave if you bury him' (1087-90).

According to Fisher, Menelaus' 'assertion that Ajax was a "blazing *hybristês*", but that he now "thinks big" proclaims that committing *hybris* is the arrogant, violent crime of those who possess, or seek, power, and merely "thinking big" is acceptable and justified self-confidence in one's capacity to exercise power and achieve a satisfactory revenge over one's defeated enemies'. But this falsifies the relationship between the terms; Menelaus' language has become precisely antithetical,<sup>52</sup> and he says explicitly that *ἐρπει παραλλὰξ ταῦτα* (1087); the things which alternate should be parallel, and that Ajax's *hybris* and Menelaus' 'thinking big' are parallel is indicated by the use of the adverb, *οὖ* (1088)—it is now Menelaus' turn to play a role similar to that played by Ajax before, when he was a *hybristês*. This must mean that *hybristês*, applied to Ajax, refers not to his commission of specific acts, but to his general demeanour as one who, as Menelaus represents it, found military discipline impossible to bear. It is to this attitude of self-assertion that Menelaus' 'thinking big' now responds, and so 'being a *hybristês*' and 'thinking big' must, at the least, be two ways of describing a disposition of confidence in one's own power.

One must concede, however, that Menelaus is unlikely to be describing his own attitude explicitly as *hybristic*; thus, while the logic of his remarks demands that 'being a *hybristês*' must involve 'thinking big',<sup>53</sup> it is likely that by terming his own attitude 'thinking big' he means to differentiate it from *hybris*. And Fisher repeatedly points out that the expression 'thinking big' differs from *hybris* in that it may be used of justifiable self-assertion, where *hybris* is

<sup>50</sup> Fisher 125, 148, 224 n. 122, 238, 244, 374.

<sup>51</sup> See Fisher 315-16, Dickie (n. 2) 106.

<sup>52</sup> See 1084-6: ἄλλ' ἐστάτω μοι καὶ δέος τι καίριον  
καὶ μὴ δοκῶμεν δρῶντες ἄν ἡδόμεθα  
οὐκ ἀντιτείσειν αὐθις ἄν λυπώμεθα.

<sup>53</sup> As Dickie ([n. 2] 106) argues, and Fisher (316) concedes.



generally pejorative.<sup>54</sup> But the very wording of Menelaus' observation suggests that there is a far closer parallel between himself and Ajax than he means to draw, and it is virtually certain that his description of himself as 'thinking big' alerts the audience to the possibility of *hybris* on his own part. Menelaus intends a parallel between unjustified and justified 'thinking big'; but the logic of *ἔρπει παραλλὰξ ταῦτα* is best preserved if the audience take him at his word, and see both forms of 'thinking big' as illegitimate.

This interpretation is confirmed by the chorus-leader (1091-2): 'Menelaus, do not lay down wise maxims and then yourself become a *hybristês* on the dead.' Fisher maintains that the *hybris* against which Menelaus is now warned is the prohibition of burial and nothing else, and thus (as usual) an action bringing dishonour on a specific victim. There is little warrant for this in the text; but even if the primary reference of the chorus-leader's words is to non-burial, it remains significant that he uses the same word as Menelaus had used of Ajax at 1088, and that he uses the dispositional term, *hybristês*, rather than the verb, *hybrizein*. There is a clear sequence of thought running from the description of Ajax as a *hybristês* at 1088, through Menelaus' avowal of his own *megalphrosynê* in the same line, to the chorus-leader's warning that Menelaus is becoming *hybristic* at 1092; 'thinking big' is the feature common to both the *hybris* of Ajax, as identified by Menelaus, and the *hybris* of Menelaus, as identified by the chorus-leader. The sequence of thought in this passage is just too neat and precise to admit the *a priori* distinctions that Fisher maintains.

This interpretation of Menelaus' remarks and the Coryphaeus' response to them also sits better with the dialectic of *hybris* in the play as a whole, where *hybris* has been applied to what 'they' do to 'us', rather than to what 'we' do to 'them'.<sup>55</sup> Even if Menelaus does not go so far as sanguinely to proclaim himself a *hybristês*, his remarks none the less encapsulate this process of retaliatory *hybris*.<sup>56</sup> The same pattern is exemplified in the ensuing confrontation between Teucer and Menelaus, in another passage which reveals the connexion between 'thinking big' and *hybris* (1120-5):

- Με.     ὁ τοξότης ἔοικεν οὐ σμικρὸν φρονεῖν.  
 Τευ.     οὐ γὰρ βάνανυσον τὴν τέχνην ἐκτησάμην.  
 Με.     μέγ' ἂν τι κομπάσειας, ἀσπίδ' εἰ λάβοις.  
 Τευ.     κἂν ψιλὸς ἀρκέσαιμι σοί γ' ὀπλισμένῳ.  
 Με.     ἢ γλώσσά σου τὸν θυμὸν ὥς δεινὸν τρέφει.  
 Τευ.     ξὺν τῷ δικαίῳ γὰρ μέγ' ἔξεστιν φρονεῖν.

References to a person's temper, spirit, or cast of mind can in fact refer to that person's acts or utterances;<sup>57</sup> Menelaus' οὐ σμικρὸν φρονεῖν (1120) is a comment on the insulting language of Teucer's speech; likewise, when he refers to Teucer's δεινὸς θυμός (1124), he is

<sup>54</sup> See Fisher 112 n. 193, 316, 323, 374-5 n. 144; for neutral/positive applications of *mega phronein*, etc., cf. Xen. *Ages.* 11.11; S. *Aj.* 1125; Hdt. vii 135-6.

<sup>55</sup> See Cairns (n. 35) 229-30, 234-8.

<sup>56</sup> Thus R.P. Winnington-Ingram (*Sophocles* [Cambridge 1980] 62) may not be absolutely right to say that Menelaus regards *hybris* as a reciprocal process, if Menelaus is not actually confessing to *hybris*; but Menelaus' remarks do reveal the reciprocity of *hybris* once we see through his implication that his own thinking big is justified. He therefore does, as M.W. Blundell points out (*Helping friends and harming enemies* [Cambridge 1989] 91), manifest a form of *hybris* which answers that which he blamed in Ajax.

<sup>57</sup> Fisher 377 recognizes this phenomenon in another connexion, but draws no conclusions for his view of the relation between 'thinking big' and *hybris*.

commenting on a disposition currently being manifested in speech. The same is true of Teucer's defence of his own 'big thoughts' at 1125; Menelaus has identified a formidable spirit of self-confidence behind Teucer's language; Teucer then justifies the spirit *and* the insulting language/behaviour with the claim that such are permissible when right is on one's side. 'Thinking big' in 1125, like *thymos* in 1124 and 'thinking no small thought' at 1120, refers to a demeanour manifested in behaviour, and there is no great difference between saying 'This fellow thinks big' and 'This fellow is insulting me': the reference to the disposition is a comment on the behaviour. This being so, we can understand the logic of Teucer's defence of his own 'thinking big'; Menelaus' references to Teucer's spirit and to his 'thoughts' accuse him of insolence; Teucer realizes that, in effect, he is being accused of *hybris*, and so defends himself. As all the dispositional terms in this short passage are used to refer to actual behaviour, there cannot be as sharp a distinction as Fisher maintains between *hybris*, the act, and 'thinking big', the state of mind. We have seen that a disposition of excessive self-assertion can be construed as an effective insult; now it appears that an actual insult can be described in terms of a disposition of excessive self-assertion. As *hybris* can refer to a disposition which can be described as 'thinking big', so 'thinking big' can refer to behaviour which might otherwise be called *hybris*.

That 'thinking big' and *hybris* can be identical in reference is also demonstrated by three passages of Herodotus vii involving the response of Artabanus to Xerxes' proposed invasion of Greece. Xerxes outlines his intentions and his motives in vii 8, and it is clear that the pursuit of honour is high among his priorities—he does not wish to be left behind in honour *vis-à-vis* his ancestors, and sees the expedition as a means of obtaining *kudos* and winning back *timê* lost as a result of the burning of Sardis and the failure of the previous expedition (vii 8α.2-γ.1); this concern for honour, too, is presented in extravagant terms—Xerxes intends to yoke the Hellespont (β.1), and cherishes an image of the Persian empire, after the conquest of Greece, encompassing all the lands on which the sun shines, equalling 'Zeus' heaven' in extent (γ.1-2). So Xerxes is motivated by honour, believes that he possesses a status sufficient to consider subduing the elements, and dreams of making his dominion co-extensive with the sovereignty of Zeus. Xerxes is also a typical *hybristês* in believing that his good fortune and that of his nation can only continue—god is guiding Persian destiny for the best, and the Persians themselves have merely to follow (α.1).

Artabanus sees the dangers in his nephew's plan; he points out that confidence does not always precede success, as in the case of Darius' expedition against the Scythians (vii 10α), and gives good grounds for caution in undertaking any enterprise against the Greeks, making particular reference to the (apparently pragmatic) dangers of bridging great waterways (α.δ). Having stressed the importance of *euboulia* (10δ), he offers a general, theological warning against over-confidence: 'the god' blasts those creatures which stand out, and does not allow them to 'show off' (*phantazesthai*), but is not irritated by the insignificant; the same applies to houses and trees, for the god is wont to cut back all things that stand out. Thus a great army can be destroyed by a small, because the god allows no one but himself to think big (10ε).<sup>58</sup> This last argument clearly constitutes a response which is very closely focused on Xerxes' proposals, on their dangerous over-confidence which threatens to encroach even upon the *timê* of the gods.

Artabanus' second evaluation of Xerxes' plan comes at vii 16α, after Xerxes has relented from his previous fury at his uncle's opposition, but has been warned by a dream-figure against calling off the expedition. Xerxes now wishes Artabanus to sit on his throne and sleep in his

<sup>58</sup> Artabanus' argument shifts from the notion of divine resentment of all forms of prominence to particular resentment of human presumption; the latter is his main point, the former merely an illustration, and the function of the warning as a whole is to provide another perspective on the unexpected failure of great armies when they cross significant natural frontiers to take on apparently inferior opponents.

bed, in order that the same dream may appear to him and he may judge that it is sent by the gods, and although Artabanus is reluctant to accept this invitation, he feels himself under compulsion. He prefaces his acceptance, however, with a rehearsal of his previous opposition to a proposal which 'increased *hybris*' and involved 'always seeking to have something more than what is present'. Even when convinced by the dream-figure that the expedition must go ahead, Artabanus reiterates his earlier position, referring (with examples) to the failure of the strong to overcome the weak, stressing Xerxes' youth, and contrasting the dangers of 'desiring many things' with the virtues of 'keeping quiet' (vii 18.2-3).

