HEROES AT THE GATES: APPEAL AND VALUE IN THE HOMERIC EPICS FROM THE ARCHAIC THROUGH THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

This thesis raises and explores questions concerning the popularity of the Homeric poems in ancient Greece. It asks why the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* held such continuing appeal among the Greeks of the Archaic and Classical age. Cultural products such as poetry cannot be separated from the sociopolitical conditions in which and for which they were originally composed and received. Working on the basis that the extent of Homer's appeal was inspired and sustained by the peculiar and determining historical circumstances, I set out to explore the relation of the social, political and ethical conditions and values of Archaic and Classical Greece to those portrayed in the Homeric poems. The Greeks, at the time during which Homer was composing his poems, had begun to establish a new form of social organisation: the *polis*. By examining historical, literary and philosophical texts from the Archaic and Classical age, I explore the manner in which Greek society attempted to reorganise and reconstitute itself in a different way, developing original modes of social and political activity which the new needs and goals of their new social reality demanded. I then turn to examine Homer's treatment of and response to this social context, and explore the various ways in which Homer was able to reinterpret and reinvent the inherited stories of adventure and warfare in order to compose poetry that not only looks back to the highly centralised and bureaucratic society of the Mycenaean world, but also looks forward, insistently so, to the urban reality of the present. I argue that Homer's conflation of a remembered mythical age with the contemporary conditions and values of Archaic and Classical Greece aroused in his audiences a new perception and understanding of human existence in the altered sociopolitical conditions of the *polis*

and, in so doing, ultimately contributed to the development of new ideas on the manner in which the Greeks could best live together in their new social world.

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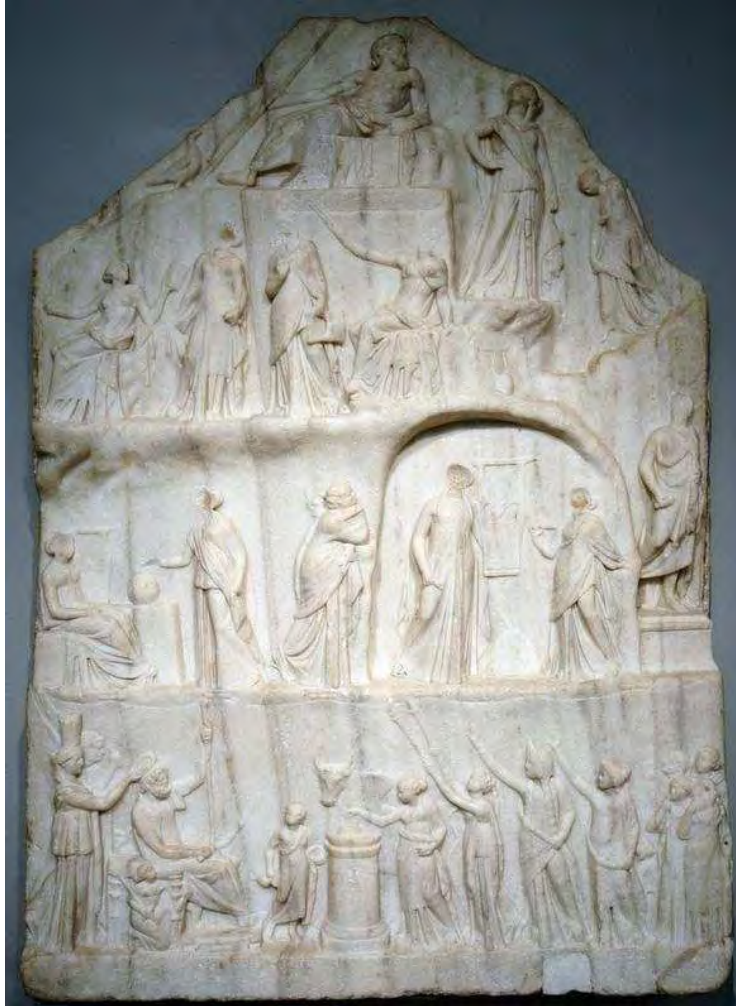

Archelaos of Priene, Hellenistic relief depicting the apotheosis of Homer

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1 The *Polis*	20
2 Ἰσονομία	40
3 Δαίμονι ἶσος	76
4 Οἱ ἄριστοι	113
5 Ποιμήν λαῶν	130
Conclusion	170
Bibliography	177

Introduction

‘The master of masters’

On a late Hellenistic relief by Archelaos of Priene (page iv),[1] the enthroned figure of Homer is honoured by the personifications of Φύσις (Nature), Ἀρετή (Virtue), Μνήμη (Memory), Πίστις (Fidelity) and Σοφία (Wisdom), and crowned by Χρόνος (Time) and Οἰκουμένη (World) as the founding cultural authority of the ancient world. While the lower tier depicts Homer and his ‘children’ – not only the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but also History, Poetry, Tragedy and Comedy – the upper tier is given over to a depiction of Zeus and his children, Apollo and the nine Muses; “the clear iconic parallelism between Homer and Zeus, the ‘father of gods and men’, points to the two key origins of all human culture.”[2] This relief is representative not only of the relationship between Homer and subsequent Greek literature – Homer was, as Hunter puts it, “the ‘source’ from which all subsequent writers were irrigated, the fountain-head of both subject and style”[3] – but also of the role that Homer came to play in the lives of his fellow countrymen.

The Homeric poems were so widely diffused and so highly regarded throughout the Greek-speaking world that, even if he were only slightly educated, “a Greek was likely to have learned great stretches of each of the two poems by heart”.[4] Homeric poetry became a source of instruction to the Greeks, and in particular an instrument of education. In Xenophon’s *Symposium*, for example, Niceratus, a fifth-century Athenian, expresses just this view: ‘My father was anxious to see me develop into a good man, ἀνήρ ἀγαθός, and as a means to this end he compelled me to memorise all of Homer; and so even now I can repeat the whole *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by heart.’[5] He states the benefits consequent on this upbringing:

> ἐκ τούτου δὲ ὁ Νικήρατος, Ἀκούοιτ' ἄν, ἔφη, καὶ ἐμοῦ
> ἃ ἔσεσθε βελτίονες, ἂν ἐμοὶ συνῆτε. ἴστε γὰρ δήπου ὅτι

[1] British Museum BM2191. Photo: copyright, British Museum.
[2] Hunter (2004) 235, 237.
[3] ibid. 235.
[4] Finley (1982) 12.
[5] Xen. *Symposium* 3.5.5-3.6.1; Todd [trans.].

Ὅμηρος ὁ σοφώτατος πεποίηκε σχεδὸν περὶ πάντων τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων. ὅστις ἂν οὖν ὑμῶν βούληται ἢ οἰκονομικὸς ἢ δημηγορικὸς ἢ στρατηγικὸς γενέσθαι ἢ ὅμοιος Ἀχιλλεῖ ἢ Αἴαντι ἢ Νέστορι ἢ Ὀδυσσεῖ, ἐμὲ θεραπευέτω. ἐγὼ γὰρ ταῦτα πάντα ἐπίσταμαι.[6]

> You may now hear me tell wherein you will be improved by associating with me. You know, doubtless, that the sage Homer has written about practically everything pertaining to man. Any one of you, therefore, who wishes to acquire the art of the householder, the political leader, or the general, or to become like Achilleus or Ajax or Nestor or Odysseus, should seek my favour, for I understand all these things.[7]

The Homeric poems were so well-known, moreover, that they became a common reference point among the Greeks – something which they could all understand and to which they could all relate. In Plato's *Apology*, for example, Socrates – forced to choose between abandoning his moral principles and death – compares his own position to that of Achilleus, the most daring of Homer's heroes. In his defence speech, he imagines that 'someone' had asked him whether he is not ashamed 'at having followed a line of action which puts [him] in danger of the death-penalty', and replies:

φαῦλοι γὰρ ἂν τῷ γε σῷ λόγῳ εἶεν τῶν ἡμιθέων ὅσοι ἐν Τροίᾳ τετελευτήκασιν οἵ τε ἄλλοι καὶ ὁ τῆς Θέτιδος ὑός, ὃς τοσοῦτον τοῦ κινδύνου κατεφρόνησεν παρὰ τὸ αἰσχρόν τι ὑπομεῖναι ὥστε, ἐπειδὴ εἶπεν ἡ μήτηρ αὐτῷ προθυμουμένῳ Ἕκτορα ἀποκτεῖναι, θεὸς οὖσα, ούτωσί πως, ὡς ἐγὼ οἶμαι· 'Ὦ παῖ, εἰ τιμωρήσεις Πατρόκλῳ τῷ ἑταίρῳ τὸν φόνον καὶ Ἕκτορα ἀποκτενεῖς, αὐτὸς ἀποθανῇ – αὐτίκα γάρ τοι,' φησί, 'μεθ' Ἕκτορα πότμος ἑτοῖμος' – ὁ δὲ τοῦτο ἀκούσας τοῦ μὲν θανάτου καὶ τοῦ κινδύνου ὠλιγώρησε, πολὺ δὲ μᾶλλον δείσας τὸ ζῆν κακὸς ὢν καὶ τοῖς φίλοις μὴ τιμωρεῖν.[8]

> On your view the heroes who died at Troy would be poor creatures, especially the son of Thetis. He, if you remember, made so light of danger in comparison with incurring dishonour that when his goddess mother warned him, eager as he was to kill Hektor, in some such words as these, I fancy,

[6] Marchant's 1921 edition of Xenophon's *Symposium*.
[7] Xen. *Symposium* 4.6.2-4.6.8; Todd [trans.].
[8] Burnet's 1900 edition of Plato's *Apologia Socratis*.

> "My son, if you avenge your comrade Patroklos' death and kill Hektor, you will die yourself; next after Hektor is thy fate prepared," – when he heard this warning, he made light of his death and danger, being much more afraid of life with dishonour if he failed to avenge his friends.[9]

It is true that Socrates displayed a different kind of heroism – "the indomitable courage of the Nonconformist conscience – but he turned instinctively to Homer's Achilleus for his example of a kindred spirit".[10] When Crito goes to visit Socrates in prison and urges him to escape before he is put to death, Socrates once again compares himself to Achilleus: he tells Crito that 'a gloriously beautiful woman' came to him in a dream and told him that his death would be a home-coming 'to the pleasant land of Phthia'[11] – the beloved fatherland to which Achilleus never returned.

Naturally, Homer was not without his critics. Plato, the great moraliser of the Greeks and Homer's most loyal and ardent adversary, complains in the *Republic* that there are Greeks who believe not only that Homer 'educated Hellas' but that he also 'deserves to be taken up as an instructor in the management and culture of human affairs, and that a man ought to regulate the whole of his life by following this poet'.[12] To those who hold this opinion, he concedes that 'Homer is a supreme poet and the original tragedian', but recommends that a proper society should bar all poetry with the sole exception of 'hymns to the gods and encomia to the good… if you admit the entertaining Muse of lyric and epic poetry, then instead of law and the shared acceptance of reason as the best guide, the kings of your community will be pleasure and pain'.[13] But Plato was no more successful in turning the Greeks against Homer than the philosopher Xenophanes had been a century earlier, when he claimed that 'unto the gods are ascribed by Hesiod, like as by Homer, all of the acts which are counted by men disgraceful and shameful, thieving and wenching and dealing deceitfully one with another';[14] recognising, "long before Plato… the tremendous hold Homer had on the Greeks".[15] Judging by an anecdote preserved by Plutarch, it was precisely this disapproval of Homer that ultimately had such a harmful

[9] Pl. *Apology* 28b3-28b5, 28b9-28d1; Tredennick [trans.].
[10] Luce (1975) 180.
[11] Pl. *Crito* 44a10-44b2; Tredennick [trans.].
[12] Pl. *Republic* 606e; Waterfield [trans.].
[13] ibid. 607a.
[14] Sext. Emp. *Adv. Phys*. i.193; Bury [trans.].
[15] Finley (1982) 12-13.

effect on Xenophanes' own career. When Xenophanes complained about the fact that he had scarcely enough money to run his household with two slaves, the tyrant Hieron of Syracuse retorted: 'Homer – whom you are always pillorying – is able to support ten thousand people, even though he's dead.'[16] The rhapsodes received payment for their Homeric recitations, based on the quality of their performance: "Xenophanes' habit of finding fault with Homer was the very thing that offended the sensibilities of his audience, with the result that he was paid less well than those who esteemed Homer and praised him highly."[17] The captivation under which Homer held his audience was just too strong. Heraclitus even goes so far as to assert that Homeric poetry is co-terminous with life:

> Εὐθὺς γὰρ ἐκ
> πρώτης ἡλικίας τὰ νήπια τῶν ἀρτιμαθῶν παίδων διδας
> καλίᾳ παρ' ἐκείνῳ τιτθεύεται, καὶ μονονοὺκ ἐνεσπαργανω
> μένοι τοῖς ἔπεσιν αὐτοῦ καθαπερεὶ ποτίμῳ γάλακτι τὰς
> ψυχὰς ἐπάρδομεν·
> ἀρχομένῳ δ' ἑκάστῳ συμπαρέστηκε
> καὶ κατ' ὀλίγον ἀπανδρουμένῳ, τελείοις δ' ἐνακμάζει,
> καὶ κόρος οὐδὲ εἷς ἄχρι γήρως, ἀλλὰ παυσάμενοι διψῶμεν
> αὐτοῦ πάλιν·
> καὶ σχεδὸν ἓν πέρας Ὁμήρῳ παρ'
> ἀνθρώποις, ὃ καὶ τοῦ βίου.[18]