This third comment on the merits of the expedition has elements in common with each of the previous; it returns to the central point of the first, that great forces have often been overcome by weaker, and with the second it shares an awareness of the dangers of seeking more. *Hybris* is associated with 'desiring many things' in the second passage, while in the third 'desiring many things' is associated with disastrous attempts by greater forces to subdue weaker; this brings us full circle back to the first passage, where one reason for the failure of such attempts is 'thinking big'. All three passages concern attempts to increase power and prestige beyond a vague limit of what is 'enough'; *hybris* is one way of describing the drive to do this, 'thinking big' is another, and the connexions between the three passages suggest that there is not much to choose between them.<sup>59</sup>

Another reason for assuming that *hybris* and 'thinking big' are virtually interchangeable here is the presumption that Artabanus' characterization of the proposal to invade Greece should refer to identifiable characteristics of Xerxes' original speech. We saw that that speech was strong on self-assertion, manifesting a desire to restore and enhance the monarch's prestige; there were also hints that this concern for individual royal *timê* was somewhat in excess of the norm, envisaging a degree of success which no mortal had hitherto attained. This is readily construed as 'thinking big'; but *qua* extravagant exaltation of one's own claim to honour, stemming from youth, existing good fortune, inexperience of failure, and blind faith in continued success, it also patently deserves the title of *hybris*. In this case it is not merely other mortals who are imagined as affronted, but the gods themselves; Artabanus' statement that 'the god does not allow anyone other than himself to think big' is a recognition that Xerxes' excessive pursuit of honour constitutes an implicit assault on those who possess the most *timê* of all; that the god is the party affected in this case does not alter the fact that we have here what is, on my account, a perfectly standard case of *hybris* involving the pursuit of greater honour for oneself in a way that threatens the honour of others.

Fisher's interpretation,<sup>60</sup> on the other hand, demands that we dissociate Artabanus' first and second evaluations from what Xerxes actually said; on his account, the 'thinking big' of the first speech does not refer to a specific offence on Xerxes' part, but is rather an aspect of Persian

<sup>59</sup> See Dickie (n. 2) 104-6. Of particular importance are Artabanus' references to the expeditions against the Massagetae, the Ethiopians, and the Scythians; all three, *qua* attempts to extend power beyond natural limits, have a symbolic function both in themselves and in the presentation of Xerxes' expedition; thus, although Artabanus advances sound pragmatic reasons against the crossing of important natural frontiers and the attempt by greater powers to subdue smaller, his reference to these campaigns is not simply intended to stress the material dangers of expansionism (*pace* Fisher 372), and this constitutes another link between the three passages, esp. between the warning against 'thinking big' and divine *phthonos* in the first and the reference to the three previous campaigns in the third. See J. Gould, *Herodotus* (London 1989) 100-9, and cf. F. Hartog, *The mirror of Herodotus* (Berkeley 1988) 331 and (on the Scythian campaign as a prefiguration of Xerxes' invasion) 34-40; on the 'river motif' cf. H. R. Immerwahr, *Form and thought in Herodotus* (Cleveland 1966) 75, 84, 91-2, 130, 132, 166, 183 n. 103, 293, 316; Fisher 352-8, 377, 383.

<sup>60</sup> Fisher 367-74, 384.

power which attracts (non-moral) divine jealousy;<sup>61</sup> whereas the *hybris* which Artabanus identifies in his second speech is not Xerxes' own, and has little to do with his acute concern for his own honour, but rather refers to a political characteristic of the Persian nation, its tendency towards imperialist expansionism, bringing 'dishonour' on the autonomous peoples who are its victims. This explanation fails, first because there is no warrant for distinguishing Persian *hybris* as an abstract national characteristic from the *hybris* of those who formulate and carry out Persian policy, and secondly because the relevant passages have much more to say about the dangers of the growth of pride and prosperity in the Persians themselves than about the effects of their actions on others. Fisher treats as discrete and heterogeneous passages which are more plausibly seen as contributing to one consistent presentation of the metaphysical aspect of Xerxes' invasion, in which the elements of human pride, *hybris*, and divine *phthonos* combine. The divine hand is clearly at work in the dreams which appear to both Xerxes and Artabanus (vii 12-19), the attempts of previous potentates to cross natural boundaries provide thematic and symbolic parallels for Xerxes' enterprise (n. 59 above), and an oracle promises divine retribution for the Persians' *hybris* (viii 77);<sup>62</sup> the judgement of Themistocles (viii 109.3) draws all these threads together—the gods and heroes caused Xerxes' defeat at Salamis, because they grudged (ἐφθόνησαν) one man rule over Asia and Europe, impious and *atasthalos* as he was. Thus divine *phthonos* is explicitly associated with the expansionism, sacrilege, and impiety which even Fisher concedes are hybristic, and referred specifically to Xerxes' desire to rule Europe and Asia in vii 8;<sup>63</sup> Themistocles' verdict is the fulfilment of the warning uttered by Artabanus in vii 10ε, which clearly forms part of a presentation of the whole expedition in terms of human *hybris* as infringement of the prerogatives of the gods.<sup>64</sup>

Fisher's treatment of two passages from Euripides' *Hippolytus* indicates the lengths to which he has to go to preserve his absolute distinction between *hybris* and 'thinking big'. At 443-6 the Nurse argues that 'The Cyprian is not a thing to be borne if she flows in full spate; the one who yields she attends with gentleness, but whomever she finds excessive and thinking big, she takes and treats with incredible *hybris*'. 'Thinking big', then, is resisting the power of the goddess, the sort of thing that provokes her to anger to such a degree that she retaliates by subjecting her victim to degrading and dishonouring treatment. Compare 473-6: 'Please, my dear child, give up your perverse thoughts, stop behaving with *hybris*—for this is nothing but *hybris*, wishing to be superior to the gods—and endure in your passion.' Both passages comment on the same sort of conduct; the one sees resistance to the goddess as 'thinking big', the other as *hybris*, and both designations identify that attitude which magnifies the honour of oneself and diminishes that of others. Fisher, however, sees the matter entirely differently; *mega phronein* is a mere condition or concomitant of *hybris*,<sup>65</sup> while the *hybris* which is actually identified

<sup>61</sup> The interplay between *hybris*, 'thinking big', and *phthonos* is discussed below. In the present context Fisher (374) may be right to say that the description of the divine reaction as *phthonos* soft-pedals the offensiveness of Xerxes' or the Persians' 'big thoughts' (whereas the description *hybris* calls attention to a moral offence), but it remains clear that 'the god' regards such presumption as an affront. Fisher (*ibid.*) states that the suffering of great armies, which, through divine *phthonos*, fall victim to small, is 'undeserved'; but this is not the implication of ἀνοξίως ἐσυντῶν, which contrasts the potential of the greater force for victory with the actual outcome of defeat; defeat was unworthy of them because it was incommensurate with their strength in numbers, abilities (etc.). (See A.W.H. Adkins, *CQ* xvi [1966] 90-4, and M. Heath, *The poetics of Greek tragedy* [London 1987] 82.)

<sup>62</sup> Discussed by Fisher 375-6, and distinguished by him from other evaluations in terms of 'thinking big' and divine *phthonos*. N.b., however, the oracle's conviction that the gods will punish Persian *koros*, a term which emphasizes the extravagant growth of Persian confidence.

<sup>63</sup> Fisher 380 does not make the connexion.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. in general H. Lloyd-Jones, *The justice of Zeus*<sup>2</sup> (Berkeley 1983) 60-9.

<sup>65</sup> Fisher 414.



is explained away as 'a cunning sophistry', a 'persuasive definition'. There is no persuasive definition; the gods participate in a hierarchy of honour in which the *timê* they possess is quantitatively but not qualitatively different from that of mortals; to think big to the extent of considering oneself equal or superior to a god is hopelessly to inflate one's own *timê* and provocatively to ignore the *timê* of the god; thus the conditions of *hybris* are satisfied. The sophistry of the Nurse's argument lies not in any redefinition of *hybris*, but in the equation of resistance to (illicit) sexual passion with a challenge to the honour of the goddess of sexual love; this might well be considered an illegitimate dialectical move, but the move from 'challenging the honour of the gods' to *hybris* is perfectly justified in terms of Greek usage; it is consonant even with Fisher's restricted definition of the term. There is a degree of confusion in Fisher's argument here, but behind that lies a desire to create as much distance as possible between *hybris* and 'thinking big'; it will not work.

The same is true of the discussion of *hybris* and *mega phronein* in connexion with Aphrodite's account of her grievance against Hippolytus, rendered in the prologue. Fisher recognizes that Aphrodite complains in general of an insult to her honour, and that she is now set on revenge precisely because she wishes to establish that mortals may not so lightly seek to deny her her due; he also points out that the goddess' complaint against Hippolytus' verbal insults (13) is justified by Hippolytus' attitude towards her in his dialogue with the Servant (102, 106, 113).<sup>66</sup> Yet according to Fisher, the insult constituted by Hippolytus' attitude is a mild one, one at which Aphrodite 'should not' take offence, and which Fisher himself 'would prefer not' to label *hybristic*. This is not the place for a discussion of the seriousness of Hippolytus' offence; but the point is that he surely does give offence.<sup>67</sup> Whether Fisher would or would not choose to label Hippolytus' behaviour *hybristic* is neither here nor there, for what we are dealing with is the *goddess'* evaluation of the situation. Of course some people (or gods) are more sensitive to perceived affronts than others; some see an insult where no normal person would; thus what one person considers *hybris* might not be so regarded by another; but if an individual sincerely regards another's behaviour as manifesting unwarranted self-assertion at his/her expense, then that individual is linguistically and culturally justified in describing it as *hybris*. Others may disagree with Aphrodite's perception of *hybris* in Hippolytus, but there can be little doubt that it is *hybris* of which she accuses him. The expression she uses, however, is not *hybris*, but *mega phronein* (6); yet it is clear that Hippolytus' 'large thoughts' have a target—σφάλλω δ' ὅσοι φρονοῦσιν εἰς ἡμᾶς μέγα, says Aphrodite, and she explains her statement with reference to the gods' paramount concern to receive *timê* from mortals (7-8). Not only can 'thinking big' in practice constitute an affront, but the phrase itself can be used actually to refer to the commission of an affront. Thus there is no possibility of a neat separation of 'thinking big' from *hybris*.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Fisher 416-17.

<sup>67</sup> Fisher (417) sees the Servant's attempt to avert Aphrodite's anger (114-20) as evidence that Hippolytus' lifestyle, demeanour, and specific remarks do not constitute a major insult; but the Servant only feels driven to make this attempt because of his concern at the danger of what Hippolytus has said, and his wish that Aphrodite show forgiveness is a reminder that gods take such attacks on their honour extremely seriously.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. A. Pers. 800-31 (Fisher 259-61); *hybris* (808, 820) certainly refers to concrete acts, including failure to recognize the honour of the gods (807-12), but it is also associated with 'godless thoughts' (808), 'thinking excessively for a mortal' (820), 'despising one's present fortune' (825), 'excessively boastful thoughts' (827-8), and 'harming the gods with over-boastful boldness' (831); if the disastrous results of *hybris* (821-2) give a reason for avoiding excessive, unmortal thoughts (820; n.b. γάρ, 821), then 'thinking more than mortal thoughts' must be a form of *hybris*; see Dickie (n. 2) 107. Fisher answers Dickie by making the dangerous concession that 'having excessive thoughts' may be 'an element' in *hybris* here, but maintains that not all such self-assertion is *hybristic*. The (fallacious) argument that, because *hybris* and 'thinking big' are not identical in definition, they are never identical in reference is also used (308-9) to distinguish *hybrizein* and *hybris* in S. Ant. 480 and 482 from *mega phronein* in 479.



The previous paragraphs have discussed those passages which contain references to both *hybris* and ‘thinking big’ etc. and which offer some hope of establishing the relationship between the two. They have shown that subjective dispositions of self-assertion, describable as ‘thinking big’, can be considered as genuine cases of *hybris* and that even where *hybris* also encompasses acts which have an impact on the honour of others, *mega phronein* etc. can refer to its dispositional aspect. The overlap of *hybris* and *mega phronein* corroborates what was said above about the importance of the subjective, dispositional side of *hybris*, and it should be obvious that the kind of inflated opinion of one’s own worth conveyed by expressions such as *mega phronein* or *phronêma* is a regular feature of *hybris* even where these expressions do not occur. The passages in which *mega phronein* etc. constitute part of *hybris* only make explicit what is latent in the other passages considered above.<sup>69</sup>

## V

The question of offences against the gods and their *phthonos* has already been touched upon; we now need to decide to what extent *hybris* may be an offence which arouses the anger of the gods, and whether divine *phthonos* can be a reaction to human *hybris*. Fisher’s exhaustive study has performed an enormous service by refuting the misconception that there is something fundamentally ‘religious’ about the concept of *hybris*, whether that misconception be what he assails as the ‘traditional view’ (*hybris* as a form of human presumption which meets with divine *nemesis*, especially in tragedy)<sup>70</sup> or the more interesting, but equally unsubstantiated thesis of Gernet (on the essentially religious quality of *timê*).<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, even under Fisher’s conception of *hybris* it is clear that the victim of insulting or dishonouring behaviour can be a god as well as a mortal; and so he discusses a number of passages in which *hybris*-words are used explicitly to denote attacks on divine *timê*.<sup>72</sup> In the previous section, too, we saw that the ‘thinking big’ which can often be construed as *hybris* could impinge upon divine as well as human honour.<sup>73</sup> A species of ‘thinking big’ is ‘thinking more than mortal thoughts’, and we saw in connexion with Darius’ speech in *Persae* (n. 68) that such thoughts could be part and parcel of *hybris*. Another example might be the description of Capaneus in the *Septem*; Capaneus’ boast οὐ κατ’ ἀνθρώπων φρονεῖ (425), and he is openly contemptuous of Zeus and the gods (427-31); Eteocles sees him as a thinker of ‘vain thoughts’ and comments on his dishonouring of the gods through his boasts (438-43). That this behaviour can be described as *hybris* is clear, and Fisher concedes that, ‘When verbal *kompoi* and *mataia phronemata* take these forms and are expressly directed against the honours and powers of the gods, they clearly constitute *hybris*,’ but ‘that is not to say that all boasting and foolish thoughts can be so

<sup>69</sup> Cf., e.g., the Aristotelian passages in sect. II in which *hybris* is associated with wealth, power, and misplaced confidence in continued good fortune; cf. E. *Supp.* 463-4, 726-30, 741-4 (Fisher 420-1; the first and third of these passages contain absolute uses of *hybrizein*, and again Fisher’s translation, ‘commit *hybris*’, begs the question by assuming specific acts against particular victims). Cf also the *hybris* of Cyrus’ sacred white horse (Hdt. i 89; Fisher 353-4; MacDowell, *G&R* [n. 2] 15), which is not disobedience towards its master (Fisher’s standard explanation of the *hybris* of domestic animals, 119-20), but the creature’s misplaced confidence that it is able to ford a river which in fact is only crossable by ship (νῆυσιπέρητον i 89.1).

<sup>70</sup> See Fisher 2-3, 32, 142-8, and cf. 484-5, 491-2 on the (untypically) religious aspect of *hybris* in Pl. *Laws*. (But see below, VI.)

<sup>71</sup> Fisher 5, 56, 62.

<sup>72</sup> Fisher 144 (Ar. *Nub.* 1506-9), 146 (Lys. *fr.* 73 Thalheim), 147 (Lys. ii 9), 412-14 (E. *Hipp.* 473-6), 415 (Or. 1641-2), 445-6 (Ba. 516-17, 553-5, 1297, 1347). *Hybris* may also concern the gods in the sense that they are felt to punish *hybris* among mortals; but here again *hybris* is no more specifically religious in nature than any other form of human injustice; see Fisher, Index, s.v. ‘gods, concern at *hybris*/injustice, etc.’, and cf. MacDowell *G&R* (n. 2) 22.

<sup>73</sup> Most explicitly in the case of E. *Hipp.* 6-8, 13, and Hdt. vii 10ε.

described'.<sup>74</sup> That this is not an admission that 'thinking more than mortal thoughts' is always *hybris* is made clear by his discussion of Clytemnestra's speech at *Ag.* 958-74; 'such over-confident boasting of one's good-fortune [*sic*] and its permanence should ... be classified rather as a strong form of "saying things too great for mortals" (etc.), that, because they can be offensive to other humans and to the gods, may conceivably be considered as (mildly) hybriatic'.<sup>75</sup> Fisher's position seems to be that 'thinking (and expressing) more than mortal thoughts' and *hybris* are conceptually distinct, but that a strong form of the former may (as a matter of contingency) constitute a mild form of the latter, even in the absence of the desire deliberately to inflict dishonour on a specific victim. This attempt to have one's cake and eat it will not work;<sup>76</sup> 'thinking more than mortal thoughts' is unlike 'thinking big' in that the latter can, apparently, be justified; the former, however, entails the notion of excess and always involves reprehensible self-assertion in the face of legitimate claims to *timê*; thus it always constitutes a standard case of *hybris* in its unattenuated sense.<sup>77</sup>

There is in many passages a strong connexion between 'thinking more than mortal thoughts' and divine *phthonos*. Fisher accepts the existence of a notion of divine *phthonos* which focuses on recognized moral offences on the part of human beings;<sup>78</sup> he is less willing, however, to accept that such moralized *phthonos* may have human *hybris* as its object. Yet Herodotus' account of Xerxes' invasion of Greece, as we have seen, draws clear links between *hybris*, human presumption, dishonouring the gods, and divine *phthonos*. Themistocles' retrospective explanation of the success of Greek resistance (viii 109.3) contains traces of all these notions. Greek victory, he says, was not achieved by merely mortal means, but the gods and heroes resented (begrudged, were envious—ἐφθόνησαν) that one man, an impious and wanton (*atasthalos*) man, a man who committed gross acts of sacrilege, who actually lashed and bound the sea, should rule Asia and Europe. The *phthonos* identified here focuses not only on the presumption first made apparent in Xerxes' initial proposal to add Europe to his rule (vii 8β-γ), the kind of presumption which Artabanus could describe both as a form of 'thinking big' liable to attract divine *phthonos* (7. 10ε) and as *hybris* (vii 16α.2), but also on the specific acts of impiety and *atasthalia* which even Fisher agrees may be regarded as *hybris*.<sup>79</sup> This *phthonos* clearly bears a considerable moral charge, and responds both to hybriatic deeds and to hybriatic attitudes. We should expect that wherever divine *phthonos* bears a similar reference to more than mortal thoughts which directly impugn the *timê* of the gods it should also be regarded as responding to *hybris*.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Fisher 253.

<sup>75</sup> Fisher 290.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. his discussion of *S. Aj.* 756-77 (342-8).

<sup>77</sup> On *hybris* and 'thinking more than mortal thoughts' cf. Dickie (n. 2) 85 against Fisher 445. Dickie does, however, import notions of 'mortal limits' or 'the human condition' rather too freely into the discussion.

<sup>78</sup> See Fisher 360, 362, 374.

<sup>79</sup> See Fisher 377-8, on Herodotus' account of the bridging of the Hellespont, where he recognizes that the use of *atasthalia* (vii 35.2) identifies conduct which might also be described as *hybris*.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *Hdt.* i 34.1; Croesus' presumption, Herodotus conjectures, attracted divine *nemesis*. Fisher (357-60, esp. 358 n. 1) is right to argue that the mere occurrence of the term *nemesis* is no proof that Croesus is to be regarded as guilty of *hybris*, for the supposed correlation between human *hybris* and divine *nemesis* which is such a feature of the 'traditional view' is poorly attested. Instead, Fisher agrees with Gould (n. 59) 79 that *nemesis* bears its Homeric sense of 'indignation'; but when he claims that this *nemesis* is merely 'the "indignation" of an "envious" deity' (358) he ignores the fact that Homeric *nemesis* always focuses on some perceived offence (see Cairns [n. 35] 51-4; cf. J. M. Redfield, *Nature and culture in the Iliad* [Chicago 1975] 117); if Fisher and Gould are right about the sense of *nemesis* (and I am sure they are), then they must locate the focus of that *nemesis* in a failure to accord honour where honour is due; Croesus' prosperity has led him to place himself on a level higher than other men and to presume to know and control what no mortal can know or control. The signs of *hybris* are all there. N.b., then,

This is clearly the case in the ‘carpet-scene’ of the *Agamemnon*.<sup>81</sup> *Timê* is central to the scene; Clytemnestra’s invitation is an attempt to persuade Agamemnon to lay claim to a greater share of honour than a mortal should possess (922, 925), and her decisive argument, after which Agamemnon ceases to resist, appeals explicitly to his desire to be honoured (939). Agamemnon realizes, too, that Clytemnestra is urging him to exalt his own honour to the extent of dishonouring the gods, and is fully aware of the dangers of *phthonos* as a divine response (921, 946-7); unlike Herodotus’ Croesus, he is determined to avoid counting himself happy before he is dead (927-30);<sup>82</sup> and he remains uneasy even as he prepares to tread the crimson path, his *aidôs* in 948-9 a sign that he realizes he is pushing his own claim to *timê* too far and failing to pay honour where honour is due.<sup>83</sup> The *phthonos* of the gods which is so prominent in this context, then, does not focus only on human prosperity or success; rather, Agamemnon is persuaded to act in a way which demonstrates an illegitimate response to success, a response of over-valuation of one’s own *timê* clearly classifiable as the *hybris* which proceeds from prosperity. Fisher’s insistence that Agamemnon’s actions and motives, while representing ‘more than mortal thoughts’, constitute at most only a ‘mild’ form of *hybris*,<sup>84</sup> becomes explicable when we realize that for him it is only the gravity of the act itself which really matters. But the importance of the scene lies in what it tells us about Agamemnon’s motivation and his sense of his own honour *vis-à-vis* that of others; the *phthonos* envisaged focuses on Agamemnon’s excessive self-assertion, and this is hybriatic precisely because its ‘victims’ are those who enjoy the greatest *timê* of all. The scene suggests not only that ‘thinking more than mortal thoughts’ is necessarily a form of *hybris* but also that *phthonos* and *hybris* can be correlatives.