> From the very earliest infancy young children are nursed in their learning by Homer, and swaddled in his verses we water our souls with them as though they were nourishing milk. He stands beside each of us as we start out and gradually grow into men, he blossoms as we do, and until old age we never grow tired of him, for as soon as we set him aside we thirst for him again; it may be said that the same limit is set to both Homer and life.[19]

Of course one of the greatest indications of the extent to which the Homeric poems were both valued and admired is in the mere fact of their intact survival. "There is no doubt that ancient Greece possessed… many other epic poems" in addition to the *Iliad*

[16] Plut. *Reg. apophth*. 175c; Gentili [trans.] 158.
[17] Gentili [tr. Cole] (1988) 158.
[18] Buffière's 1962 edition of Heraclitus' *Allegoriae* (*Quaestiones Homericae*).
[19] Heracl. *Homeric Problems* 1.5-1.7; Hunter [trans.] 235.

and *Odyssey*.[20] And while we cannot compare this poetry with the Homeric poems – since, apart from a few surviving fragments, the rest has all been lost – there are, none the less, strong indications that antiquity rated "the now lost work far below the two surviving poems".[21] For one thing, references to the lost epics in such authors as Herodotus, Plato and Aristotle "are very scanty" in comparison "with their citations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*"; a strong indication, Lang believes, that "in the central age of classical literature the two great epics were already far more familiar, far more esteemed, than the epics which have disappeared".[22] And for another, Proclus' failure to summarise the events of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as he does those of all the other poems in his synopsis of the compilation known as the 'Epic Cycle', leads many critics to conclude not only that Homer's poems were sufficiently well-known but that – when taken in conjunction with the position of the other epics in the Cycle and the summary of their events – "they were infinitely more popular than the other ancient pieces on kindred subjects," which were not even "given in their full original form, but were curtailed and dovetailed into each other… so as to bring [them] into harmony with the accounts given in [Homer]".[23]

What remains of ancient literature today is completely "disproportionate in… bulk" to what originally existed. That which "has survived," moreover, "is, apart from some accidental exceptions, what was deemed worthy of being copied and recopied for hundreds of years of Greek history and then through more hundreds of years of Byzantine history, centuries in which values and fashions changed more than once, often radically".[24] Just how 'worthy' the Homeric poems were believed to have been is made "abundantly clear" by "the papyri of Egypt":

> Of all the scraps and fragments of literary works found in Egypt that had been published by 1963, there is a total of 1,596 books by or about authors whose names are identifiable. This figure represents individual copies, not separate titles. Of the 1,596, nearly one-half were copies of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, or commentaries upon them… The next most 'popular' author was the orator Demosthenes, with 83 papyri… followed by Euripides with 77, and Hesiod with 72. Plato is represented by but 42 papyri, Aristotle by 8.

[20] Lang (1893) 323.
[21] Finley (1963) 6.
[22] Lang (1893) 324.
[23] ibid. 329. See also Kirk (1962) 254 and Latacz (1996) 61.
[24] Knox. Intro. Finley (1982) 10.

> These are figures of book-copying among the Greeks in Egypt after Alexander, to be sure, but all the evidence indicates that they may be taken as fairly typical of the Greek world generally. If a Greek owned any books – that is, papyrus rolls – he was almost as likely to own the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as anything from the rest of Greek literature.[25]

And so "the name *Homer*" has remained "synonymous with great poetry" for nearly three thousand years.[26] But what is the secret to Homer's continuing appeal? Modern Homeric criticism tells us that "no other poet, no other literary figure in all history for that matter, occupied a place in the life of his people such as Homer's. He was their pre-eminent symbol of nationhood, the unimpeachable authority on their earliest history, and a decisive figure in the creation of their pantheon, as well as their most beloved and most widely quoted poet."[27] But what was it about his poetry that so captured the heart and imagination of the entire Greek-speaking world? Why did the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* – far from merely serving as a source of entertainment – ultimately come to provide "historical continuity," "a source of social cohesion," "a valuable cultural resource" and "a method of ethical thought"?[28] How did Homer's "brilliant enshrinement of a long-dead civilisation"[29] ultimately become *the* repository of Greek culture that "helped to shape the evolution of Greek civilisation"?[30] And why was it that Greece, right from the very beginning, "chose Homer for the master of masters, the teacher of all philosophers, 'the first of those who know'"?[31]

A glorious past

The Homeric poems belong to the genre of heroic poetry, a type of poetry "which is [similarly] represented in the early eras of many peoples as the praise of the great deeds of a long-ago nobility".[32] The Greek term for this type of poetry was κλέα ἀνδρῶν, 'the famous deeds of men' (*Il*. 9.189, *Od*. 1.338).[33] The 'men' were noble warriors,

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[25] Finley (1982) 11-12.
[26] Latacz (1996) 1.
[27] Finley (1982) 5.
[28] Scodel (2004) 45.
[29] Green (1973) 48.
[30] Luce (1975) 179.
[31] Lang (1893) 5.
[32] Latacz (1996) 15-16.
[33] I will be using Allen's 1931 edition of Homer's *Ilias* and Von der Mühll's 1962 edition of Homer's *Odyssea* throughout.

descendants of the immortal gods, who were supposed to have lived in a 'Heroic Age' at the end of our Bronze Age, and the 'deeds' were those of the Trojan War and its aftermath. "That there had once been a time of heroes few Greeks, early or late, ever doubted"; indeed, "Homer was their most authoritative source of information"[34] and his depiction of a 'heroic world' was "believed… to have been a real past which the poet narrated, rather than invented or created".[35] As Odysseus praises the bard Demodocus: 'For it is remarkable how accurately you sing the tale of the Achaians' fate and of all their achievements, sufferings and struggles. It is almost as if you had been with them yourself or heard the story from one who was.'[36]

The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are set against the background of the Mycenaean world in the late Bronze Age. We can picture Mycenaean Greece, during this period, as being split up "into a number of petty bureaucratic states, with a warrior aristocracy, a high level of craftsmanship, extensive foreign trade in necessities (metals) and luxuries, a long tradition of internecine warfare and bickering, and a permanent condition of armed neutrality at best in their relations with each other".[37] Evidence from the so-called Linear B tablets reveals that the whole society was governed by a number of palace-fortresses throughout the Peloponnese: "administrative centres" that not only organised, collected and recorded "the production and movement of a wide range of agricultural and other goods,"[38] but also "determined the conditions… of military, religious and artistic life".[39] From around 1300 B.C., however, "the Mycenaean world began, slowly but unmistakably, to lose ground"[40] and, about 1200, ultimately collapsed. Whatever the cause of this catastrophe, the effects were devastating: "By 1100 Mycenaean civilisation was virtually extinct, and the Greek world had sunk into a deep trough of poverty and isolation."[41]

The period from 1100 to 800 B.C. has come to be known as the 'Dark Age'. This is a loaded term, since 'Dark' refers not only to the fact that the era "began with a serious

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[34] Finley (1982) 19.
[35] Finley (1963) 6.
[36] Hom. *Od*. 8.489-491; Rieu [trans.].
[37] Finley (1970) 55-56.
[38] Osborne (2004) 207.
[39] Latacz (1996) 36.
[40] Green (1973) 41.
[41] Luce (1975) 38.

decline of material conditions and communications consequent upon the burning and virtual abandonment of most of the main centres," but also in the sense that it is an "obscure" stage in Greek history, for which "our evidence… is slight".[42] In comparison with the period before the catastrophe, the beginning of the Dark Age is characterised by a severe decline in social, economic and cultural conditions: "A highly efficient, surplus-producing society became for a long period a merely primitive, self-reproducing one."[43] As well as a drastic decrease in population numbers – "by 1100 the population was perhaps as little as one-tenth of what it had been a hundred years earlier" – a number of important skills had also been lost: "the ability to build with large blocks of well-cut stone," "to produce fine jewellery and metal-work." When the palace-centres collapsed, decorative arts like "fresco painting, gem-cutting and ivory carving… disappeared," so too did the most important administrative tool of those centres – writing. Iron replaced bronze as the new working metal. Overseas trade dwindled; as well as being a time of great uncertainty and instability, "it was a time of isolation when all contact with the Levant and Egypt were lost".[44] Athens, which "had not been among the first rank of palaces,"[45] was the only centre that remained undestroyed, and became a refuge for migrants from the Peloponnese.

We can picture the first half of the eleventh century, then, as an era of poverty and decline in which "the opulence of the Mycenaean kingdoms remained only as a bright memory in a darkened Greece".[46] While these circumstances may have proved disastrous to the likes of 'fresco painting' and 'ivory carving', Kirk points out "that a Dark Age, especially if it is the direct aftermath of a Heroic Age, is not necessarily a bad environment for the production of oral poetry". The production and consumption of oral poetry does not depend on optimum material conditions; on the contrary, "the truth seems to be that adverse conditions… are often favourable to heroic poetry. However scarce are food and liquor, however harsh the invaders… the singer can still repeat and improvise songs… [that] keep alive some kind of pride and self-respect."[47] Bowra argues that "the

[42] Kirk (1976) 25.
[43] Latacz (1996) 40.
[44] Luce (1975) 39.
[45] Kirk (1976) 28.
[46] Luce (1975) 38.
[47] Kirk (1976) 34, 35.

most important contribution made by this period was the formation of a belief in a heroic age":

> The waste and wreckage in Greece were so enormous that men must have turned back to the not-too-distant past and seen in its power and splendour something utterly alien to their own experience… From this sense of departed glory and the imaginations which it bred the Dark Age gave to the Greeks the conception of a heroic past, and to their poetry some of its most special qualities.[48]

"The world of epic poetry offered" to the Greeks of the Dark Age not only "the grandeur of that crucial distance between 'now' and 'then'" – "the regretful sense of loss of a larger and paradigmatic past" – but also, through "the audience's identification of itself as part of the future of the heroes of whom" the bards sang, "a self-conscious sign of identity, a talismanic assertion of continuity in a distinctly changed world."[49]

Many Homeric critics agree with Bowra and Kirk. They argue, not only that the Dark Age provided the context and inspiration for Homer's reinterpretation of heroic themes relating to the old Mycenaeans in his composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but, more importantly, that therein lies the secret to Homer's popularity. The Greeks understood the Heroic Age to have coincided with the 'golden age' of Mycenae, an era of wealth and splendour. The converse conditions of "dissolution and decay" in the Dark Age, according to Luce, "must… have… led [the Greeks] to cherish and idealise the memory of the palace-kingdoms of the thirteenth century". He argues that the Homeric poems became a source of "comfort and inspir[ation]" to "the dispossessed survivors" who were "displaced from the Greek mainland… and forced to cross the Aegean".[50] Likewise, Latacz argues that Homer's poetry on the 'famous deeds of men' in the great era before the devastation of 1200 "belonged among the small treasures that the Greek aristocracy had saved from the catastrophe and to which it clung with special affection".[51] And finally, Hiller, along similar lines, argues that "during the darks years of decline, depression and isolation, the world of the heroes must have seemed," to the Greeks, "to have vanished forever". But, as Greece began her slow recovery, "the more vividly the

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[48] Kirk (1976) 35.
[49] Hunter (2004) 241, 249.
[50] Luce (1975) 47.
[51] Latacz (1996) 51.

heroic past revived," and made, once again, "identification with that heroic past possible".[52]

It is a commonly held view, therefore, that Homer's retrospective portrayal of the heroic world of golden Mycenae accounts for much of "the strength and persistence"[53] of his appeal among the ancient Greeks. There is little doubt that his depiction evoked among his listeners a sense of nostalgia, of a relation with their shared past, but the same can surely be said for all the other heroic epics that have been lost, even supposing that Homer's versions were artistically superior. Is this enough to account for the fact that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* "not only survived, but became a combined Bible, moral code and source of practical wisdom for all Greeks of the Classical age"?[54] I am forced to agree with Finley that an 'identification' with the past does not, alone, serve to account for the unrivalled hold that Homer had, for centuries, over the entire Greek-speaking world: "The key lies elsewhere."[55]

A new world

A great span of time extends between the Mycenaean subject matter of the poems (*c*.1250 B.C.) and their actual composition (at some time, to give the extreme limits, between the late 9th and early 7th century B.C). The poems themselves emphasise that the world 'as it is today' – that is, in the time of performance – is not the same as that depicted in the poems. At various points throughout the poems we are told about heroes who throw huge stones 'which no two men could carry such as men are now'.[56] Although modern criticism is divided on everything from whether or not 'Homer' even existed to whether or not one poet could possibly be responsible for the composition of both poems, "it is now agreed… that the author or authors cannot be thought of in the same way as later epic poets, such as Virgil or Dante or Milton". The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were the culmination of a long oral tradition reaching back to the Bronze Age, "behind… [which] lay centuries of oral poetry, composed, recited and transmitted by professional bards"

[52] Scully (1990) 97.
[53] Luce (1975) 47.
[54] Green (1973) 48.
[55] Finley (1963) 12.
[56] Hom. *Il*. 5.302-304, 12.445-450, 20.285-287; Lattimore [trans.].

who traveled widely in the Greek world.[57] "This tradition was not static or merely custodial, but underwent episodes of active generation" as the heroic lays were transmitted by a succession of professional singers, with the result that the Homeric poems do not present a picture of one particular epoch, but rather a composite or 'mosaic' world picture, in which elements from different epochs are dynamically recombined. So while they may be "the product of a particular poet in a particular time, they owe their material to the entire period in which they were under formation".[58]