It remains to be seen, however, whether they are necessary correlatives, or only contingently so, where *phthonos* has become a just response to human offences rather than mere jealousy. We need, therefore, to explore the concept of *phthonos* in greater detail. As a human emotion, *phthonos* bears no essential reference to *hybris*. Human *phthonos* focuses on another’s possession of goods which one would like for oneself; it presupposes no moral offence, but is a malicious reaction to others’ success or good fortune which is frequently said to demonstrate the viciousness not of its target, but of its patient.<sup>85</sup> Yet this *phthonos* does operate within the same milieu as *hybris*, in that it enjoys a fundamental relationship with the notion of honour. *Phthonos* can be directed at the possession of any good,<sup>86</sup> but in practice the relationship between *phthonos* and competition for honour is intimate, first because it is typical of the *phthoneros* to resent not only the other’s success, but also the enhanced reputation and status which success brings; *phthonos*, as a feeling that others’ success somehow diminishes one’s own standing, thus belongs with the competitive impulse of *philotimia*.<sup>87</sup> Secondly, as a reaction to the possession of some admired good or quality, *phthonos* is the negative obverse of that

that the statement at i 34.1 is referred in context to Solon’s warning that the divine is φθονερόν and παραχῶδες (i 32.1). Fisher is right to assimilate *nemesis* and *phthonos* in this case (contrast Gould [n. 59] 80), but wrong to deny their focus on an offence on Croesus’ part.

<sup>81</sup> For a recent discussion of the scene, with bibl., see G. Crane, *CP* lxxxviii (1993) 117-36.

<sup>82</sup> See Crane (n. 81) 130-1.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Cairns (n. 35) 194-8, 210-11 n. 129.

<sup>84</sup> Fisher 287-9, with repeated doubts as to whether ‘the walking on tapestries should be called hybriatic at all’ (289).

<sup>85</sup> See (e.g.) Arist. *Rhet.* 1388a35-8; cf. Pl. *Laws* 731a-b; Isoc. ix 6, xv 259; Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 681e; P. Walcot, *Envy and the Greeks* (Warminster 1978) 72-5; cf. P. Bulman, *Phthonos in Pindar* (Berkeley 1992) *passim*.

<sup>86</sup> See Arist. *Rhet.* 1386b18-20, 1387b21-1388a28.

<sup>87</sup> See Arist. *Rhet.* 1387b31-1388a23 on *phthonos* and *philotimia*, esp. the remarks on the grounds of *phthonos* (1387b34-1388a5) and on its typical targets (1388a5-23). Cf. Walcot (n. 85) 16-20, 34, 62, 97-8; H. Lloyd-Jones, *Greek comedy, Hellenistic literature, Greek religion, and miscellanea* (Oxford 1990) 255-7.

positive acclaim which is conveyed by terms such as *timê*, *kleos*, etc. Hence the commonplace that others' *phthonos*, though possibly harmful and certainly to be deprecated, is at least a sign of one's own achievement, that *phthonos* is better than pity.<sup>88</sup>

There is no question of a total separation of meaning between human and divine *phthonos*, and the conception of divine *phthonos*, I take it, will have grown out of the deeply rooted belief that the gods are givers of both good and evil on an apparently indiscriminate basis, and that they are particularly stinting (*phthoneroi*) in their granting of good fortune or in allowing it to continue.<sup>89</sup> The idea that the gods somehow resent mortals' success has its roots in Homer,<sup>90</sup> but is expressed in terms of *phthonos* (etc.) only in later authors such as Pindar, Aeschylus, and Herodotus. It is generally accepted that in these authors moral factors enter into the notion of divine *phthonos* to a greater or lesser degree, but there is real disagreement as to where the line should be drawn between ('unmoralized') conceptions which focus on success alone and those ('moralized') which focus on human transgression.<sup>91</sup> Fisher is firmly on the side of those who see real persistence of the unmoralized view (especially in Herodotus), and he draws an absolute distinction between the gods' punishment of *hybris* and their non-moral resentment of human prosperity; there may be a degree of overlap between the fields in which *hybris* and *phthonos* are operative (because divine *phthonos* may focus on human offences), but where the 'unmoralized' form of *phthonos* is in play, no overlap can exist; the gods' resentment of human prosperity in itself cannot be regarded as outrage at human *hybris*.<sup>92</sup>

This is debatable, for there are certain differences between human and divine *phthonos* which make it difficult to consider a conception of the latter which totally excludes the possibility of a relationship between divine *phthonos* and human *hybris*. In achieving the kind of success which annoys a god, a human being has transgressed a boundary in a way that the target of human *phthonos* has not; for, though it may be virtually impossible to know for certain where the limit lies, there certainly exists an unbridgeable gap in status between men and gods. Since this is true, and since it is well known that the gods resent all incursions into their sphere, it behoves any prosperous mortal to avoid antagonizing the gods by the appearance of rivalry; accordingly, if such a person's success does antagonize the gods, he has failed to be cautious, to exhibit the proper attitude of mind. Thus in divine resentment of human prosperity there will always be an element which focuses on the attitude of the human victim, either on his failure

<sup>88</sup> See Clytemnestra at A. Ag. 939; better to be envied than pitied, see Pi. *Pyth.* 1. 85, Hdt. iii 52, Thales 17 DK, Epicharmus 285 Kaibel/B34 DK. The Pindar passage is perversely interpreted by Bulman (n. 85) 5, 21. For the standard interpretation, see A.W.H. Adkins, *Moral values and political behaviour in ancient Greece* (London 1972) 77; see further G.M. Kirkwood in Gerber (n. 2) 169-83.

<sup>89</sup> See W.C. Greene, *Moirai* (Cambridge Mass. 1944) 20, 28, 36-7, 39-42, 47-8, etc. The verb *phthonein* does not occur in the context of divine responses to human affairs in Homer, but its sense of 'begrudging', 'refusing to grant' (see Walcot [n. 85] 26; Bulman [n. 85] 15-17) is shared by *agasthai*, which is used of the gods' grudging attitude towards mortal happiness (*Il.* xvii 70-1, *Od.* iv 181-2, v 118-20, viii 565-6, xiii 173-4, xxiii 209-12; cf. Greene 19-20; Lloyd-Jones [n. 64] 57; Walcot [n. 85] 26).

<sup>90</sup> See *Il.* v 440-2, vii 446-53, *Od.* iv 78-81, xii 287-9, with Greene (n. 89) 20; Lloyd-Jones (n. 64) 4, 56; Walcot (n. 85) 26.

<sup>91</sup> Broadly, commentators divide into those who find that all or most instances of divine *phthonos* found in Pindar, Aeschylus, and Herodotus are, in some sense, 'moral', and those who believe that even in (one or other, or some passages of) these authors traces of the unmoralized version remain. For the first view see E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon* ii (Oxford 1950) 349-50; Lloyd-Jones (n. 64) 56-70, (n. 87) 255-6; Bulman (n. 85) 1, 31-4, 88 n. 66; for the second, see Greene (n. 89) 6-7, 48, 74-5, 84-8, 103, 106, 113 n. 54; Adkins (n. 88) 78-82; Walcot (n. 85) 22-51; R.P. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1983) 1-13.

<sup>92</sup> See esp. Fisher 363: 'the chorus of the *Agamemnon* (750 ff.) analysed in Chapter Seven [pp. 275-7] is ... strong evidence that explanations in terms of divine jealousy at human prosperity and those in terms of divine anger at human crime are felt to be incompatible contraries'. Cf. Garvie (n. 2) 243-4, 249, 252. For Fisher's distinction between 'moralized', 'unmoralized', and 'ambiguous' forms of divine *phthonos*, cf. 360, 362.



to manifest the correct attitude (to recognize the gulf between human and divine prosperity, as well as the role of the gods in human achievement), or on his active adoption of the wrong attitude (deliberate rejection of mortal limits, through an inflated conception of himself as master of his destiny and guarantor of his prosperity). The target of human *phthonos*, by contrast, is not necessarily deluded as to his real status and worth. Thus divine *phthonos*, even when focusing on the prosperity of its target, must always be a form of resentment in which the divine agent feels justified, in that the target has failed (by commission or omission) to recognize the boundary which separates his *timê* from that of the gods.<sup>93</sup>

This can be demonstrated by passages in which the concept of divine *phthonos* is felt to be at its most 'unmoralized'. In Aeschylus' *Persae*, the divine *phthonos* which Xerxes, according to the Messenger, did not understand (362) is not explicitly referred either to great prosperity alone or to some more specific offence; it certainly belongs with the Messenger's ascription of the defeat at Salamis to the influence of an *alastôr* or *kakos daimôn* (354), as with similar Persian pronouncements on the unpredictability of (unnamed) *daimones*, but there is also stress in the context on Xerxes' confidence (352, 372-3), which the Queen later explains in terms of the human tendency blindly to believe that present good fortune will continue forever (601-2). The unpredictability of fortune or of the gods who grant and withhold good fortune has been a theme since the beginning of the play (see 93-100, 157-8, 161-4); it was with the help of 'some god' that Darius amassed his great prosperity, and the correct attitude in anyone who would retain such prosperity is caution. The Messenger's reference to *phthonos* belongs with these hints of a mistaken attitude to prosperity and to the decisive role played by the gods in all human affairs which are later broadened into an account of the Persians' deluded pride, impiety, and *hybris* by the authoritative pronouncements of Darius' ghost.<sup>94</sup>

Similarly, in Herodotus' presentation of the warnings delivered by Solon to Croesus and Amasis to Polycrates (i 32.1, iii 40.2)<sup>95</sup> the emphasis is more on the need to manifest the proper attitude in success than on the notion that success in itself provokes the gods to envy; Croesus, Solon implies, should be more circumspect and less confident of his own happiness, given that prosperity is in the lap of the gods, with their tendency to disrupt human affairs. This point is just as clear in the case of Amasis' advice to Polycrates, which urges him, in view of the divine propensity to *phthonos*, to acknowledge the role of the gods in all human prosperity and to manifest a proper sense of perspective with regard to his wealth by jettisoning something he values highly. That the gods are not simply concerned with material wealth emerges in sinister fashion from the fact that even this propitiatory offering proves unsuccessful—the offence cannot be undone by material propitiation (and Polycrates' display of caution and humility comes too late to save him).<sup>96</sup> In all these cases there exists at least a minimal idea of offence, and the conditions for describing the behaviour and motivations of the humans involved as *hybris* are, at least from the divine point of view, satisfied.

Neither in *Persae* nor in Herodotus, moreover, do apparently non-moral conceptions of divine *phthonos* constitute the last word on the subject. In *Persae*, the Persians' complaints

<sup>93</sup> Cf. (broadly) Lloyd-Jones (n. 64) 4, 56-8, 67-70, (n. 87) 255-6; N. Yamagata, *Homeric morality* (Leiden 1994) 97-8 makes a similar point.