Archaeological excavations over the last few centuries have established "a firm factual basis for the Greek heroic legends".[59] A key example is Heinrich Schliemann's rediscovery of the city of Troy. Similarly, archaeological remains at three large Mycenaean palaces in the Peloponnese prove that Homer's depiction of 'the palace of the illustrious Menelaos' – with its 'amazing quantity of treasures', its 'polished baths' and 'burnished' walls, and its abundance of 'bronze and gold, amber and silver and ivory' (*Od*. 4.43-75) – "is soundly based in fact".[60] And yet all the palaces had been destroyed before the end of the twelfth century, and "neither post-Mycenaean Greece nor Homer's Ionia knew palaces of the complexity and refinement of those described by Homer… The great Bronze Age mansions impressed their magnificence on the poetic tradition, and were never forgotten."[61] There are a number of objects mentioned in the poems which became extinct after the Mycenaean Age and can therefore only owe their survival to the remarkable faithfulness of the oral tradition. These include, among others, the silver-studded sword (*Il*. 2.45), the boar's tusk helmet (*Il*. 10.261-265), the tower shield (*Il*. 15.645-646) and the composite bow (*Il*. 4.105-111, *Od*. 21.395).[62]

There can be no clearer proof of the strength of the oral tradition or of the fidelity with which it was transmitted, however, than the Catalogue of Ships (*Il*. 2.494-759): the Catalogue lists all the Greek forces, a total of 29 contingents, and specifies where the various troops came from (164 place-names), who their commanders were ("nearly half" of the 46 commanders are provided with "patronymics or other biographical details"),

[57] Finley (1963) 5.
[58] Antonaccio (1995) 6.
[59] Luce (1975) 25.
[60] ibid. 49.
[61] ibid. 53.
[62] ibid. 101-111.

and how many ships they brought, "making a grand total of 1186".[63] A considerable number of the place-names mentioned in the Catalogue have been identified as Mycenaean by archaeological investigation: "On the basis of post-war excavations and their own thorough field surveys, R. Hope Simpson and J.F. Lazenby claim… that 75 per cent of the identifiable places are now known to have been occupied in the Late Mycenaean period. They further add that none can be shown not to have been inhabited then."[64]

While it may seem "that the bards had transmitted… a recognisable picture of the late Mycenaean world… from generation to generation down to the eighth century,"[65] it becomes evident on closer analysis that although Homer was "drawing the materials" for his composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* "from the past," he did not remain "immune from the influences of the present". "Conventions for depicting life in the Bronze Age" mingle with "the culture and customs of the post-Mycenaean world" in the poems.[66] "Agamemnon the supreme ruler of 'Argos and many islands'," for example, "is most probably derived, tortuously and indirectly, from memories of the great period," but "Agamemnon the leader of an uneasy and at times disobedient expedition against Troy… belongs to the age of disintegration".[67] Similarly, if "Troy in the *Iliad*, set back from the sea on a hilltop, is typically Mycenaean," then "Scheria in the *Odyssey* resembles a contemporary Ionian settlement on a flat peninsula with a double harbour (such as Old Smyrna and Oikonomos)".[68] The "voyages of opportunism and plunder" which feature in the *Odyssey* "belong" not to the prosperous and peaceful world of the Mycenaean Age, but rather to the turmoil of "the succeeding Dark Age".[69] And Homer's frequent mention of trading in Greek waters by Phoenician sailors (*Od*. 15.415-484, 13.256-286, 14.285-315, *Il*. 23.743-745) is "consistent with the facts of Phoenician expansion in the eighth century," when "Greek merchants would have been in keen competition with the Phoenicians in many markets, and the repeated characterisation of them in the *Odyssey* as

[63] Luce (1975) 87.
[64] ibid. 88.
[65] Finley (1970) 83.
[66] Luce (1975) 58.
[67] Kirk (1962) 21-22.
[68] Scully (1990) 87.
[69] Kirk (1962) 22.

‘skinflints’ is perhaps a reflection of the kind of tension between the two peoples that would have been prevalent in the eighth century but not earlier”.[70]

So “the Homeric poems form a complex amalgam of elements derived from different epochs, and artificially welded together by the craft of song that each singer inherited from his forerunners”.[71] On the one hand, Homer reproduces a picture of the Mycenaean world that is remarkably accurate in many respects – such as his depiction of Menelaos’ palace and his knowledge of Mycenaean geography. There is a sense, moreover, that when Homer looks back in his portrayal of a lost heroic world, he does so deliberately. He insistently excludes many “contemporary institutions and practices” – “no Ionia, no Dorians to speak of, no writing, no iron weapons, no cavalry in battle scenes, no colonisation, no Greek traders, no communities without kings”.[72] On the other hand, however, Homer also feels free to include many pertinent elements from his own world – such as his depiction of ‘Ionian’ Scheria and of the Phoenician traders. Could not this ‘complex amalgam of elements’ perhaps have something to do with Homer’s unrivalled popularity? Is it not possible that the secret to Homer’s appeal has less to do with his ability to work so well within the oral tradition and more to do with his ability – through his composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* which not only look back to the golden age of Mycenae, but also look forward to his audience’s experience of a very different reality – to successfully transcend it?

If we now turn to a closer examination of the historical period during which Homer was composing the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, we find that there has been a profound change in society and its institutions. “After the slow recovery of the Dark Age there came a sudden spurt, an accelerated cultural, political and intellectual efflorescence”[73] in which “various marked cultural changes” took place: “sanctuaries, both new and old, receive[d] massively increased quantities of dedications, the first substantial temple buildings [were] constructed… ; figure scenes, involving both humans and animals, [began to] reappear on painted pottery; writing, employing a new alphabet derived from Phoenician practice, sprea[d] rapidly round the Greek world… ; settlement numbers increase[d] substantially,

[70] Luce (1975) 68.
[71] ibid. 47.
[72] Finley (1982) 43.
[73] Green (1973) 49.

and, from the middle of the [eighth] century onwards, Greek communities [started to] set themselves up outside the traditional Greek homeland, and in particular in Italy and Sicily.[74] In addition, there was "a resurgence in seagoing trade," resulting in a considerable "influx" not only of wealth but also of "new ideas, beliefs and customs".[75] And it was also during this period that the "concept of 'Hellenism'" began to emerge: "a community of language, speech and cult, symbolised by the great" Panhellenic festivals that arose at Olympia, Delphi and Delos.[76]

Society had become "distinctly more egalitarian".[77] Kingship had been replaced by a hereditary aristocracy who maintained an unrivalled position of power and control. It did not take long, however, for social conflict, *stasis*, to surface between the aristocracy and the rest of society. Population increase was one of the contributing factors: "the archaeological evidence" makes it "clear" that "neither mainland Greece nor the Aegean islands could support a sizable agrarian population."[78] Another was that wealth had now become more mobile. The expansion of trade created new economic opportunities that "accelerated the rise to social prominence of a new class of merchants, businessmen and producers of export goods"[79] – a new class of self-made men who felt that their wealth entitled them to a share of the aristocracy's monopoly. The spread of literacy, the new colonisation movement, the emergence of the hoplite phalanx and "the broadening of horizons generally" also played a role in strengthening "the capacity for autonomy and the self-reliance of non-aristocrats". This increase in "self-confidence in turn brought serious demands for the abolition of aristocratic privileges, for justice, for equality, and ultimately for self-determination".[80]

By far the most important phenomenon of the early Archaic Age, however, was "the emergence and slow development of the characteristically Greek community-structure, the *polis*".[81] A large number of relatively small communities were now established "in the more advanced areas of the Greek and Asia Minor mainlands and on the Aegean

[74] Osborne (2004) 210-211.
[75] Green (1973) 49, 53.
[76] ibid. 51.
[77] Osborne (2004) 210.
[78] Finley (1963) 20.
[79] Latacz (1996) 57.
[80] ibid. 57, 58.
[81] Finley (1970) 90.

islands". Archaeological remains reveal that many of the people, particularly the wealthy, resided in the urban centres, and that "the main civic and religious buildings" were "concentrated" in the town square, an open space that was easily accessible so that "the citizens could be assembled when necessary". Many of these communities also had "an acropolis, a high point to serve as a citadel for defence".[82] Scully believes that this new "urban design" shows that the Greeks "had abandoned the visual and symbolic manifestations of Mycenaean majesty" in favour of "a new spirit of collective urbanisation".[83] The city institutions that emerged within these urban centres, moreover, "took on a new significance" and became, according to Hammond, "the focus of social and political life".[84] Most critics agree that these early forms of the *polis*, "if still rather nascent," foreshadow the fully-developed *polis* of Classical Greece still to come.[85]

It was in this atmosphere of change and innovation – "a sense of exhilaration, of widening emotional horizons"[86] – that Homer composed his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Cultural products such as poetry cannot, of course, be separated from the social context in which and for which they originally emerged: "cultural texts are fundamentally and inescapably embedded in social practices, institutional processes, politics and economy." The significance of any text cannot, therefore, "be treated as independent of the broader flows and operations of the culture in which [that] text exists".[87] The environment or 'life process' of the society, related to the *Zeitgeist* or spirit of the age, is not merely reflected in the cultural texts of a society, however, but is in fact "responsible not only for the evaluation and, in some instances, canonisation of works and authors, but also for the [actual] literature [composed] at the time".[88] It is "the context itself," according to Tompkins, "that creates the value its readers 'discover' there".[89]

Cultural products are "not just expressions [or] correlates" of social conditions; they also serve to "create and maintain the social level of reality that lends coherence to behaviour and renders actions meaningful within a given cultural context": "Objectified

[82] Finley (1963) 18-19.
[83] Scully (1990) 83.
[84] ibid. 85.
[85] ibid. 90. Also Finley (1970) 91-92 and Green (1973) 48.
[86] Green (1973) 48.
[87] Lewis (2002) 35.
[88] Holub (2003) 50.
[89] Tompkins (2001) 149.

in material objects and institutionalised in social relations and social systems," cultural texts are the "taken-for-granted meanings and categorisations of social reality" on which all social behaviour "is premised".[90] "Conceptualised as the psychological externalised or… the social order objectified," cultural artifacts "carry with them past interactions," "mediate the present," "reflect the ideas, images, understandings and values" of their particular contexts, and function as a representation of identity by helping "to integrate people with the world and with each other".[91] As well as serving as "a medium of… socialisation" by "reproducing meaning and anchoring identity," cultural texts also serve as a medium of "innovation and transformation, enabling people to alter their experience and re-envision their lives"; teaching people, in short, not only "who they are" but who they "might become".[92]

So poetry is both a reflection of social conditions and a repository of cultural information. But in ancient Greece, many critics believe, it was even more:

> Poetic performance, whether epic or lyric, was conceived of as more than a means for allowing audiences to see themselves in the mirror of mythical or contemporary events; it could also serve to arouse in them a new perception of reality and broaden their awareness to include the new modes of social and political activity which new needs and goals demanded.[93]

A "forerunner of thought and change," "poetry acquired sufficient status to become a determinant of social forms, a guide in political experimentation, an innovator in language, [and] a catalyst in the evolution of Greece from a primitive to a sophisticated society".[94] The great changes and innovations that mark the beginning of the Archaic Age must surely then have had some impact on Homer's poetry. The Homeric poems, as we have seen, look back to the lost world of golden Mycenae, to a time when Greece was "divided into more or less independent kingdoms, each based upon a palace, the home of the king and his family and many of his retainers".[95] "The future of the Greeks," however, "lay not" in the highly centralised and bureaucratic palace-societies of the

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[90] Markus and Hamedani (2007) 6, 12.
[91] ibid. 10.
[92] Miller, Fung and Koven (2007) 596, 595.
[93] Gentili [tr. Cole] (1988) 55.
[94] Snell (1961) 1.
[95] Kirk (1962) 36.

Mycenaean world, "but in the new kind of society which was forged out of the impoverished communities that survived the great catastrophe".[96] We cannot, according to Finley, overestimate the importance of this shift:

> What happened after the fall of the Mycenaean civilisation was not merely a decline within the existing social framework but a decline and a change in character altogether. Then as the new Greek society emerged from these new beginnings, it moved in a very different direction, so that the kind of world which had existed before 1200 B.C. never again appeared in ancient Greece proper. In that sense, the break was complete and permanent.[97]

The Homeric poems were composed at the beginning of a new era, an era during which society was forced to reorganise and reconstitute itself in a different way, developing original modes of social and political activity which the needs and goals of their new social world demanded. During their recent work on ethnic identity, Worchel and Coutant found that groups have an intrinsic and powerfully driven need to "develop an identity of [their] own". This identity – which "includes the group's boundaries, its beliefs and values, its history, and its reputation within the wider domain of groups" – signifies the "justification used to legitimise the group's existence and its behaviour". They add, moreover, that this 'need' was found to be particularly strong whenever a "distinct incident" or "threat" arose within a group's social environment.[98] Latacz is surely correct, then, when he argues that the "profusion of new experiences and new knowledge in Greece" must have led, "not only to an extraordinary and dramatically rapid broadening of horizons," but also to the emergence of "a new self-awareness and concomitantly prompted a need for self-justification".[99]

Homer represented a response to this social need in the composition and canonisation of his two works. He reinterpreted and reinvented the inherited heroic tradition in order to compose poetry that not only looked back to the highly centralised and bureaucratic society of the Mycenaean world, but also looked forward to the urban reality of the present. I agree with Scully that this association of "old themes with a new consciousness

[96] Finley (1970) 71.
[97] Scully (1990) 83-84.
[98] Worchel and Coutant (2004) 183-184, 187-188.
[99] Latacz (1996) 54, 65.

of urbanisation" became the means by which the Greeks could "distance themselves from and… reflect on their emerging world":

> So the Homeric poems may be viewed as a kind of cultural autobiography in that, while privileging the Mycenaean past, they *fuse* widely divergent eras into coherent unity… If the past engenders the present, it is equally true, and more accurate in this instance, to say that the present brings the past to light: through the evolution of the Homeric poems, the contemporary world was giving birth to its own past.[100]

I would argue, however, that Homer's conflation of a remembered mythical age with the contemporary conditions of his own world did far more than just provide a sense of history, of 'autobiography', for the new form of social organisation emerging in the Archaic age. Homer revitalised the inherited stories of adventure and warfare in order to inspire among his audience contemplation and reflection on their new urban lives. If it is indeed true that poetry in ancient Greece "existed to inform and instruct, most explicitly so when composed with the needs of specific groups… in mind,"[101] then I would argue that Homer, through his composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, contributed to the development of new ideas on the manner in which the Greeks could best live together in their new social world. Herein lies the secret to Homer's appeal, for his poetry became the expression of social issues that would remain relevant to Greece for centuries.