<sup>94</sup> Winnington-Ingram (n. 91) and Fisher 261-2 agree that the interpretation offered by the Ghost is authoritative, but contrast this moral explanation of Persian failure with the supposedly non-moral interpretation of the other characters; M. Gagarin (*Aeschylean drama* [Berkeley 1976] 49-50) denies that the Ghost's interpretation has any special authority. Others (Fraenkel [n. 91] ii 349; Lloyd-Jones [n. 64] 69) regard the Messenger's reference to *phthonos* as itself a moral explanation.

<sup>95</sup> See Fisher 357-60, 362-3 (resp.).

<sup>96</sup> In the case of the *phthonos* against which Artabanus warns Xerxes the element of moral offence is, as we have seen, even clearer (confirmed at viii 109.3).



against the evil deities who have struck them down at the height of their fortunes are partisan,<sup>97</sup> and belong with a perspective which seeks to minimize the notion of Persian offence; the true perspective is offered by the ghost of Darius, but it is one which the Athenian audience will already have formed for themselves as they set the remarks of the Persian characters in the context of all that is said about Persian prosperity and presumption. Likewise in Herodotus, most of the references to divine *phthonos* come in speeches,<sup>98</sup> and in the cases of Solon, Amasis, and Artabanus their purpose is precisely to warn without giving offence; all three try to promote the correct attitude to one's own prosperity and the prerogatives of the gods, and so remind their interlocutors of the dangers of offending jealous and resentful deities, as a way of stressing the dangers without actually accusing them of *hybris*. The suggestion of *hybris*, however, is there; Solon, Amasis, and Artabanus are not denying that divine *phthonos* is a response to a perceived human offence; they are rather suggesting that the gods have a tendency to perceive offence where none is intended. The implication that divine resentment is sometimes excessive and unjustified allows the warning to be conveyed without explicit accusation of *hybris*. But the gods themselves believe their *phthonos* to be justified, and the author or the reader can always endorse this interpretation.<sup>99</sup> Thus Solon, diplomatically, speaks of the instability of good fortune and reminds his host of the grudging meddlesomeness of the divine; but the reader will have noted the dangerous moral blindness involved in Croesus' conviction that his prosperity is paramount and permanent, and the notion that forthcoming *phthonos* would be directed not merely at his great wealth but at his mistaken attitude to that wealth is confirmed by the sequel, where Croesus is declared liable to divine *nemesis* because he thought himself (*not*, as Lloyd-Jones points out,<sup>100</sup> because he was) the most fortunate of men.<sup>101</sup>

An evaluation in terms of *phthonos*, then, can never entirely rule out an interpretation of the same state of affairs in terms of human *hybris*. In all behaviour which attracts divine *phthonos* will be found the same elements of the transgression of limits, of the offender's excessive pursuit of honour and status, and of the corresponding insult to the *timê* of the gods.

## VI

The final area in which I wish to test Fisher's view of *hybris* concerns the role of exuberance, energy, and high spirits. This will lead us into an examination of certain instances of *hybris* in Plato which Fisher regards as anomalous, but which I believe can be accommodated in an account which lays proper emphasis on the dispositional aspect. We come now to the central point of disagreement between Fisher and MacDowell. For MacDowell,<sup>102</sup> the notion of excess energy or exuberance stands very close to the heart of the concept, whereas for Fisher

<sup>97</sup> See 345-7, 353-4, 472-3, 513-16, 724-5, 909-11, 920-1, 942-3, 1005-7; cf. Winnington-Ingram (n. 91) 13-14, Fisher 261.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Immerwahr (n. 59) 313, who argues that the one occurrence of the notion in narrative (iv 205) proves that 'the great advisers do indeed propound a Herodotean idea'. The *phthonos* of iv 205 is moral in scope, and Immerwahr's statement will, I think, be true only if we construe divine *phthonos* in moral terms.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Lloyd-Jones (n. 87) 255-6.

<sup>100</sup> See Lloyd-Jones (n. 64) 63; cf. 68.

<sup>101</sup> That divine *phthonos* is by definition justified seems to be the view favoured by Aeschylus in *Pers.* and *Ag.*, and to be implied in Herodotus. Similarly Pindar's references to divine *phthonos* (*Ol.* 13.24-8, *Pyth.* 8.71-2, 10.20-1, *Isth.* 7.39-42) belong with warnings such as 'Seek not to become Zeus' (*Isth.* 5.14, cf. *Ol.* 5.24) and his stress on the objective limits dividing man and god (*Nem.* 6.1-4). See Lloyd-Jones (n. 64) 69; Bulman (n. 85) 31. Kirkwood (n. 88) imagines that the use of divine *phthonos* as a 'rhetorical formula of praise' (174-6) entails the absence of 'the Herodotean religious meaning' (182; cf. 176, 179). The two are not incompatible; even if the former is primary, it implies the latter.

<sup>102</sup> And for Hooker (n. 2).

the essence of *hybris*, even when associated with such ideas, is always to be found in a more immediate and specific reference to dishonour. Crucial to MacDowell's case are those passages in which *hybris* is attributed to animals and plants, which he maintains cannot simply be dismissed as metaphorical, but must contribute to an overall definition.<sup>103</sup>

On the basic question of the status of the *hybris* of animals and plants I agree with Fisher that such manifestations must be regarded as metaphorical and therefore as parasitic on standard applications of the term. None the less, there must be a ground for the metaphorical extension, and we are entitled to look for the point of comparison in something that vehicle and tenor may be thought to have in common, the identification of which may prove enormously helpful in establishing the flavour or character of a concept.<sup>104</sup> For Fisher, the point of comparison in the case of domestic animals and plants lies in a sense that they are 'disobedient', dishonouring human beings by 'refusing' to behave as required;<sup>105</sup> in wild animals and natural forces such as the winds and the sea, on the other hand, the point of comparison is the violence and aggression which the elements share with hybristic humans.<sup>106</sup> According to Xenophon, *Cyr.* vii 5.62-3, for example, horses which are *hybristai* cease to bite and to *hybrizein* once castrated; similarly, bulls cease to *mega phronein* and *apeithein*, and dogs to desert their masters. The notion of disobedience, which can certainly be construed as offering dishonour to a superior, is clearly there, and Fisher (119) sees this as the main reference of the *hybris*-words in this passage. Equally, however, both *mega phronein* and *apeithein* may convey some of the force of *hybris* here, and indeed the aspect of arrogant pride and wilfulness will be difficult to separate from that of disobedience, given that, in a domestic animal, the latter can always be construed in terms of the former and the former always furnish the explanation for the latter. This passage is compatible with Fisher's definition, although it also offers scope for an interpretation which lays more stress on the dispositional aspect.

Elsewhere, however, and indeed in general, the metaphor is better explained with reference to dispositional factors. Common to a number of metaphorical applications, for example, is a reference to food.<sup>107</sup> The analogy between the over-feeding which produces *hybris* in animals and plants and the wealth or good fortune which commonly leads to *hybris* in standard, human cases is well explained by Michelini, who also notes how the opposition between the *hybris* of plants and that of humans is mediated by the frequent association of the latter with both *koros*<sup>108</sup> and vegetation imagery.<sup>109</sup> This notion of nurture and growth in itself suggests those ideas of 'being full of oneself', 'becoming too great' which I have argued to be important, and surely implies a process in the hybristic organism itself, a process resulting in a condition of

<sup>103</sup> See MacDowell (n. 2) *G&R* 15-16, *Meidias* 21.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. R. Osborne in Cartledge *et al.* (n. 8) 85.

<sup>105</sup> See Fisher 19, 119-20.

<sup>106</sup> Fisher 121.

<sup>107</sup> See Arist. *GA* 725b35 (Fisher 19); Ar. *Vesp.* 1306, 1310 (Fisher 120); Theophr. *HP* 2.7.6, *CP* 2.16.8, 3.1.5, 3.6.8, 3.15.4 (Michelini [n. 2] 36-8). Previous pampering rather than excessive nutrition *per se* is what leads to *hybris* in both horses and subjects at Xen. *Hiero* 10.2 (Fisher 119), but the common idea of sufficiency/surfeit still underlies the comparison.

<sup>108</sup> See Michelini (n. 2) 36 on Solon *fr.* 4. 8-10 (West) and Pi. *Ol.* 1. 55-6, where the connexion between *koros* and food is explicit; cf. Fisher 70-3, 240-2, on these passages, and 21, 75, 154-5, 212-13, 219, 221-3, 230-2, 233-5, 272-3, 336, 347-8, 375-6 on others. Cf. also MacDowell *G&R* (n. 2) 15-16 and n.b. the association between nutrition, youth, and *hybris* at Pl. *Laws* 835e (Fisher 486). For a recent (brisk) survey of *koros* in archaic poetry, see J.J. Helm, *CW* lxxxvii (1993) 5-11.

<sup>109</sup> See Solon *fr.* 4. 34-5 (West) (Michelini [n. 2] 40, Fisher 73), Bacch. 15. 57-63 (Michelini 39, Fisher 227-9); A. *Pers.* 821-2 (Michelini 40, Fisher 258-61), 104-11 (Michelini 39, Fisher 265); S. *OT* 873-9 (Fisher 329-38), *fr.* 786 Radt (Fisher 97); cf. the rapprochement between human and animal *hybris* at Pl. *Phd.* 81e (Fisher 456 n. 13) and *Laws* 808d (Fisher 480); also the physical and psychological forms of *hybris* at *Laws* 691c (see below).

satiety in which the potency or energy of the subject exceeds the norm; in a human being this will be the disposition of excessive self-assertion which arises from having had too much of a good thing and entails the feeling that one's own claims are superior to those of others.<sup>110</sup>

This notion of excessive energy or power is present even in the passage from the *Cyropaedia* (above). The point of the reference to the *hybris* of horses (the *megalophrosynê* of bulls, etc.) is that it can be cured by castration (as it can in humans—the ultimate point is an analogy between castrated male animals and eunuch bodyguards). We do not have to look far to discover why it is that castration should be felt to cure *hybris*—there is clearly a link between the powerful forces of masculinity and a headstrong spirit which values self over others and rejects external restraint.<sup>111</sup> Even if the verb *hybrizein* refers to the commission of concrete acts in this passage, the association with an excess of natural energy and power constitutes an important part of the context which helps give *hybris* its meaning.<sup>112</sup> This association is, as MacDowell points out,<sup>113</sup> apparent in the attribution of *hybris* to donkeys: Fisher explains the 'erect *hybris*' of the donkeys about to be sacrificed by the Hyperboreans (P. *Pyth.* 10.34-6) with reference to 'the rampantly ithyphallic prancing that donkeys are often held to display in ritual and folk-tale contexts, and are often shown displaying in Greek art'.<sup>114</sup> But where does this leave his definition of *hybris*? No doubt the donkeys' prancing coincides with their notorious recalcitrance, and no doubt this could be construed as a form of disobedience or dishonour; but there is no mention of such things in the context, and the application of the adjective *orthios* to the creatures' *hybris* locates the latter quite firmly in their phallic display, a self-absorbed and self-indulgent manifestation of their frivolous masculine energy.<sup>115</sup>

In passages like these *hybris* is envisaged as a force which grows and wells up within the organism, a force which has its origins in the energy-giving properties of food or in the inherent fertility or fecundity of the subject itself, and which eventually grows so powerful that it can be contained no longer and 'breaks out'.<sup>116</sup> This idea of *hybris* as a form of unchecked energy is present not only in its associations with plants and animals, not only in the use of plant and food imagery in the context of human *hybris*, but also in many of the standard contexts in which the concept is at home—in the common link between *hybris* and wealth;<sup>117</sup> in those passages in which *hybris* is associated with *tryphê*;<sup>118</sup> in the association of *hybris* with the

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Micheleni (n. 2) 38-9: 'The ὑβριζων organism—whether human, animal, or vegetable—puts self-aggrandizement before the performance of the social role assigned to it'.