I attempt to account for the continuing appeal of the Homeric poems by exploring the relation of the social, political and ethical conditions and values of Archaic and Classical Greece to those portrayed in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In Chapter 1, The *Polis*, I examine the manner in which Greek society attempted to reorganise and reconstitute itself in a different way, developing original modes of social and political activity which the needs and goals of their new social world demanded. I demonstrate that the emerging notion of 'community' as represented in the slow development of the *polis* was hampered by an underlying tension between the competing demands of social obligation and personal freedom. I go on to further develop this discussion of the *polis* in Chapter 2, Ἰσονομία, where I argue that, despite the advent of democracy, the development and

[100] Scully (1990) 97, 82.
[101] Gentili [tr. Cole] (1988) 3.

implementation of new laws and institutions to promote social harmony, institutional continuity and the principles of ἰσονομία, and the growing recognition of the need for a more collaborative system of values, the Greeks never quite managed to successfully resolve this tension between independent self-interest and the common good.

I then proceed to examine Homer's treatment of and response to this social context. Chapter 3, Δαίμονι ἶσος, is a discussion of the manner in which Homer's two main protagonists, Achilleus and Odysseus, rather than being primarily defined as descendants of the gods, are instead brought closer to the world of the audience. They are made to undergo developments that gradually force them into the realisation and acceptance of their own limitations as human beings. In Chapters 4 and 5 I consider the broader implications of the role afforded the heroes in Homeric society. Chapter 4, Οἱ ἄριστοι, studies the extent to which the competitive pursuit of individual honour and prestige – which is both the defining characteristic and the principal motivation of any Homeric hero – inevitably leads to conflict and a breakdown in social cohesion. Chapter 5, Ποιμένα λαῶν, examines how the heroes, the leaders of Homeric society, repeatedly jeopardise the security and well-being of the social group in the pursuit of their own drives and ambitions. In conclusion I argue that Homer's conflation of a remembered mythical age with the contemporary conditions and values of Archaic and Classical Greece must have developed in his audiences a new conception and understanding of human existence for the altered sociopolitical conditions of the *polis*. His poetry became the means by which all Greeks from the eighth century onwards could contemplate and reflect on the reality of their own lives in the *polis*.

Chapter 1
The *Polis*

Greece, at the time during which Homer was composing his poems, had begun to evolve into a new form of social organisation: the *polis*. In contrast to the preceding Mycenaean Age – in which communities were "organised primarily on a basis of scattered individual households"[102] – this new form of social organisation involves by its very nature a drastic concentration of the population and, as a result, depends far more heavily for its success upon adherence to the social, or co-operative, virtues like justice, self-control, mutual respect and fellow-feeling. But was this major social development, with its evolution of new social relations and unprecedented political structures, actually accompanied by the necessary change in values better suited to these new social conditions?

After the end of the Mycenaean Era in Greece, power passed into the hands of small groups of aristocratic families. These men were denoted by the "most powerful words of commendation used of a man in both Homer and later Greek": "The noun ἀρετή, with the adjective ἀγαθός, its synonyms ἐσθλός and χρηστός, the comparative forms ἀμείνων and βελτίων, and the superlatives ἄριστος and βέλτιστος… The noun κακότης, with the adjective κακός, its synonyms δειλός and πονηρός, the comparative form κακίων, and the superlative κάκιστος, are the corresponding words of denigration."[103] These terms were typically reserved for the antithesis of the aristocratic class: poor men of low birth with no social standing.

Why should the aristocracy represent the most admired type of men? Ancient Greece was at this stage a moneyless economy, "in which wealth consisted of land and its products, houses, goods and chattel".[104] Much of the land, and certainly all of the best land, was under the control of the aristocracy. The "primary function of any state," as Adkins points out, "is to survive, and to prosper as well as it may; and in a small state such as a Greek city-state, in competition with its neighbours for the produce of a not very wealthy land, this primary function can never be long out of mind".[105] In order to

[102] Adkins (1960) 75.
[103] ibid. 30.
[104] Adkins (1972) 13.
[105] Adkins (1960) 197.

carry out this 'primary function', it was imperative that a *polis* be able to successfully defend itself against all instances of invasion and attack. A key requirement of such defence was the possession of horses, armour and weaponry; but these had to be supplied by the individual himself, and metal, "particularly the iron for swords and spear-heads… was scarce and expensive".[106] Since the aristocracy controlled most of the land and, as a result, the wealth, they were granted the highest terms of commendation because they represented the class of men that society relied on most.

Society valued these men for their possession of the qualities and skills which it recognised as being most essential to its safety and security: wealth, high-birth, courage, physical and military prowess, and skill in counsel and strategy. In order to have a fair chance at survival, any *polis* needed to be defended as efficiently as possible, and it was the aristocracy – with their wealth, their horses, their armour and weaponry, and their skill in strategy and warfare – who were best equipped to do so. Should they prove successful, they would maintain the safety and well-being of their community, for which they would be rewarded with admiration and social prestige; but should they fail, they would typically subject their community to poverty, slavery or annihilation. "Success" was therefore "so imperative that only results could have any value," for it was results that determined whether or not a community would continue to exist; "intentions were unimportant".[107]

Society's need of the aristocracy and of the competitive excellences they displayed was so strong that the co-operative virtues were far "less esteemed":[108] "Life is a matter of skill and courage; hence skill and courage are most highly commended. The co-operative virtues are less highly admired by society as a whole than skill and courage, for the latter are more evidently needed to secure its survival."[109] An ἀγαθός needed to be capable, efficient and, at all costs, successful. What he did not especially need to be was understanding, πινυτός, wise, πεπνυμένος, self-controlled, σώφρων, or just, δίκαιος, in his dealings with other members of society. A problem begins to emerge: though Greece had evolved into a new form of social organisation represented by the development of the

[106] Finley (1970) 100.
[107] Adkins (1960) 35.
[108] Adkins (1972) 14.
[109] Adkins (1960) 55.

polis, the current alignment of values dictated that it was not adherence to the co-operative virtues – the very virtues upon which the success and stability of this new social venture depended – that earned a man the highest praise, that judged him to be the 'best' in his society, but the display of the competitive excellences.

The ἀγαθοί as a class, the wealthy possessors of land, initially retained an unrivalled position of pre-eminence and control, ruling "partly through formal institutions, councils and magistracies; partly by marital and kinship connections as an Establishment; and partly by the intangible authority which came from their ancestry, for they could all produce genealogies taking them back to famous 'heroes' (and from there, often enough, to one of the gods)".[110] The landless κακοί remained inferior, with no social influence, no prerogatives, and no opportunity to improve their standing: "where land was the standard of wealth, the poor could not purchase it (even had anyone been able and willing to sell; and land was presumably inalienable) for there was nothing else with which they could purchase it; and being, as κακοί, necessarily ill-armed, they had no chance of taking land by force."[111]

From around 750 B.C., however, things start to change. The expansion of seagoing trade across the Mediterranean, together with the advent of colonisation and the commercial growth which accompanied it, led to an increased mobility of wealth and "accelerated the rise to social prominence of a new class of merchants, businessmen and producers of export goods".[112] Although the aristocrats themselves were initially "the chief traders," they "soon developed a taste for imported luxuries" which, in time, served to undermine "their previously unassailable position": in order to afford these luxuries, the aristocracy "would often have to sell off part of their property… without fresh investment, except in trading ventures" – which, as Herodotus warned his brother Perses, were so risky that they often resulted not in 'riches or success' but in 'evil poverty', κακή πενία (Hes. *Works and Days* 637-638; Hine [trans.])[113] – "and thus, in the long term,

[110] Finley (1963) 20.
[111] Adkins (1972) 22.
[112] Latacz (1996) 57.
[113] I will be using Solmsen's 1970 edition of Hesiod's *Opera et dies* throughout.

weaken their own economic position".[114] These shifts were further exacerbated by the invention of coined money:

> Money differs from land… in several important respects: it may be acquired by a variety of means, means which are available to others besides the traditional landowning class; though evidently the amount of metal from which money may be manufactured in any society at any time is finite and limited, it may be increased in a manner, and to an extent, which would be quite impossible in the case of society's holding of land; it is not perishable in the same way as is much agricultural produce; and it renders possible many types of financial transaction and enterprise not possible in a barter-economy.[115]

The new economic opportunities engendered by the expansion of trade and the invention of coined money resulted in an unprecedented increase in social mobility. Many people, who had been classified as κακοί under the traditional scheme of values, now became distinctly more prosperous and successful, while many ἀγαθοί, who had previously enjoyed a life of wealth and leisure, started to be forced downwards on the social scale due to economic difficulties. Although the exact nature of this process, as Finley points out, "may be wholly mysterious to us,"[116] its consequences certainly are not: the moral, social and economic confusion that resulted from the new mobility of wealth are clearly reflected in the collection of poems preserved under the name of Theognis, a sixth-century elegiac poet from Megara. 'Wealth', says Theognis, has wreaked havoc on the social structure:

> Κριοὺς μὲν καὶ ὄνους διζήμεθα, Κύρνε, καὶ ἵππους
> εὐγενέας, καί τις βούλεται ἐξ ἀγαθῶν
> βήσεσθαι· γῆμαι δὲ κακὴν κακοῦ οὐ μελεδαίνει
> ἐσθλὸς ἀνήρ, ἤν οἱ χρήματα πολλὰ διδῶι,
> οὐδὲ γυνὴ κακοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀναίνεται εἶναι ἄκοιτις
> πλουσίου, ἀλλ' ἀφνεὸν βούλεται ἀντ' ἀγαθοῦ.
> χρήματα μὲν τιμῶσι· καὶ ἐκ κακοῦ ἐσθλὸς ἔγημε
> καὶ κακὸς ἐξ ἀγαθοῦ· πλοῦτος ἔμειξε γένος.
> οὕτω μὴ θαύμαζε γένος, Πολυπαΐδη, ἀστῶν

[114] Green (1973) 58.
[115] Adkins (1972) 23.
[116] Finley (1983) 13.

μαυροῦσθαι· σὺν γὰρ μίσγεται ἐσθλὰ κακοῖς.[117]

> In rams and asses and horses, Kyrnos, we select the well-born; one wishes to acquire offspring of good [ἀγαθοί] stock. But in marriage a gentleman [ἐσθλός] doesn't care whether his wife is low-born [κακή], and from a lowborn [κακός] father, if the father gives him many possessions. Nor does a woman refuse to be the wife of a lowborn man [κακός] if he's rich; she wants money rather than excellence [ἀγαθός]. They all want money; thus, gentlemen [ἐσθλός] breed with low families [κακόν], low ones [κακός] with noble [ἀγαθόν]. Wealth has mongrelised thrown breeding. Thus, don't be surprised, son of Polypaos, if our citizen's children come to nothing, for good [ἐσθλά] is mingled with bad [κακά].[118]

Whereas before κακοί and ἀγαθοί had only ever 'mingled' with members of their own social class, the desire for 'wealth' and social prestige, Theognis complains, has now 'mongrelised' this precedent. Members of the aristocracy, driven by the lust for 'money' and 'possessions', are actually marrying into families outside their own prestigious circle; a development, no doubt, with which the wealthy commoners are only too pleased.

Given what they must have considered to be this considerable 'rise' in their social standing, the new rich are "unlikely to be willing to continue to be termed κακός".[119] The terms ἀγαθός, ἐσθλός and ἀρετή commend prosperity and success, and this they most certainly are; in some cases, it seems, far more so than the traditional ἀγαθοί:

Κύρνε, πόλις μὲν ἔθ' ἥδε πόλις, λαοὶ δὲ δὴ ἄλλοι,
οἳ πρόσθ' οὔτε δίκας ἤιδεσαν οὔτε νόμους,
ἀλλ' ἀμφὶ πλευραῖσι δορὰς αἰγῶν κατέτριβον,
ἔξω δ' ὥστ' ἔλαφοι τῆσδ' ἐνέμοντο πόλεος.
καὶ νῦν εἰσ' ἀγαθοί, Πολυπαΐδη· οἱ δὲ πρὶν ἐσθλοί
νῦν δειλοί.

> Kyrnos, the city stands; her men are changed. You know, in former days, there was a tribe who knew no laws nor manners, but like deer they grazed outside the city walls, and wore the skins of goats. These men are nobles [ἀγαθοί], now. The gentlemen of old [ἐσθλοί] are now the trash [δειλοί].[120]

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[117] I will be using Young's 1971 edition of Theognis' *Elegiae* throughout.
[118] Theog. 1.183-192; Wender [trans.].
[119] Adkins (1972) 39.
[120] Theog. 1.53-58; Wender [trans.].

No doubt the aristocracy views these changes as a threat to their own pre-eminence, as the bitterness of the following attack against those who consider 'wealth' to be 'the greatest power among all men' clearly suggests:

> Πλήθει δ' ἀνθρώπων ἀρετὴ μία γίνεται ἥδε,
> πλουτεῖν· τῶν δ' ἄλλων οὐδὲν ἄρ' ἦν ὄφελος,
> οὐδ' εἰ σωφροσύνην μὲν ἔχοις Ῥαδαμάνθυος αὐτοῦ,
> πλείονα δ' εἰδείης Σισύφου Αἰολίδεω,
> ὅστε καὶ ἐξ Ἀΐδεω πολυϊδρίῃσιν ἀνῆλθεν
> πείσας Περσεφόνην αἱμυλίοισι λόγοις,
> ἥτε βροτοῖς παρέχει λήθην βλάπτουσα νόοιο…
>
> … οὐδ' εἰ ψεύδεα μὲν ποιοῖς ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
> γλῶσσαν ἔχων ἀγαθὴν Νέστορος ἀντιθέου,
> ὠκύτερος δ' εἴησθα πόδας ταχεῶν Ἁρπυιῶν
> καὶ παίδων Βορέω, τῶν ἄφαρ εἰσὶ πόδες.
> ἀλλὰ χρὴ πάντας γνώμην ταύτην καταθέσθαι,
> ὡς πλοῦτος πλείστην πᾶσιν ἔχει δύναμιν.

> To most men this is the one excellence [ἀρετή]: to be rich. Nothing else is worth anything, not if you had the good judgement of Rhadamanthus, nor if you were more intelligent than Sisyphus the son of Aeolus, who with his cleverness escaped from Hades, having persuaded Persephone with flattering words – Persephone who gives men oblivion by damaging their minds… Not if you could make lies seem true, having the tongue of godlike Nestor, not if you were faster on foot than the swift harpies, or the sons of Boreas, whose feet are so quick. No; it is necessary for all to learn this wisdom: wealth has the greatest power among all men.[121]

And they are evidently not prepared to allow the commoners, no matter how 'rich' they are, to appropriate the title of ἀγαθός – much less the position of power which accompanies it – for themselves:

> Πολλοί τοι πλουτοῦσι κακοί, ἀγαθοὶ δὲ πένονται,
> ἀλλ' ἡμεῖς τούτοισ' οὐ διαμειψόμεθα
> τῆς ἀρετῆς τὸν πλοῦτον, ἐπεὶ τὸ μὲν ἔμπεδον αἰεί,
> χρήματα δ' ἀνθρώπων ἄλλοτε ἄλλος ἔχει.

[121] Theog. 1.699-705, 1.713-718; Wender [trans.].

> Bad men [κακοί] are often rich, and good men [ἀγαθοί] poor. But we would not exchange our virtue [ἀρετή] for their wealth. Our virtue [ἀρετή] always is secure, while money goes to this one, then to that.[122]

> Πολλοῖσ' ἀχρήστοισι θεὸς διδοῖ ἀνδράσιν ὄλβον
> ἐσθλόν, ὃς οὔτ' αὐτῶι βέλτερος, οὐδὲν ἐών,
> οὔτε φίλοισ'. ἀρετῆς δὲ μέγα κλέος οὔποτ' ὀλεῖται·
> αἰχμητὴς γὰρ ἀνὴρ γῆν τε καὶ ἄστυ σαοῖ.

> The gods give good prosperity [ἐσθλόν] to many a worthless man which does no good to him nor to his friends; but the great name of courage [ἀρετή] never dies: the hero saves his city and its land.[123]

Contrary to a popular proverb of the time, 'Money makes the man',[124] wealth, Theognis claims, is by no means the most important criterion. Many members of the aristocracy may be 'poor', but they still have their noble breeding, their physical prowess, and their status as the most efficient force for the defence of society, and thus remain ἀγαθοί nonetheless. And since wealth is not a quality inherent to ἀρετή – because it passes first 'to this one, then to that' – and 'rich' is all that these commoners can claim to be, they remain 'worthless' κακοί.

The different classes portrayed in the Theognid corpus are not merely "engaged in a discussion about semantics and the use of language". To be ἀγαθός, according to the traditional scheme of values, is to be well-born, successful and prosperous; but it is also, by implication, to have an irrefutable claim to the highest positions of power and pre-eminence that society has to offer. This is what the aristocracy and the new rich are competing for, "power and prestige, and their being termed ἀγαθοί is the acknowledgement that the one or the other has succeeded in obtaining, or retaining, them".[125] Power and authority, as we have seen, had previously been monopolised by the aristocracy. But now "a number of outsiders [had] acquired enough wealth to feel themselves entitled to a share in [that] monopoly,"[126] and the aristocratic principle of

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[122] Theog. 1.315-318; Wender [trans.].
[123] ibid. 1.865-868.
[124] Green (1973) 58.
[125] Adkins (1972) 40.
[126] Finley (1983) 13.

government began to come under increasingly heavy pressure ("a supposition" that is "confirmed," Green argues, not only by "an increased emphasis on divine ancestry and genealogical sanctions" but also "by subsequent political reforms, all heavily loaded in favour of capital" instead of the exclusive rights of a hereditary order[127]).

Society was in turmoil: "all classes… found themselves involved in social conflict, or *stasis*, in varying combinations and alliances."[128] The aristocracy, of course, had no intention of forfeiting their own position of power and influence to those who had traditionally been subordinate to them. The lust for power, however, was so strong that not even this mutual threat was enough of an incentive to maintain a united front: "factious and ambitious individuals often brought about struggles for power within their own ranks, exacerbating the troubles".[129] Then there were the wealthy commoners, who "at once saw a chance to improve their position, politically as well as socially".[130] Green argues that "the success story" of a non-aristocrat such as Gyges of Lydia (*c*. 685-652) – who not only 'made himself supreme' by usurping Candaules' throne but also managed to have his 'royal power' 'confirmed' by bribing the oracle at Delphi with 'presents' of 'silver and gold' (Hdt. *Histories* 1.12-14.; De Sélincourt [trans.]) – must have "made it clear to talented, ambitious men outside the charmed inner circle that inherited rule was not laid down in heaven, and that capital could, at a pinch, make a highly effective substitute for breeding".[131] And finally there were the poor, the mass of working farmers, who, according to Aristotle, turned to *stasis* out of a 'desire for equality': 'there was strife for a long time between the notables and the masses' because 'the poor were enslaved to the rich, themselves and their children and their wives' and 'had no political rights'.[132] Theognis is afraid that these conditions of civic turmoil will ultimately give rise to a tyrant:

> Κύρνε, κύει πόλις ἥδε, δέδοικα δὲ μὴ τέκηι ἄνδρα
> εὐθυντῆρα κακῆς ὕβριος ἡμετέρης.
> ἀστοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἔθ' οἵδε σαόφρονες, ἡγεμόνες δέ

[127] Green (1973) 49-50.
[128] Finley (1970) 102.
[129] Finley (1963) 24-25.
[130] Green (1973) 49.
[131] ibid. 57-58.
[132] Arist. *Politics* 1301b; Sinclair [trans.], *The Athenian Constitution* 2.1-2.3; Rhodes [trans.].

τετράφαται πολλὴν εἰς κακότητα πεσεῖν.
οὐδεμίαν πω, Κύρν', ἀγαθοὶ πόλιν ὤλεσαν ἄνδρες,
ἀλλ' ὅταν ὑβρίζειν τοῖσι κακοῖσιν ἅδηι
δῆμόν τε φθείρουσι δίκας τ' ἀδίκοισι διδοῦσιν
οἰκείων κερδέων εἵνεκα καὶ κράτεος·
ἔλπεο μὴ δηρὸν κείνην πόλιν ἀτρεμέ' ἧσθαι,
μηδ' εἰ νῦν κεῖται πολλῆι ἐν ἡσυχίηι,
εὖτ' ἂν τοῖσι κακοῖσι φίλ' ἀνδράσι ταῦτα γένηται,
κέρδεα δημοσίωι σὺν κακῶι ἐρχόμενα.
ἐκ τῶν γὰρ στάσιές τε καὶ ἔμφυλοι φόνοι ἀνδρῶν·
μούναρχοι δὲ πόλει μήποτε τῆιδε ἅδοι.

> Kyrnos, this city is pregnant; I fear she may give birth to a man to straighten out our evil ὕβρις, for these citizens are still sound of mind, but their leaders have turned towards a fall into great evil. No city has yet been destroyed by good men, Kyrnos; but when it pleases evil men to commit ὕβρις, when they corrupt the common people and give judgement in favour of the unjust for their own profit or power, do not expect that city to stay peaceful for long, not even if it now rests in tranquility, and because these things are dear to evil men their profits bring evil to the people. And from them comes civil strife, the killing of kinfolk, and dictatorships too. May the city never wish for these![133]

The current alignment of values is clearly proving disruptive to city life: in the quest 'for their own profit or power', ambitious individuals are inflicting 'evil', 'civil strife' and 'violence' upon the 'city' and its 'people'. But it was from this chaos that new insights began to spring, as society started to reassess the qualities fundamental to the nature of ἀγαθός, "fundamental, that is, to a man's being of the greatest value to society".[134]

In his *Works and Days* (*c*. 700), Hesiod – who, along with Homer, was credited as having 'composed theogonies and described the gods for the Greeks, giving them all their appropriate titles, offices, and powers'[135] – includes a little story about a hawk and a nightingale. He begins by stating that he will now 'tell' the sort of 'fable' that 'lords', βασιλεῖς, 'understand':

[133] Theog. 1.39-52; Gagarin and Woodruff [trans.].
[134] Adkins (1960) 76.
[135] Hdt. *Histories* 2.53; De Sélincourt [trans.].

ὧδ' ἴρηξ προσέειπεν ἀηδόνα ποικιλόδειρον
ὕψι μάλ' ἐν νεφέεσσι φέρων ὀνύχεσσι μεμαρπώς·
ἣ δ' ἐλεόν, γναμπτοῖσι πεπαρμένη ἀμφ' ὀνύχεσσι,
μύρετο· τὴν ὅ γ' ἐπικρατέως πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν·
"δαιμονίη, τί λέληκας; ἔχει νύ σε πολλὸν ἀρείων·
τῇ δ' εἶς ᾗ σ' ἂν ἐγώ περ ἄγω καὶ ἀοιδὸν ἐοῦσαν·
δεῖπνον δ', αἴ κ' ἐθέλω, ποιήσομαι ἠὲ μεθήσω.
ἄφρων δ', ὅς κ' ἐθέλῃ πρὸς κρείσσονας ἀντιφερίζειν·
νίκης τε στέρεται πρός τ' αἴσχεσιν ἄλγεα πάσχει."
ὣς ἔφατ' ὠκυπέτης ἴρηξ, τανυσίπτερος ὄρνις.

A hawk spoke to a speckle-necked nightingale cruelly, as he lifted her up to the clouds while gripping her tight in his talons. Piteously she, transfixed by his crooked claws, was lamenting when the imperious hawk addressed her in arrogant parlance: "Why, little lady, such shrieks? One stronger than you now has got you; where you are going, I will take you myself, though you are a songstress, for as I please I will make you my dinner or give you your freedom. Witless is one who attempts to strive against those who are stronger [κρείσσων], for he is bereft of victory [νίκη] and suffers woes in addition to disgrace [αἴσχεα]." Thus said the fast-flying hawk, that bird with the generous wingspan.[136]

These are the traditional values: the hawk is 'stronger', κρείσσων, than the 'little' nightingale, he holds all the power, and since "the achievement of victory and the avoidance of the disgrace [αἴσχεα] of defeat"[137] are all that matter, the nightingale is 'witless' to suppose that her appeals to the co-operative virtues like pity and compassion can in any way 'strive' against the hawk's prerogative to do as he pleases. It would seem that Hesiod is condoning the use of violence and cruelty in the pursuit of individual success.

But then he continues:

Ὦ Πέρση, σὺ δὲ ταῦτα μετὰ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῇσι
καί νυ δίκης ἐπάκουε, βίης δ' ἐπιλήθεο πάμπαν.
τόνδε γὰρ ἀνθρώποισι νόμον διέταξε Κρονίων,
ἰχθύσι μὲν καὶ θηρσὶ καὶ οἰωνοῖς πετεηνοῖς
ἔσθειν ἀλλήλους, ἐπεὶ οὐ δίκη ἐστὶ μετ' αὐτοῖς·
ἀνθρώποισι δ' ἔδωκε δίκην, ἣ πολλὸν ἀρίστη

[136] Hes. *Works and Days* 202-212; Hine [trans.].
[137] Adkins (1972) 31.

γίνεται· εἰ γάρ τίς κ' ἐθέλῃ τὰ δίκαι' ἀγορεῦσαι
γινώσκων, τῷ μέν τ' ὄλβον διδοῖ εὐρύοπα Ζεύς·
ὃς δέ κε μαρτυρίῃσιν ἑκὼν ἐπίορκον ὀμόσσας
ψεύσεται, ἐν δὲ δίκην βλάψας νήκεστον ἀασθῇ,
τοῦ δέ τ' ἀμαυροτέρη γενεὴ μετόπισθε λέλειπται·
ἀνδρὸς δ' εὐόρκου γενεὴ μετόπισθεν ἀμείνων.