<sup>111</sup> For the *hybris* of the bull, that most masculine of animals, cf. E. *Ba.* 743-4; Fisher (121; cf. 450) sees the reference of *hybristai* here in 'frightening hostility to men', but I should prefer to see it in the creature's general 'machismo', its brutish demeanour, and its exuberant sexual energy.

<sup>112</sup> This is another passage where Fisher's translation, 'committing *hybris*', assumes no distinction in sense between transitive and absolute uses. See above, nn. 48, 69.

<sup>113</sup> *G&R* (n.2) 15-16.

<sup>114</sup> Fisher 232-3 (quotation, 233). On the opposition between *hybris* and festive *hêsychia* in this and other passages, see Fisher 216-42 *passim* and Dickie (n. 2); cf. W.J. Slater, *ICS* vi (1981) 205-14.

<sup>115</sup> For asinine *hybris*, cf. Hdt. iv 129 and Ar. *Vesp.* 1306, 1310; I doubt whether the point of comparison in these passages lies in 'acts of disobedience' or 'insolence to one's betters' (Fisher 120) rather than in the general skittish exuberance of a particularly self-willed creature.

<sup>116</sup> Such, I think, is the normal connotation of the compound *exhybrizein*; see below, n. 140. On the imagery of plant-like growth and efflorescence in the content of human psychology, see R. Padel, *In and out of the mind* (Princeton 1992) 134-7.

<sup>117</sup> See Fisher 19-21, 102-4, 113-17, and Index, s.vv. 'olbos', 'wealth'.

<sup>118</sup> See above Sect. III, Fisher 113-17.

young;<sup>119</sup> and in the connexion between *hybris* and alcohol in sympotic contexts,<sup>120</sup> where the significance of the concept is not exhausted by reference to the concrete acts of dishonour undoubtedly perpetrated by drunken *hybristai*, but also resides at least partly in the fact that alcohol unleashes energies which are normally repressed.<sup>121</sup> The notion of exuberance and excess energy is thus to be linked to the element of self-assertion, over-confidence, and presumption in *hybris*, in both metaphorical and non-metaphorical passages;<sup>122</sup> it gives us a great deal of the flavour of *hybris*—not, indeed, the essence of the concept, but an important aspect of its phenomenology, and, I should say, of its ‘meaning’.

If this is correct, there are important consequences for the treatment of *hybris* in Plato. Fisher contends that Plato revalues *hybris*, greatly extends its range, and adapts it to his own, highly individual philosophy. ‘Platonic’ forms of *hybris* emerge in works of Plato’s middle period, especially in the *Phaedrus*, and are atypical in that they represent *hybris* as any form of excessive desire (though the paradigm of such *hybris* is sexual desire) and oppose *hybris* to *sôphrosynê* in what Fisher claims is a much more general sense than is normally the case.<sup>123</sup> While I would not deny that Plato does very occasionally extend the application of *hybris*, I do not agree that he ever redefines the concept, and I believe that, if we give the dispositional aspect of *hybris* and its frequent representation in the language of exuberance and energy their due importance,<sup>124</sup> then we can dispense with the distinction between ‘Platonic’ and ‘traditional’ uses.

Fisher’s identification of a Platonic revaluation of *hybris* starts from a discussion of the relevant terms in the *Phaedrus*. In the first passage discussed in this connexion (237d-238c), it is indeed clear that some extension of the regular meaning has occurred, for *hybris* is explicitly applied to the rule in the soul of any form of irrational desire, opposed to *sôphrosynê qua* rule of reason over desire, and specifically said to include excessive desires for food, drink, and sex. The surprise in this passage is the extension of *hybris* to cover gluttony and dipsomania; but the surprise is softened, first (as Fisher himself points out, 468) by the regular association of *hybris* with food and drink—food and drink can be seen as leading to *hybris*, and one can eat and drink in a hybriatic manner.<sup>125</sup> But this association with food and drink does not normally extend to the identification of the specific desires for such things with *hybris*, and to that extent the use of *hybris* here is anomalous. The anomaly, however, is slight, and it is further reduced by the antithesis with *sôphrosynê* (which is regular and traditional). Furthermore, as Fisher again makes clear (*ibid.*), the personificatory language of (here) bipartition facilitates an understanding of

<sup>119</sup> See esp. Arist., *Rhet.* 1389b8-9, 11-12, to be seen in the context of the spirited impulsiveness of youth (1389a2-b12 *passim*); cf. Pl. *Laws* 835e, where the *hybris* of youth is explicitly associated with being well fed; cf. n. 108 above, and Fisher 20, 97-9, and Index, s.v. ‘youth’.

<sup>120</sup> See Fisher 16-17, 57-8, 98-102, 145, 203-7, 488; also Index, s.vv. ‘symposia’, ‘drink’.

<sup>121</sup> N.b. esp. Panyassis *fr.* 13 Davies (Fisher 206). The links between drink, the control of passions, and the terminology of honour and shame are explored below *re* Plato’s *Laws*.

<sup>122</sup> We should perhaps remember that the notion of ‘flourishing’ is typically opposed to *hybris* not only in the case of plants but also in connexion with both youth and the symposium (see [e.g.] B. MacLachlan, *The age of grace* [Princeton 1993] 39, 57-64, 91-3).

<sup>123</sup> See Fisher 467-79, 485-92, 499-500. ‘Platonic’ instances constitute a problem for Fisher’s definition in that they often refer to forms of self-assertion in which no other person is harmed (453). Fisher (468-9) recognizes that these uses have developed from standard cases, for *hybris* is associated with the desires for food and drink, and is often found as a description of pederastic sexual activity (n. 34 above); *hybris qua* disobedience is also relevant, in so far as ‘Platonic’ *hybris* presupposes the tripartite or bipartite soul, in which the lower elements rebel against the higher. Nevertheless, he still sees the Platonic development as ‘radical’, and ‘startling’ (492).

<sup>124</sup> Fisher (e.g. 489, 491) recognizes the presence of many of the complex, traditional, and metaphorical associations in Plato’s uses of *hybris*, but does not see these as mitigating the novelty of Plato’s view of the concept.

<sup>125</sup> See (e.g.) *Od.* i 227 (Fisher 163, MacDowell *G&R* [n. 2] 16).



*hybris* as the refusal to fulfil one's allotted role, which can readily be construed as the dishonouring of superior by inferior. In so far as *hybris* is attributed to the quasi-personified desiderative part, then, its sense is quite regular and traditional; the departure from tradition comes only when this *hybris* of one part of the soul against another is said to account for *hybris* of the whole person. But this extension, as we have seen, is mitigated; and it is further mitigated by the fact that the main point of the passage is the condemnation of pederastic sexual desire, for in pederastic contexts *hybris* has come to be used as a descriptive term for practices which as a matter of fact involve the dishonour of a submissive by a dominant party.<sup>126</sup> Also relevant, however, is the fact that *hybris* is not just the name for a type of act or intention to act, but can refer more generally to self-indulgent and egotistical self-assertion; such self-assertion, in the Greek context, is always a matter of honour, in that it inevitably involves an image of oneself and one's status which implies as a correlative a certain attitude towards the claims of others. In applying *hybris* to all forms of excessive desire (desires which involve excessive self-assertion both on the part of the whole person and on that of the desiderative part of the soul), Plato is exploiting the most fundamental of all significances of *hybris*, the idea that *hybris* involves a disposition in the agent which overvalues self and undervalues others. The *hybris* identified in this passage, then, is less startling under an interpretation which gives the dispositional aspect of *hybris* its due than it is under one which stresses the actual over the dispositional.

This is as far as Plato goes in extending the sense of *hybris*. The other passages in the *Phaedrus* are fully explicable in traditional terms; at 250e the opposition of psychic parts is not in question, and the *hybris* of the man who, on seeing the earthly manifestation of the Beautiful, conceives the desire to 'go the way of a four-footed animal and sow children' is opposed both to reverence (*sebas*) for the beautiful object and to *aischynê* at pursuing unnatural pleasure; it is thus fully at home in its normal context of honour and shame, of the disgrace of pederastic desires,<sup>127</sup> and of the pursuit of self-assertion in the face of the honour of others. The next relevant passage comes in the description of the horses which draw the chariot of the soul, and so the opposition of psychic parts is relevant, but once again the personification of the parts makes the *hybris* of the bad horse analogous to that of a whole person; the good horse is a 'lover of *timê* with *sôphrosynê* and *aidôs*', the bad 'a companion of *hybris* and *alazoneia*' (253d-e). Both sides of this antithesis deal with attitudes to honour; the good horse values honour, but observes limit in its pursuit, its *aidôs* recognizing the point at which excessive pursuit of *timê* violates the honour of others and so becomes dishonourable for oneself, while the bad exaggerates its own importance (*alazoneia*) and pursues its selfish goals in excessive ways which dishonour others (*hybris*).<sup>128</sup> *Hybris* here, to be sure, is used in the service of a highly individual Platonic doctrine, but its actual significance in the description of the personified psychic force is wholly traditional.

Of course, the implication is there that the *hybris* of the 'bad horse', which represents the purely selfish, irrational, appetitive aspect of the human personality, will, if it prevails, translate into *hybris* of the lover against his *paidika*, and so there is a close link between these passages and the earlier at 237d-238c; but the application of *hybris* to all desires, while perhaps not totally abandoned, is at least not mentioned in these later passages, and so the *hybris* of the individual in whose soul the *hybris* of the appetites prevailed would be readily explicable as the

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Fisher 109-10 (and above, n. 34).

<sup>127</sup> See G. Vlastos, *Platonic studies* (Princeton 1973) 25 n. 76, and contrast A.W. Price, *Love and friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford 1989) 228-9 n. 8. K.J. Dover, *Greek homosexuality* (London 1978) 163 n. 15, and Fisher 474 see a reference to both homosexual and heterosexual intercourse.