> Brother Perses, lay up in your heart these things that I tell you: Pay attention to justice [δίκη], forget about violence altogether. Zeus, son of Kronos, ordained one rule of behaviour for humans but quite another for fishes and animals, likewise for birds, who commonly eat one another; there is no justice [δίκη] among such creatures. But to mankind he gave justice [δίκη], which proves to be much the most beneficial [ἀρίστη]. To that man that argues a just cause truthfully, knowing its justice, Zeus the far seeing will give great blessings, prosperity, good luck, but for someone who knowingly bears false witness, committing perjury, injuring justice, and doing permanent damage, surely his progeny will be left in the shadows hereafter, whereas the race of the man who swears truly will be better [ἀμείνων] hereafter.[138]

While 'violence' is both necessary and acceptable among 'animals', 'birds' and 'fishes', Zeus has 'ordained… quite another… rule of behaviour' for human beings. So instead of harming one another, as animals do, for the sake of one's own advancement, men should embrace δίκη, since this 'proves much the most beneficial'. Hesiod explains why δίκη is the 'better road' to follow:

οἳ δὲ δίκας ξείνοισι καὶ ἐνδήμοισι διδοῦσιν
ἰθείας καὶ μή τι παρεκβαίνουσι δικαίου,
τοῖσι τέθηλε πόλις, λαοὶ δ' ἀνθεῦσιν ἐν αὐτῇ·
εἰρήνη δ' ἀνὰ γῆν κουροτρόφος, οὐδέ ποτ' αὐτοῖς
ἀργαλέον πόλεμον τεκμαίρεται εὐρύοπα Ζεύς·

> But they who deliver correct just judgments to stranger and fellow countryman, never transgressing a bit the way of the righteous; theirs is a stalwart city and flourishing people within it. Peace that cherishes children is over the land, and all-seeing Zeus never ever allots to them cruel and terrible warfare.[139]

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138 Hes. *Works and Days* 274-285; Hine [trans.].
139 ibid. 225-229.

When men co-operate justly in their relations with one another, their 'city' is 'stalwart', and the 'people' 'flouris[h] within it'. Men 'just in their dealings' are never forced to endure 'disasters' or 'famines'; indeed, every aspect of the community's life 'flourish[es] with all good [ἀγαθά] things': the 'earth bears plentiful food for them'; their sheep are 'beautifully woolly', 'fraught with luxuriant fleece'; their 'women at term give birth to fine children resembling their fathers'; and they never have to 'venture' out in ships, since 'the grain-growing ploughland provides produce in plenty'.[140] Hesiod continues:

> οἷς δ' ὕβρις τε μέμηλε κακὴ καὶ σχέτλια ἔργα,
> τοῖς δὲ δίκην Κρονίδης τεκμαίρεται εὐρύοπα Ζεύς.
> πολλάκι καὶ ξύμπασα πόλις κακοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἀπηύρα,
> ὅστις ἀλιτραίνῃ καὶ ἀτάσθαλα μηχανάαται.
> τοῖσιν δ' οὐρανόθεν μέγ' ἐπήγαγε πῆμα Κρονίων,
> λιμὸν ὁμοῦ καὶ λοιμόν, ἀποφθινύθουσι δὲ λαοί·
> οὐδὲ γυναῖκες τίκτουσιν, μινύθουσι δὲ οἶκοι
> Ζηνὸς φραδμοσύνῃσιν Ὀλυμπίου· ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε
> ἢ τῶν γε στρατὸν εὐρὺν ἀπώλεσεν ἢ ὅ γε τεῖχος
> ἢ νέας ἐν πόντῳ Κρονίδης ἀποτείνυται αὐτῶν.
> Ὦ βασιλῆς, ὑμεῖς δὲ καταφράζεσθε καὶ αὐτοὶ
> τήνδε δίκην·

> Zeus, son of Kronos, who sees far and wide, metes justice to those who care for evil and violence [ὕβρις], foster criminal actions; time and again whole cities are lost on account of one wicked [κακός] man who is sinful and dreams up deeds of presumptuous daring. Zeus, son of Kronos, from heaven inflicts great suffering on them, famine and pestilence at once, and the people perish; women do not give birth, so that households waste away, all through the plans of Olympian Zeus, who likewise at other times devastates broad armies of men and their fortifications, and in his wrath Kronos' son sinks ships in the midst of the sea, too. You rulers, take notice of this punishment.[141]

When men choose to disregard δίκη in favour of ὕβρις, 'criminal actions' and 'presumptuous daring', the entire community 'waste[s] away': the city is 'lost' and its people 'perish'. Hesiod is commending the co-operatives virtues, arguing that it is δίκη,

[140] Hes. *Works and Days* 230-237; Hine [trans.].
[141] ibid. 238-249.

rather than the competitive excellences, that proves most essential and most beneficial, ἀρίστη, to life in a *polis*.

Of course to assert something is not the same as to actually have it accepted. Hesiod certainly does not seem too optimistic that his cry for justice will be heard:

> νῦν δὴ ἐγὼ μήτ' αὐτὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποισι δίκαιος
> εἴην μήτ' ἐμὸς υἱός, ἐπεὶ κακὸν ἄνδρα δίκαιον
> ἔμμεναι, εἰ μείζω γε δίκην ἀδικώτερος ἕξει.

> Now, therefore, may neither I nor my son be just [δίκαιος] among men; for it is disadvantageous [κακόν] to be just [δίκαιος] if he who is more unjust [ἀδικώτερος] is to come off better.[142]

But there were, in fact, a number of developments that seem to indicate that the social virtues – justice, equality, social cohesion – were beginning to take hold: "the codification of laws, the multiplication of administrative posts, the swing against *ex officio* life appointments, the tendency to elect officials by majority vote for a one-year tenure (as early as 683 BC in the case of the Athenian archonship), the right of free citizens to exercise that vote, and the sense of collective comradeship engendered by the hoplite phalanx."[143] In practice, however, the competitive pursuit of power, if anything, actually increased. By the mid 570s the social conflict in Athens between the 'few' and the 'many' (Arist. *The Athenian Constitution* 5.1; Rackham [trans.]), between the ruling classes and those traditionally subordinate to them, had reached "so hopeless – and dangerous – a deadlock… that both sides expressed their readiness to accept arbitration as a preferable alternative to endless factionalism, civil war or the 'strong man' solution of tyranny".[144] In 594 Solon was chosen, by agreement, to revise and reform the Athenian constitution.

Athens, Solon believes, 'will never be' brought to 'ruin… by the dispensation of Zeus and the purpose of the blessed immortal gods', since Pallas Athene, their 'great-hearted

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142 Hes. *Works and Days* 270-272; Hine [trans.].
143 Green (1973) 63-64.
144 ibid. 83.

guardian', shields the city with 'her hands'.[145] If anything, it is 'the people themselves' who will 'destroy' the city:

> αὐτοὶ δὲ φθείρειν μεγάλην πόλιν ἀφραδίῃσιν
> ἀστοὶ βούλονται χρήμασι πειθόμενοι,
> δήμου θ' ἡγεμόνων ἄδικος νόος, οἷσιν ἑτοῖμον
> ὕβριος ἐκ μεγάλης ἄλγεα πολλὰ παθεῖν·
> οὐ γὰρ ἐπίστανται κατέχειν κόρον…
>
> … πλουτέουσιν δ' ἀδίκοις ἔργμασι πειθόμενοι…
>
> … οὔθ' ἱερῶν κτεάνων οὔτε τι δημοσίων
> φειδόμενοι κλέπτουσιν ἀφαρπαγῆι ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος,
> οὐδὲ φυλάσσονται σεμνὰ Δίκης θέμεθλα,
> ἣ σιγῶσα σύνοιδε τὰ γιγνόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα,
> τῶι δὲ χρόνωι πάντως ἦλθ' ἀποτεισομένη…
>
> … οὕτω δημόσιον κακὸν ἔρχεται οἴκαδ' ἑκάστωι,
> αὔλειοι δ' ἔτ' ἔχειν οὐκ ἐθέλουσι θύραι,
> ὑψηλὸν δ' ὑπὲρ ἕρκος ὑπέρθορεν, εὗρε δὲ πάντως,
> εἰ καί τις φεύγων ἐν μυχῶι ἦι θαλάμου.[146]

> It is the people themselves who in their folly seek to destroy our great city, prompted by desire for wealth; and their leaders, unjust [ἄδικος] of heart, for whom awaits the suffering of many woes, the fruit of their great arrogance [ὕβρις], since they know not how to check their greed… They have wealth though their following of unjust [ἄδικος] works and ways… Neither the sacred treasure nor that of the state do they spare in any wise, but they steal, each in his own corner, like men pillaging. They take no heed of the holy foundations of Justice [Δίκη], who in silence marks what happens and what has been, and who in course of time comes without fail to exact the penalty… Thus the public ill [δημόσιον κακόν] comes home to every single man, and no longer do his court-yard gates avail to hold it back; high though the wall be, it leaps over, and finds him out unfailingly, even though in his flight he be hid in the farthest corner of his chamber.[147]

The unchecked desire for power, the new mobility of wealth, and the insecurity of social identity are all proving disastrous to *polis*-life. The 'leaders' of the people – 'unjust of

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[145] Sol. 4.1-4; Freeman [trans.].
[146] I will be using West's 1972 edition of Solon's *Fragmenta* throughout.
[147] Sol. 4.5-16, 4.26-29; Freeman [trans.].

heart' and swollen with 'great arrogance' – are disrespecting 'the holy foundations of Justice' in the pursuit of their individual drives and ambitions. They "are becoming wealthy by indiscriminate means," and abusing that wealth in order to engage "in faction and competition for political power". Meanwhile "the citizens in general," 'prompted by desire for wealth', "are siding with the faction of one or another powerful and wealthy individual".[148] The outcome of this 'folly', Solon believes, can only be public disaster, δημόσιον κακόν, and the eventual destruction of their 'great city'. He presents his solution:

> ταῦτα διδάξαι θυμὸς Ἀθηναίους με κελεύει,
> ὡς κακὰ πλεῖστα πόλει Δυσνομίη παρέχει·
> Εὐνομίη δ' εὔκοσμα καὶ ἄρτια πάντ' ἀποφαίνει,
> καὶ θαμὰ τοῖς ἀδίκοις ἀμφιτίθησι πέδας·
> τραχέα λειαίνει, παύει κόρον, ὕβριν ἀμαυροῖ,
> αὑαίνει δ' ἄτης ἄνθεα φυόμενα,
> εὐθύνει δὲ δίκας σκολιάς, ὑπερήφανά τ' ἔργα
> πραΰνει· παύει δ' ἔργα διχοστασίης,
> παύει δ' ἀργαλέης ἔριδος χόλον, ἔστι δ' ὑπ' αὐτῆς
> πάντα κατ' ἀνθρώπους ἄρτια καὶ πινυτά.

> These are the lessons which my heart bids me teach the Athenians, how that lawlessness [δυσνομία] brings innumerable ills [κακά] to the state, but obedience to the law [εὐνομία] shows forth all things in order and harmony and at the same time sets shackles on the unjust [ἄδικοι]. It smoothes what is rough, checks greed, dims arrogance, withers the opening blooms of ruinous folly, makes straight the crooked judgement, tames the deeds of insolence, puts a stop to the works of civic discord, and ends the wrath of grievous strife. Under its rule all things among mankind are sane and wise.[149]

Εὐνομία, Solon argues, will remedy the current state of δυσνομία and restore order to 'all things among mankind'. An "important political catchword in the sixth century," εὐνομία "convey[s] ideas of 'good order', 'good laws' and 'having the laws well obeyed', together with that of an appropriate distribution of wealth, power and resources within

[148] Adkins (1972) 50.
[149] Sol. 4.20-39; Freeman [trans.].

society".[150] This is precisely what Solon – who is quoted by Aristotle as claiming that he 'stood protecting both [rich and poor] with a strong shield, permitting neither to prevail unjustly'[151] – set out to achieve through his reforms.

Solon's first move was to alleviate the 'fierce' 'strife' that had arisen between the small farm owners and the wealthy individuals to whom many had fallen into debt. In his so called σεισάχθεια, the 'Shaking-off of Burdens', Solon 'cancell[ed]' all agricultural debt, 'both private and public', ordered that those who had been sold into slavery be returned, and 'forbi[d]' that any future loans be contracted 'on the security of the person'. He then took steps to ensure greater equality before the law, establishing a People's Court, the Heliaea, and giving every citizen the right 'to seek retribution for those' who had been 'wronged'.[152] "Most important of all," however, "was his constitutional redefinition of the Athenian class structure."[153] Solon 'divided the citizens into four classes by an assessment of wealth: the five-hundred-bushel class, the cavalry, the rankers and the labourers'. The 'major offices, such as the nine archons, the treasurers, the sellers, the Eleven and the *colacretae*', were 'distributed among' the first three classes, with the offices being assigned 'to the members of each class according to the level of their assessment', and the rest, 'those registered in the labourers' class', were restricted to 'the assembly and jury-courts'.[154] This served to spread the basis of political power more widely: "the wealthiest commoners became eligible for the highest offices and the Areopagus, thus breaking the [aristocratic] monopoly; the middle classes, including the hoplite soldiers who held sufficient land, were given a role in government for the first time; and even the poor, both urban and rural, were recognised as a working part of the *demos* as a whole, severely restricted though their position was."[155]

Aristotle tells us that Solon 'was so moderate and impartial' in his reforms that, had he wished, he could easily 'have got the rest of the people into his power and made himself tyrant over the city'. He did not; "set[ting] a higher value on honour and the safety of the city than on his own advantage', Solon chose instead to leave Athens for a period of ten

[150] Adkins (1972) 51.
[151] Arist. *The Athenian Constitution* 12.1; Rhodes [trans.].
[152] ibid. 6-9.
[153] Green (1973) 85.
[154] Arist. *The Athenian Constitution* 7; Rhodes [trans.].
[155] Finley (1970) 125.

years.[156] That Solon was acting against the prevailing standards is made clear when he imagines the contempt with which his decision would be viewed by the general population:

> "οὐκ ἔφυ Σόλων βαθύφρων οὐδὲ βουλήεις ἀνήρ·
> ἐσθλὰ γὰρ θεοῦ διδόντος αὐτὸς οὐκ ἐδέξατο…
>
> … θυμοῦ θ' ἁμαρτῆι καὶ φρενῶν ἀποσφαλείς·
> ἤθελον γάρ κεν κρατήσας, πλοῦτον ἄφθονον λαβὼν
> καὶ τυραννεύσας Ἀθηνέων μοῦνον ἡμέρην μίαν,
> ἀσκὸς ὕστερον δεδάρθαι κἀπιτετρίφθαι γένος."

> "Solon is not gifted by nature with depth of wit and shrewdness; for when the god was offering him boons [ἐσθλά], of his own accord he declined them… [like one who falls] short alike in pluck and wits. If I could get the mastery, and seize boundless wealth and the lordship of Athens for one single day, I would be willing afterwards to be flayed for a wineskin, and let my family be obliterated."[157]

The competitive values prevail: individual success, the mark of an ἀγαθός, "is the [highest] goal, the unquestioned end".[158] And who is more successful than the tyrant, a man who holds the supreme position of power and prestige? So "far from restraining," such values actually "enjoin upon the individual" that he should maximize his prosperity by "secur[ing] himself a tyranny if he can".[159] Solon is all too aware that his decision – try as he may to justify it – is shameful, αἰσχρόν, in terms of these values:

> εἰ δὲ γῆς φησιν ἐφεισάμην
> πατρίδος, τυραννίδος δὲ καὶ βίης ἀμειλίχου
> οὐ καθηψάμην μιάνας καὶ καταισχύνας κλέος,
> οὐδὲν αἰδέομαι· πλέον γὰρ ὧδε νικήσειν δοκέω
> πάντας ἀνθρώπους.

> If I have spared my native land, and did not defile and dishonour my good repute by laying hands on a tyranny of cruel violence, I feel no shame

[156] Arist. *The Athenian Constitution* 6.3; Rhodes [trans.].
[157] Sol. 33.1-2, 33.4-7; Freeman [trans.].
[158] Adkins (1972) 27.
[159] ibid. 56.

[αἰδεῖσθαι] at all; for in this way I believe that I shall win a greater triumph – over all mankind.[160]

It should come as no surprise, given these values, that Solon's reforms – designed to advance the co-operative virtues like justice, equality and fellow-feeling – ultimately failed to eliminate 'civic discord' and 'grievous strife'.[161] The factional disturbances continued, "play[ing] into the hands of the more ambitious [individuals] able to draw upon retainers and followers in the continual jockeying for honour, power and wealth".[162] Three main factions arose – 'the party of the Men of the Coast', 'the party of the Men of the Plain', and 'the party of the Hillmen' – 'none' of whom 'thought of an equitable settlement, but each counted upon improving its own position and overwhelming its opponents'. Twice in the next decade it proved impossible, 'because of the civil strife', to appoint an archon. And one archon, a clear indication of the 'state of general internal disorder', held office illegally for over two years before he was 'driven out of the office by force'.[163] Eventually, in 545 B.C., one man seized the opportunity to do what Solon would not: he rose above everyone else and secured for himself the paramount position of power and prestige. Peisistratus ruled as tyrant until his death in 527, and was succeeded by his two sons, Hippias and Hipparchus. Following the overthrow of the Peisistratid tyranny in 510, an outright struggle 'for power' once again broke out between the aristocratic factions, eventually won by Cleisthenes after he had '[taken] the people into his party'.[164] Once in power, Cleisthenes 'became leader and champion of the people' (Arist. *The Athenian Constitution* 20.4; Rhodes [trans.].), implementing new reforms that "laid the structural foundation of Athenian democracy".[165]

If there was to be any chance of peaceful co-existence, of stability and social cohesion, the monopoly of power by wealthy and influential individuals ('bribe-devouring judges', Hesiod called them[166]), it was clear, would no longer work.

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[160] Sol. 32.1-5; Freeman [trans.].
[161] ibid. 4.37-38.
[162] Finley (1970) 126.
[163] Arist. *The Athenian Constitution* 13.1-13.5; Rackham [trans.], Plut. *Solon* 29.1-29.2; Scott-Kilvert [trans.].
[164] Hdt. *Histories* 5.66; De Sélincourt [trans.], Arist. *The Athenian Constitution* 20.1-20.5; Rackham [trans.].
[165] Finley (1970) 128.
[166] Hes. *Works and Days* 263-264; Hine [trans.].

Cleisthenes recognised that the only way to eliminate factionalism and civil strife was to politically remodel the old tribal-aristocratic power structure, which still retained its old patronage network of clan-based allegiances. So he decided "to substitute neighbourhood for tribe or clan as the main determinant in Attica's social grouping".[167] His first move was 'to distribute all the citizens' into 'ten tribes instead of the old four'. He then 'divided the land of Attica' into 139 demes, making 'the men living in each deme fellow-demesmen of one another' who were now identified not only by 'their fathers' names' but also by the name of their deme. He divided the demes into three groups – city, coast and inland – 'and allotted three to each tribe in such a way that each tribe should have a share in all the regions'. By creating ten tribes that "each contained a representative cross-section of the whole population,"[168] Cleisthenes was able to 'mix' everyone up, thereby dissolving the old factions and giving 'more men… a share in the running of the state'. 'When this had been accomplished', Aristotle writes, the Athenian constitution was 'much more democratic' than it had ever been before.[169]

As Greek society was forced to reorganise and reconstitute itself in a different way, developing original modes of social and political activity which the needs and goals of their new social world demanded, the emerging notion of 'community' as represented in the slow development of the *polis* was clearly hampered by the underlying tension between individual autonomy and social obligation, between the interests of the individual and the interests of the larger social group, between the need to maintain group harmony and the desire to assert one's own pre-eminence. And the δυσνομία, 'civic discord' and 'grievous strife'[170] that frequently arose as a result of the failure to adequately resolve this tension posed a serious threat to the very existence of the early Archaic *polis* as a community of Greek citizens. Now that an increase in the level of social and political self-consciousness had finally led to the advent of democracy, the development of new laws and institutions to promote social harmony, institutional continuity, justice and equality, and the growing recognition of the need for a more collaborative system of values, would the Greeks at last manage to achieve some kind of

[167] Green (1973) 94.
[168] ibid. 94.
[169] Arist. *The Athenian Constitution* 21-22.1; Rhodes [trans.].
[170] Sol. 4.20-39; Freeman [trans.].

workable compromise between the competing demands of social obligation and personal freedom?

Chapter 2
Ἰσονομία

New Values

Athenian democracy was founded upon a principle of "direct participation". The meetings of the Assembly, "whose authority was essentially total," were open to all male citizens above the age of eighteen. The Assembly met frequently – "at least four times in every thirty-six-day period in the fourth century and perhaps as often in the fifth" – and the citizens who chose to attend were expected to participate in discussions and debates, to suggest new decrees or amendments and to vote on any proposals. Members of the *boule* – a Council of five hundred which was responsible for "much of the prepatory work" for the Assembly – were chosen by lot from all citizens above the age of thirty. Their term of office lasted for one year and no-one was permitted to serve more than twice in his lifetime. Most of the officials were also elected by lot for a single year of office: "the few exceptions included the ten generals (*strategoi*) who were elected and could be re-elected without limit, and temporary *ad hoc* commissions for diplomatic negotiation and the like." "Regardless of the significance or insignificance" of their post, public officials were directly responsible "to the *demos* itself, in the Council or the Assembly or the courts, and not to a superior officeholder". Jury-members were also selected by lot from a panel of 6 000 volunteers, for which they received an allowance; as did the members of the Council, certain public officials and (from 403/402 B.C. onwards) those who attended the Assembly, with the result that "poverty was no bar to public service". So "when one adds up the Assembly, the Council, the courts and the large number of rotating offices, the total – several thousands – "indicates a direct participation in the work of government widely shared among the citizen-body, an uncommon degree of political experience cutting right across the class structure".[171]

Given the development and implementation of these democratic principles of government – designed with the express purpose of promoting justice, equality and social cohesion – it would seem that the importance of the co-operative virtues to the well-being of society had finally been recognised and established. The Athenians certainly believed

[171] Finley (1963) 56-59.

that their new form of government would prove highly beneficial to *polis*-life. In Euripides' *Suppliant Women* (*c*. 420), for example, a herald arrives in Athens from Thebes and asks, 'Who is king absolute [τύραννος] of this land?' Theseus, constitutional ruler of Athens, retorts:

> πρῶτον μὲν ἤρξω τοῦ λόγου ψευδῶς, ξένε,
> ζητῶν τύραννον ἐνθάδ'· οὐ γὰρ ἄρχεται
> ἑνὸς πρὸς ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ' ἐλευθέρα πόλις.
> δῆμος δ' ἀνάσσει διαδοχαῖσιν ἐν μέρει
> ἐνιαυσίαισιν, οὐχὶ τῶι πλούτωι διδοὺς
> τὸ πλεῖστον ἀλλὰ χὠ πένης ἔχων ἴσον.[172]

> First, stranger, you began your speech on a false note, enquiring for a τύραννος here. This state is not subject to one man's will, but is a free *polis*. The king here is the people [δῆμος], who by yearly office govern in turn. We give no special power to wealth; the poor man's voice commands equal [ἴσον] authority.[173]

The herald is appalled that the 'poor' should be allowed to participate in government:

> ἄλλως τε πῶς ἂν μὴ διορθεύων λόγους
> ὀρθῶς δύναιτ' ἂν δῆμος εὐθύνειν πόλιν;
> ὁ γὰρ χρόνος μάθησιν ἀντὶ τοῦ τάχους
> κρείσσω δίδωσι. γαπόνος δ' ἀνὴρ πένης,
> εἰ καὶ γένοιτο μὴ ἀμαθής, ἔργων ὕπο
> οὐκ ἂν δύναιτο πρὸς τὰ κοίν' ἀποβλέπειν.

> The common man! Incapable of plain reasoning, how can he guide a city in sound policy? Experience gives more useful knowledge than impatience. Your poor rustic, even though he be no fool – how can he turn his mind from ploughs to politics?[174]

Theseus proceeds to argue that, far from being the 'worst pestilence of our time', a democratic form of government is, in fact, most beneficial to the interests of a *polis*:

> οὐδὲν τυράννου δυσμενέστερον πόλει,
> ὅπου τὸ μὲν πρώτιστον οὐκ εἰσὶν νόμοι

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[172] I will be using Diggle's 1981 edition of Euripides' *Supplices* throughout.
[173] Eur. *Suppliant Women* 399, 403-408; Vellacott [trans.].
[174] ibid. 417-422.

κοινοί, κρατεῖ δ' εἷς τὸν νόμον κεκτημένος
αὐτὸς παρ' αὑτῶι· καὶ τόδ' οὐκέτ' ἔστ' ἴσον.
γεγραμμένων δὲ τῶν νόμων ὅ τ' ἀσθενὴς
ὁ πλούσιός τε τὴν δίκην ἴσην ἔχει,
ἔστιν δ' ἐνισπεῖν τοῖσιν ἀσθενεστέροις
τὸν εὐτυχοῦντα ταὔθ' ὅταν κλύηι κακῶς,
νικᾶι δ' ὁ μείων τὸν μέγαν δίκαι' ἔχων.
τοὐλεύθερον δ' ἐκεῖνο· Τίς θέλει πόλει
χρηστόν τι βούλευμ' ἐς μέσον φέρειν ἔχων;
καὶ ταῦθ' ὁ χρήιζων λαμπρός ἐσθ', ὁ μὴ θέλων
σιγᾶι. τί τούτων ἔστ' ἰσαίτερον πόλει;

> A *polis* has no worse enemy than a τύραννος. First, under such a ruler there are no laws [νόμοι] common to all, but one man holds sway, with the law [νόμος] in his own possession; that means an end to equality [ἴσον]. But when the laws [νόμοι] are written down, both the poor and the rich possess their equal right [δίκη ἴση]; the weak, threatened or insulted by a prosperous neighbour, can retort in the same terms, and the lesser can defeat the great if justice [δίκαι] is on his side. This is freedom [τό ἐλεύθερον]: 'Who possesses some plan useful [χρηστόν] to the city and wishes to bring it forward to public notice?' He who desires to speak wins fame; he who does not is silent. Where could greater equality [ἰσαίτερον] be found?[175]

Ἰσονομία – 'equal distribution', 'equality of political rights', 'equality before the law' – was a fundamental principle of Athenian democracy. Whereas monarchy, μοναρχία, 'allows a man to do whatever he likes without any responsibility or control' and inevitably leads to 'acts of savage and unnatural violence' and 'all' manner of 'wickedness [κακότητα]'; and the competition for 'distinction', ἀρετή, that typically arises in an oligarchy, ὀλιγαρχία, 'cannot but lead to violent personal feuds', 'civil wars' and 'bloodshed' (Hdt. *Histories* 3.80-82; De Sélincourt [trans.]);[176] it is the very principle of ἰσονομία, Theseus argues, that makes democracy, δημοκρατία, the best form of government: the *polis* is not 'subject to one man's will', the people, δῆμος, are free to 'govern' themselves, the νόμοι are 'common to all', the weak can defeat the stronger in

[175] Eur. *Suppliant Women* 423, 429-441; Vellacott [trans.].
[176] Legrand's 1960 edition of Herodotus' *Historiae*.

court if δίκη 'is on his side', and anyone who wishes, rich or poor, has an 'equal right' to express his views in the Assembly and thus contribute to the well-being of the *polis*.