<sup>128</sup> For the opposition between the two horses in terms of *hybris* against *aidôs/aischynê*, cf. 254c, 254e.



standard *hybris* of the pederast, abandoning proper self-control in favour of selfish desires which take no account of the honour of the other party. The real importance of the attribution of *hybris* to the bad horse lies in the recognition that this kind of self-assertion or self-indulgence springs from forces within the personality which subvert the individual's concern for the honourable; the personificatory allegory is Plato's way of locating *hybris* in a defective disposition of character, in which basic human drives have been allowed to run riot.<sup>129</sup> His account thus combines stress on the dispositional aspect of *hybris* with the portrayal of this aspect in traditional terms as the product of the growth of powerful forces within the individual.<sup>130</sup>

The arbitrariness of Fisher's distinction between 'Platonic' and 'traditional' uses of *hybris* is demonstrated by his treatment of the discussion of the proper task of the statesman which concludes the *Politicus* (305e-311e). Fisher (479-80) is happy to classify the two instances of *hybris*-words in this section of the dialogue as 'traditional', denoting 'anti-social and unjust aggression', but this does scant justice to the argument. The discussion of the Statesman's task begins with the opposition of *sôphrosynê* and *andreia* as traits of character; these two are then analysed into simpler terms, as quietness and quickness, which can be either praiseworthy or excessive; excessive quickness is called 'hybristic' and 'manic', excessive slowness or softness cowardly and indolent (307b-c). This temperamental opposition is then traced in the state, where the political consequences of the ascendancy either of the *kosmioi* or of those who tend towards *andreia* are equally disastrous, and so the role of the true Statesman must be to weave these elements into a harmonious whole, both in the individual and in the state; those who are incapable of sharing in a manly and *sôphrôn* character, but instead are driven to atheism, *hybris*, and injustice by their evil nature, he must eliminate (308e-309a).

In both applications of *hybris*-words here we are dealing with states of character in which an excess of vigour, 'quickness', or manliness leads to a breakdown in the personality; this aspect of the context is much more prominent than any implicit reference to aggression against others (though aggression is the consequence of the relevant character defect which makes it so problematic). The references to *hybris* must be understood in terms of the general opposition between self-control and self-assertion as dispositions of character; this is confirmed in the ensuing discussion of the twin methods of interweaving of *andreia* and *sôphrosynê*, through education and eugenics, which emphasizes the importance of avoiding intermarriage within the two character-types—continued intermarriage between brave and brave with no admixture of *sôphrosynê* will issue in madness, while that between souls 'too full of *aidôs* and unmixed with manly daring' will eventually produce complete passivity (310d-e). Two points in this last

<sup>129</sup> In manifesting *hybris* and *alazoneia*, the bad horse, which represents the *epithymêtikon*, is being credited with thymoeidic responses; but this phenomenon, in which each 'psychic part' possesses the capacities which typify the others, is a regular feature of Plato's tripartition, not a sign that the categories of the *Rep.* are breaking down. See J. Annas, *An introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford 1981) 142-6; G.R.F. Ferrari, *Listening to the cicadas* (Cambridge 1987) 185-203.

<sup>130</sup> Cases of 'Platonic' *hybris* in other works prove equally or more traditional. At *Phd.* 81e-82a (Fisher 476), *hybreis* are associated with vices (love of drinking, gluttony) which involve lack of self-control and contrasted with those (injustice, tyranny, rapacity) which entail action in infringement of others' rights. At *Rep.* 402e-403b (Fisher 477) pederastic sex is said to involve excessive, maddening pleasures which signify *hybris* and *akolasia* and are incompatible with *sôphrosynê*; the view that *sôphrosynê* and excessive pleasure are incompatible because the latter 'makes one go out of one's wits' shows that *sôphrosynê* is being used in its everyday, quasi-intellectual sense. *Hybris* and *akolasia*, regular antonyms of *sôphrosynê*, connote the pursuit of self-assertion beyond the limits which *sôphrosynê* observes; *akolasia* is always liable to be reformulated in terms of *hybris*, because self-indulgence implies a view of one's *timê* which takes little account of the *timê* of others. It is partly this that makes such instances of *hybris* recognizably traditional; but also relevant are the elements of undisciplined, riotous exuberance (expressed several times by Plato in terms of *mania*) and the consequent failure to fulfil one's social role which are constitutive of the *hybris* of plants. For the opposition, *hybris/akolasia/madness versus sôphrosynê/limit*, cf. *Phlb.* 26b, 45d-e, *Soph.* 228d-229a (Fisher 478-9).

passage indicate that we are still dealing with matters pertinent to the earlier occurrences of *hybris*: first, madness is the ultimate consequence of an excess of manliness or daring, as at 307b; we note, therefore, that manliness is said eventually to ‘burst into bloom’ (*exanthein*) with ‘madnesses of all sorts’; the botanical metaphor is familiar in the context of *hybris*, and it cannot be that *hybris* is not in Plato’s mind here.<sup>131</sup> This suggests that we are to regard *hybris* and *mania* in 307b as close associates; both are, here as elsewhere in Plato (particularly in cases classified by Fisher as ‘Platonic’), the result of an excess of vital, masculine energy, analogous to the excess of growth potential which produces *hybris* in plants. The reference to *aidôs* is the second indication that we are still dealing with a form of *hybris* as an unbalanced, undisciplined, diseased state of character, for *aidôs* is, even more clearly than *sôphrosynê*, that recognition of the balance between one’s own and others’ *timê* which inhibits excessive self-assertion. The discussion in which *hybris*-terms occur thus deals exclusively with the dispositions of self-assertion and self-control, expressed in terms which both invite a construction of these notions in terms of *timê* and locate their origins in innate character-traits which must be regulated, educated, and harmonized. The *Politicus* thus effaces the distinction between ‘Platonic’ and ‘traditional’ uses of *hybris*. It is ‘Platonic’ in seeing *hybris* as a character-trait antithetical to *aidôs* and *sôphrosynê*, but thereby also ‘traditional’, for *hybris* traditionally has its roots in a disposition of excessive self-assertion.

The *Politicus* in many respects looks forward to the *Laws*, in which Plato’s interest in the dispositional basis of *hybris* may also be traced. The roots of *hybris* in unrestrained drives are apparent in the long discussion of the utility of controlled alcohol abuse which dominates the early part of the work; *symposia* as they currently exist encourage pleasure, *hybreis*, and every sort of senselessness (637a-b), but in the controlled *symposion* advocated by the Athenian, through which one repeatedly comes to terms with one’s own hybristic and other passions, repeated relaxation of one’s *aidôs* can eventually foster an ingrained form of *aidôs* which keeps *hybris* safely under control. *Hybris* occurs only once in the discussion of the reformed *symposion* (649d5),<sup>132</sup> but its one appearance has to be understood in the context of the discussion of *methê* as a whole. Basic to this is the opposition between *sôphrosynê* and *andreia* which was operative in the *Politicus* but goes back ultimately to the *Republic*.<sup>133</sup> In the discussion of alcohol as a drug which removes one’s inhibitions and, paradoxically, facilitates the acquisition of an ingrained inhibitory mechanism, we are dealing with the same two educable drives as in the *Politicus*, one of self-assertion, described in terms of *anaischyntia*, *anaideia*, and boldness, and one of self-control, relying on the good *phobos*, *aidôs/aischynê*.<sup>134</sup> It is with these self-assertive, bold, and dangerous drives that *hybris* belongs, as 649c-d makes clear: just as *andreia* has to be developed by confronting circumstances in which we naturally feel fear, so the avoidance of *anaischyntia* and boldness must be practised when we are affected by factors which naturally incline us to be exceedingly confident and bold, to wit *thymos*, *erôs*, *hybris*, *amathia*, and *philokerdeia*,<sup>135</sup> which arise from the conditions of being wealthy, physically attractive, or strong; all these things make us drunk with desire for pleasure and make us mad. It is clear from the list in which *hybris* occurs that the term is being applied in a

<sup>131</sup> L. Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato* (Oxford 1867) *ad loc.*, is right to compare A. Pers. 821.

<sup>132</sup> See Fisher 488.

<sup>133</sup> See 646e-647a: *andreia* is a matter of dealing with fear of pain and danger in the correct way, and *sôphrosynê* is closely associated with *aidôs/aischynê*, which, *qua* fear of ill-repute, opposes the strongest pleasures.

<sup>134</sup> See 647a-d, 649b (the *anaideia* of the drunk), 649d, 671c-e; for wine as a drug which both relaxes and develops *aidôs*, cf. 666a-c and 672b-d, with Cairns (n. 35) 374-5.

<sup>135</sup> Not *deilia*, rightly deleted by Ast (cf. E. B. England, *The Laws of Plato* i [Manchester 1921] 270). *Amathia* here is probably the effrontery involved in thinking one knows what one does not.

dispositional sense; the other terms are all dispositions or drives of agents, not forms of behaviour, and the purpose of the list is to name affections which naturally incline us to be confident and bold; it is thus impossible that *hybris* should refer to 'insulting violence and [unfortunate phrase] straight sexual excesses'.<sup>136</sup>

So *hybris* is here a dysfunctional trait of character involving excessive boldness or confidence and a desire for some form of pleasure. The same characteristics recur in a specifically sexual context at 782e-783a.<sup>137</sup> Where in the *Phaedrus* all excessive desires, including *erôs*, were called *hybris*, here excessive desires for food and drink as well as for sex are called *erôs*, and it is the last, the keenest form, which most sets people on fire with *maniai* burning with the greatest *hybris*; all three desires, however, are *nosêmata* and their growth and onrush are to be quenched.<sup>138</sup> The 'growth and onrush' are those of the *nosêmata*, not of *hybris*,<sup>139</sup> but still the fact that the *erôs* which is regarded as a disease can 'burn with *hybris*' and produce madness reveals that we are dealing with that complex of ideas in which the deviant psychological drives which cause disturbances within human beings have much in common with the uncontrolled vital forces which are described as *hybris* in plants.<sup>140</sup> We thus have the *Phaedrus*' identification of sexual and non-sexual desires as manifestations of one drive with different objects; this assimilation of other desires to the sexual urge combines with the presence of the metaphorical associations of *hybris* with exuberance, fertility, and turmoil in regularizing the application of *hybris* to all forms of desire (for *hybris* is regularly linked with *erôs* in its everyday sense, and if all desires are forms of *erôs*, then *hybris* can be associated with all desires). But this *hybris* is also a matter of excessive self-assertion at others' expense, whether we regard it specifically as the lack of deference of a personified desire towards a superior *logistikôn*, or more generally as an experience of the individual in the grip of *erôs*—a desire for self-gratification which takes no account of the honour of the object of desire, or a desire to indulge one's own passion regardless of the role in life laid down for one by *logos*.<sup>141</sup>

That Plato's view of hybristic desires is firmly rooted in the traditional significance of *hybris* is made clear by the discussion of three types of *philia* at 837a-d. The essential distinction is between the love of the body, a form of *philia* which is based on the lover's desire to obtain from the beloved something that he lacks, and a form which exists between equals and is reciprocated, the desire of one soul for another like itself. These forms can, however, be

<sup>136</sup> Fisher 488.

<sup>137</sup> Discussed by Fisher 485-6, and classified as 'Platonic'.

<sup>138</sup> England's explanation of the Mss. σβεννύωντων as scribal error is persuasive, and it would be better to read σβεννύοναι with the Aldine.

<sup>139</sup> *Hybris* does, however, occur as the object of *sbennumi* at 835d-e, where *hybris* is a fire/disease/desire which burns and grows within the (well-fed) individual and leads to self-indulgent sexual behaviour.

<sup>140</sup> The notion of *hybris* as a form of disease or madness which results from too much of a good thing (n.b. *tryphê* at 691a) is active at 691c: giving 'more to the less' and disregarding moderation (e.g. sails to ships, food to bodies, and rule to souls) results sometimes in disease, sometimes in 'the offspring of *hybris*', injustice. The participle ἐξυβρίζοντα applies both to those things which break out into disease and those which produce injustice; we thus have a notion of physical disease as the result of a form of *hybris* in the organism which comes of over-feeding. The verb *exhybrizein* suggests in itself the bursting out of a *hybris* hitherto contained, and this fits very well with the statement that *adikia* is the offspring of *hybris*; *hybris* is thus the disposition, the force which grows out of control within the individual, and injustice is its issue in concrete acts. Fisher (19, 112, 120-1, 129-30, 135, 147, 299, 344, 388, 393-4, 427, 489 [this passage]) typically refers the verb to the commission of acts.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. 835d-e (above n. 139) and 831c-e, where the elements of *erôs*, shamelessness, and selfishness strongly suggest a *hybris* which lies in neglecting one's proper concerns as a human being in favour of a hedonistic conception of advantage.

combined within one individual, which inevitably causes a conflict of desires,<sup>142</sup> between the motivation of one whose passion is a physical craving like hunger and who ‘awards no *timê* to the character of the beloved’s soul’ and that of one ‘who considers the desire for the body to be a matter of no importance’, and who ‘regards the fulfilment of the body with the body as *hybris*, and because he both respects and reveres *sôphrosynê*, bravery, magnificence, and *phronêsis*, would wish to remain pure forever with a pure beloved’ (837b-d).

The *hybris* which the pure lover rejects is traditional in two ways; first, it involves that lack of regard for the honour of the beloved that is attributed to the base, physical lover, and concentrates instead on selfish gratification of extravagant desires; and secondly, it constitutes a failure to live up to the standards of behaviour proper for one who aspires to virtue. This last makes contact with *hybris* in its traditional guise because Plato sees good performance of one’s allotted role as a human being as a matter of paying honour where honour is most due—to reason, to the soul rather than the body, and ultimately to the gods. Indulgence of one’s baser desires is *hybris* because it involves exalting oneself, and the inferior part of oneself, in the face of the much weightier claims to consideration of reason, the good, and the divine. Plato’s ideas of what sorts of action or desire qualify as *hybris* may be idiosyncratic and extreme, but his view of what *hybris* is is entirely traditional; *hybris* is still a matter of illegitimately placing oneself, one’s desires, and one’s own claim to honour before the legitimate claims of others.

One final passage may help to draw these ideas together. At 713c the Athenian begins a myth which is used to illustrate the disasters which ensue when human beings order their lives and their communities without deference to an ultimate, divine authority. Human nature is insufficient to order human affairs without *hybris* and *adikia* (713c), and so Kronos placed human communities under the rule of *daimones*, whose kingship made for peace, *aidôs*, *eunomia*, and an abundance of justice, and made human peoples free from faction and happy (713c-e). Contemporary communities must, as far as possible, recreate this kind of regime, in which the divine rather than the human is the ultimate source of authority, and foster obedience to the divine in us (713e-714a); the alternative, be it rule of one man, few men, or many, is irremediable disaster, caused by the insatiable urge to gratify extreme desires (714a).<sup>143</sup> These remarks are presently followed by an appeal to the colonists of the new city, which extols humility before ‘the god’ and his attendant, Justice, and warns:

if anyone, raised up by pride [*megalauchia*], whether exulting in money or honours, or again in bodily beauty along with youth and senselessness, blazes in his soul with *hybris*,<sup>144</sup> as if he needed neither ruler nor any leader at all, but were actually sufficient to lead others, he is left behind deserted by god, and, once left behind, he takes to himself yet others of the same kind and romps [σκιρτῶ], throwing everything at once into confusion; to a good many people he seems to be someone, but after a short time he pays to justice no negligible penalty, and utterly destroys himself, his household, and his city (715e-716b).

<sup>142</sup> This conflict is not presented as one between psychic parts, but as one between the two other types of lover, concrete persons representing abstract types of motivation. Thus we do not quite have the personification of the good and the bad horse of the *Phaedrus* myth, and the *hybris* which is associated with the inferior form of *erôs/philia* is that of a type of individual rather than of one part of the soul against another. Cf. England (n. 135) ii 344, on 837a2, and 345 on 837b8.

<sup>143</sup> The paradosis would introduce the metaphor of disease at this point (714a5-6); but England’s ([n. 135] i 442) defence of Hermann’s seclusion of νοσήματι is persuasive.

<sup>144</sup> It is unclear what text Fisher (489) is translating, but the Mss. ὁ δὲ τις ἐξαρθεῖς...φλέγεται ...καταλείπεται, printed by Burnet, will not do. We need either the εἰ δὲ τις of some quotations or the ὁ δὲ τις explained by England ([n. 135] i 448-9). N.b. that the conditions described in ἡ χρημασιν...ἀνοία are those which are typically associated with *hybris*; if, therefore, England is right to take this phrase as subordinate to ἐξαρθεῖς ὑπὸ μεγαλαυχίας, this is a sign of the closeness of *hybris* and *megalauchia* here.



Fisher calls this passage 'a mixture of old and new ideas', but there is no element which is not thoroughly traditional. The *hybris* of the unjust type is, as usual, something which results from too much of a good thing, a powerful force, associated with youth and high spirits, which builds up within the individual until it can be contained no more,<sup>145</sup> and which involves over-valuing one's own qualities to the extent that one under-values the claims of others and neglects one's social role. The novelty of the passage for Fisher seems to lie first in the stress placed on the role of the divine, and secondly in the notion of *hybris* in the soul; but although in both these directions Plato is using *hybris* as an element in a moral theory that is certainly highly individual, his application of the term is in no way revisionary. Fisher is right to link this passage with others on the need to honour the soul, or the immortal in us,<sup>146</sup> but while this does introduce the idea of the divided soul it implies no novel extension of the meaning of *hybris*, for *hybris* in such a context remains the insolent and self-centred failure to pay honour where honour is due.

The exhortations to honour the soul and to refrain from *hybris* belong very closely with similar exhortations to honour the gods; in the immediate sequel to the passage quoted the hybriatic way of life is contrasted with following the divine, behaving with *sôphrosynê*, and honouring especially the gods and one's parents (716c-718a); this exhortation is then followed by a coda in which one's obligations to honour other relatives, *philoî*, and guests are also mentioned (718a). The emphasis on the need to honour the gods above all is typical of the *Laws*, but it entails no revaluation of the concept of *hybris* in the direction of a specifically religious offence; rather, since the gods are firmly entrenched at the top of a hierarchy of honour, *hybris* against them is the worst *hybris* of all.<sup>147</sup> Similarly, the *hybris* which involves a failure to honour the best part of oneself is a matter of withholding due deference; in dishonouring what should be an internal source of authority one is also giving in to a powerfully disruptive psychic force and failing to fulfil one's social role;<sup>148</sup> these are traditional elements in the concept, and this way of looking at the matter is not a Platonic revaluation of *hybris*, but rather Plato's way of explaining what *hybris*, in its traditional guise, really is. The extreme over-valuation of the self that is *hybris* is, for Plato, a failure to control disruptive forces within the personality, a refusal to accept one's place within a rational system, and an exaltation of the merely human (or less than human) at the expense of the divine. Plato's recognition of the associations of *hybris* with exuberance, vigour, disease, and madness is, because it forms such an obvious point of contact between his view and some of the earliest poetic applications, valuable evidence of the dispositional basis of *hybris*. Since Plato does give the dispositional aspect its full significance and does connect *hybris* with failure to know one's place in society and in the universe as a whole, he is in some ways less revisionary in his approach to the concept than is Aristotle.

<sup>145</sup> Excess energy and high spirits, I think, are the basic connotations of *σκιρτῶ* at 716b2; cf. *Ar. Vesp.* 1303-6. Fisher (491) would specify 'sexual excitement or over-confident violence'.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. 697c-d, 726a-728c (Fisher 490).

<sup>147</sup> Cf. the hierarchy of kinds of *hybris* at 884a-885b (Fisher 483-5).

<sup>148</sup> In Cairns (n. 35) 373-8 I underestimate the extent to which Plato's emphasis on 'honouring the soul' implies an internalized form of *aidôs*; but see 378 n. 103 on 837c.

## CONCLUSION

We are now in a position to compare Fisher's definition of *hybris* with that of his most persuasive opponent; and it must be said that MacDowell's 'having energy or power and misusing it self-indulgently' can now be seen to have a great deal in its favour.<sup>149</sup> But its great demerit is its failure to recognize that, as social phenomena, the excess energy and self-indulgence of someone who is 'full of himself' must be construed in terms of *timê*. For *timê* is the concept with reference to which are balanced the claims of the individual and the rights of others. Expressing one's excess energy self-indulgently means placing oneself and one's pleasure first, and thus losing sight of one's status as one among others. Self-aggrandisement constitutes an incursion into the sphere of others' honour, because the concept of honour is necessarily comparative.<sup>150</sup> Thus the reason why MacDowell, Dickie, and others ought to recognize that their accounts of *hybris* should be firmly located within the concept of honour is also the reason why Fisher should accept that the essential relationship between *hybris* and dishonour can accommodate purely dispositional, apparently victimless forms of self-assertion. Both sides, in fact, make the same error, in working with a view of dishonour which is too narrowly focused on the perpetration of acts of physical or verbal affront; but both demonstrate valuable insights into the nature of *hybris* which should be incorporated into an account of *hybris* as a way of going wrong about the honour of self and others.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> The element of self-indulgence is central to my view of *hybris* as excessive self-assertion in the face of others' claims; it also emerges in the frequent association of *hybris* with *akolasia* and in the antithesis of *hybris* and *sôphrosynê* or *aidôs*; but it is especially prominent where acting 'just for *hybris*' is contrasted with action for some further motive (see n. 31 above).

<sup>150</sup> This is noticed by Aristotle in so far as he recognizes that *hybris* is a form of particular injustice which seeks to increase one's own honour at the expense of another (cf. n. 30 above); the comparative aspect of *timê* also plays a major role in his account of *phthonos* at *Rhet.* 1387b25-30, 1388a12-24 (esp. 18-21). Aristotle's view has much (and mine a little) in common with the modern description of honour in terms of a 'zero-sum game'; but the very existence of the term *hybris*, referring to a way of dishonouring others which brings no honour to the agent, proves that the zero-sum view is an over-simplification. See Cairns (n. 35) 94 n. 141 (cf. 56 n. 42) and *PLLS* vii (1993) 162, 166 n. 32; cf. (and contrast) now Cohen (n. 34) 63.

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