The same views are expressed in Pericles' Funeral Speech:

> Χρώμεθα γὰρ πολιτείᾳ οὐ ζηλούσῃ τοὺς τῶν πέλας
> νόμους, παράδειγμα δὲ μᾶλλον αὐτοὶ ὄντες τισὶν ἢ μιμού-
> μενοι ἑτέρους. καὶ ὄνομα μὲν διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς ὀλίγους ἀλλ'
> ἐς πλείονας οἰκεῖν δημοκρατία κέκληται· μέτεστι δὲ κατὰ
> μὲν τοὺς νόμους πρὸς τὰ ἴδια διάφορα πᾶσι τὸ ἴσον, κατὰ
> δὲ τὴν ἀξίωσιν, ὡς ἕκαστος ἔν τῳ εὐδοκιμεῖ, οὐκ ἀπὸ μέρους
> τὸ πλέον ἐς τὰ κοινὰ ἢ ἀπ' ἀρετῆς προτιμᾶται, οὐδ' αὖ
> κατὰ πενίαν, ἔχων γέ τι ἀγαθὸν δρᾶσαι τὴν πόλιν, ἀξιώ-
> ματος ἀφανείᾳ κεκώλυται.[177]

> Let me say that our system of government does not copy the institutions of our neighbours. It is more a case of our being a model to others, than of our imitating anyone else. Our constitution is called a δημοκρατία because power is not in the hands of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal [ἴσον] before the law [νόμοι]; when it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility [τά κοινά], what matters is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability [ἀρετή] which the man possesses. No one, so long as he has it in him to benefit [ἀγαθόν δρᾶν] the *polis*, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty.[178]

Everyone is given a share in political 'power'; everyone is 'equal before the law', particularly in the case of private litigation; and everyone is entitled to hold 'positions of public responsibility'. Wealth, breeding and social class, it would seem, now count for much less. The ἀγαθός, the man valued most highly in Greek society, now becomes the good citizen, the ἀγαθός πολίτης. "Traditionally, the ἀγαθοί always earned this commendation because they were in fact the most valuable men, the men most able to secure society's safety. Accordingly, the ἀγαθός πολίτης must do the same": he must promote the welfare and prosperity of his community; "he must ἀγαθά ποιεῖν his city."[179]

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[177] I will be using Jones and Powell's 1942 edition of Thucydides' *Historiae* throughout.
[178] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* II.37.1.1-2.1; Warner [trans.].
[179] Adkins (1960) 207.

Whereas before 'positions of public responsibility' had typically been reserved for men who belonged to 'a particular class' – wealthy and influential members of the aristocracy – now, says Pericles, 'no one, so long as he has it in him to benefit the *polis*', will be 'kept in political obscurity'. What matters, then, is not so much what a man is, but what he actually does. Wealth and class have become irrelevant; who one's ancestors were, whether or not one is able to produce a genealogy going back to some god or famous 'hero', how much land one owns, how many resources one has at one's disposal – this is not 'what matters' anymore. The only consideration that is of any importance whatsoever is whether or not someone has the 'ability', ἀρετή, to 'benefit', ἀγαθόν δρᾶν, the city in some way. A natural aptitude and ability for promoting the interests of the city, it would seem, now outweighs the importance of inherited and socially conceded advantages.

The democratic aspirations so evident in these passages were accompanied by a new attachment to the importance of the co-operative virtues. In Sophocles' *Antigone* (*c*. 441), for example, the Chorus of Theban citizens praise the 'great wonder' that is 'man'. The forces of nature, they sing, are no 'match for man': he 'holds his steady course' through 'the blasts of winter' and the 'breakers crashing left and right' to cross the 'heaving grey sea'; he 'wears away' the 'oldest of the gods', 'the inexhaustible Earth', with his 'plows' and his 'stallions'; man, 'skilled' and 'brilliant', 'conquers all' animals – the 'lightheaded race of birds', the 'tribes of savage beasts', and the 'life that swarms the depths'. 'Resourceful man' has 'taught himself' how to survive: he has cultured 'speech and thought', 'quick as the wind', and the 'mood and mind for law that rules the city'; he has devised 'shelter from the arrows of the frost' and 'the shafts of lashing rain'; he has even 'plotted' to 'find rescue' from 'Death', by learning how to 'escape' the danger of 'desperate plagues'.[180] Then they go on to add:

> Σοφόν τι τὸ μηχανόεν
> τέχνας ὑπὲρ ἐλπίδ' ἔχων,
> τοτὲ μὲν κακόν, ἄλλοτ' ἐπ' ἐσθλὸν ἕρπει,
> νόμους παρείρων χθονὸς
> θεῶν τ' ἔνορκον δίκαν

[180] Soph. *Antigone* 332-363; Fagles [trans.].

ὑψίπολις· ἄπολις ὅτῳ τὸ μὴ καλὸν
ξύνεστι τόλμας χάριν·
μήτ' ἐμοὶ παρέστιος γέ-
νοιτο μήτ' ἴσον φρονῶν
ὃς τάδ' ἔρδοι.[181]

> Man the master, ingenious past all measure, past all dreams, the skills within his grasp, at one time he comes to destruction, at another to greatness. When he observes the laws [νόμοι] of the land and the justice [δίκη] which he has sworn by the gods to uphold, he and his city rise high; but that man who weds himself to what is not καλόν thanks to reckless daring – the city casts him out [ἄπολις]. Never share my hearth; never think my thoughts, whoever does such things.[182]

'Man the master', 'ingenious past all measure', has the 'skills within his grasp' to accomplish anything; there is no difficulty, ἀπορία, which he cannot overcome.[183] And yet all of this amounts to nothing, unless a man also upholds the co-operative virtues. That man who chooses to disregard δίκη and the νόμοι of the land in favour of 'reckless daring', no matter how 'brilliant' he may be, is reduced to an ἄπολις, a social outcast and nonentity: no city will own him, no man embrace him.

Plato's Protagoras also places the utmost importance on the co-operative virtues when he relates a myth describing the creation of animals and humans. Mankind, he says, began its existence by living in 'scattered groups'. But since it lacked the skill of politics, of running a city, τέχνη πολιτική – 'of which the τέχνη of war is a part' – it was unable to defend itself, and was 'consequently devoured by wild beasts'. 'They sought to save themselves by coming together and founding fortified cities,' but when they gathered together they only succeeded in causing one another harm, ἀδικεῖν, and so 'scattered again and continued to be devoured'. Eventually, 'fearing the total destruction' of the human race, Zeus stepped in:

> Ἑρμῆν πέμπει ἄγοντα εἰς ἀνθρώπους αἰδῶ τε καὶ δίκην, ἵν' εἶεν πόλεων κόσμοι τε καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί. ἐρωτᾷ οὖν Ἑρμῆς Δία τίνα οὖν τρόπον δοίη δίκην καὶ αἰδῶ ἀνθρώ-

[181] I will be using Dain and Mazon's 1955 edition of Sophocles' *Antigone* throughout.
[182] Soph. *Antigone* 364-375; Fagles [trans.].
[183] ibid. 360.

> ποις· "Πότερον ὡς αἱ τέχναι νενέμηνται, οὕτω καὶ ταύτας
> νείμω; νενέμηνται δὲ ὧδε· εἷς ἔχων ἰατρικὴν πολλοῖς ἱκανὸς
> ἰδιώταις, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι δημιουργοί· καὶ δίκην δὴ καὶ αἰδῶ
> οὕτω θῶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, ἢ ἐπὶ πάντας νείμω;" "Ἐπὶ
> πάντας," ἔφη ὁ Ζεύς, "καὶ πάντες μετεχόντων· οὐ γὰρ ἂν
> γένοιντο πόλεις, εἰ ὀλίγοι αὐτῶν μετέχοιεν ὥσπερ ἄλλων
> τεχνῶν· καὶ νόμον γε θὲς παρ' ἐμοῦ τὸν μὴ δυνάμενον
> αἰδοῦς καὶ δίκης μετέχειν κτείνειν ὡς νόσον πόλεως."[184]

> He sent Hermes to impart to men the qualities of respect for others [αἰδώς] and a sense of justice [δίκη], so as to bring order into our cities and create bonds of friendship and union [φιλία]. Hermes asked Zeus in what manner he was to bestow αἰδώς and δίκη on men: "Shall I distribute them as the τέχναι were distributed – that is, on the principle that one man possessing the τέχνη of medicine suffices for many laymen, and so with the other experts? Shall I distribute δίκη and αἰδώς in this way, or to all alike?" "To all" said Zeus. "Let all share in them. There could never be cities if only a few shared in these virtues, as in the τέχναι. Moreover, you must lay it down as my law [νόμος] that if anyone is incapable of acquiring his share of αἰδώς and δίκη he shall be put to death as a plague to the city."[185]

In order for the *polis* not only to exist, but to function as an 'orderly' and 'unified' community of citizens, men need to demonstrate civic self-consciousness by behaving with δίκη and αἰδώς in their relations with one another. If there is to be any chance of peaceful co-existence – of forming the necessary 'bonds of friendship', φιλία, among men – 'all' members of society need to recognise and embrace the importance of these 'virtues' since, without them, mankind is but a 'plague' to itself.

While the co-operative virtues were being widely commended as essential to the stability and prosperity of the *polis*, the most powerful value-terms in Greek society were also being redefined in a manner that reflected these democratic ideals. In Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (*c*. 409), for example, Odysseus instructs Neoptolemus to deceive his friend, Philoctetes, so that the Greeks may gain possession of Herakles' bow and arrows – without which Troy cannot be captured. Neoptolemus is hesitant to betray his friend; Odysseus tries to persuade him:

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[184] I will be using Burnet's 1903 edition of Plato's *Protagoras* throughout.
[185] Pl. *Protagoras* 322a8-322c1, 322c2-322d5; Guthrie [trans.].

ΝΕ. Οὐκ αἰσχρὸν ἡγῇ δῆτα τὸ ψευδῆ λέγειν;
ΟΔ. Οὔκ, εἰ τὸ σωθῆναί γε τὸ ψεῦδος φέρει.
ΝΕ. Πῶς οὖν βλέπων τις ταῦτα τολμήσει λακεῖν;
ΟΔ. Ὅταν τι δρᾷς εἰς κέρδος, οὐκ ὀκνεῖν πρέπει.[186]

Neoptolemus: Thou think it no shame [αἰσχρόν] then, to tell a lie?
Odysseus: Not if success depends upon a lie.
Neoptolemus: With what face shall one dare to speak such words?
Odysseus: If thou must profit [κέρδος] thou must have no qualms.[187]

These are the traditional values: Neoptolemus is reluctant to deceive his friend, for fear that he may incur shame, αἰσχρόν; but according to the traditional alignment of values, "a man need only be ashamed of his failures, not of his breaches of the quiet virtues".[188] 'Profit' and 'success', as Odysseus so shrewdly points out, is the primary objective, how one goes about attaining that success is simply irrelevant. Odysseus continues:

ΟΔ. Ὡς τοῦτό γ' ἔρξας δύο φέρῃ δωρήματα.
ΝΕ. Ποίω; μαθὼν γὰρ οὐκ ἂν ἀρνοίμην τὸ δρᾶν.
ΟΔ. Σοφός τ' ἂν αὑτὸς κἀγαθὸς κεκλῇ' ἅμα.

Odysseus: Know that, if thou dost this thing, two prizes are thine.
Neoptolemus: What are they? Tell me, and I will not refuse the deed.
Odysseus: Thou wilt be called at once wise [σοφός] and valiant [ἀγαθός].[189]

This clinches the deal:

ΝΕ. Ἴτω· ποήσω, πᾶσαν αἰσχύνην ἀφείς.

Neoptolemus: Come what may, I'll do it, and cast off all shame [αἰσχύνη].[190]

Adherence to the social virtues becomes insignificant when set against individual success and prestige: Neoptolemus' 'qualms' vanish at the prospect of being commended ἀγαθός. He steals the bow from Philoctetes; but then realises that he has made a mistake:

[186] I will be using Dain and Mazon's 1960 edition of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* throughout.
[187] Soph. *Philoctetes* 108-111; Jebb [trans.].
[188] Adkins (1960) 162.
[189] Soph. *Philoctetes* 117-119; Jebb [trans.].
[190] ibid. 120.

ΟΔ. Ὦ Ζεῦ, τί λέξεις; οὔ τί που δοῦναι νοεῖς;
ΝΕ. Αἰσχρῶς γὰρ αὐτὰ κοὐ δίκῃ λαβὼν ἔχω.

Odysseus: Zeus! What would'st thou say? Thou wilt not give it back?
Neoptolemus: Yes, for I obtained it by shameful means [αἰσχρῶς] and unjustly [οὐ δίκη].[191]

Instead of rejoicing in his 'success', Neoptolemus now condemns his breach of the co-operative virtues as αἰσχρόν, "the most powerful term available to decry an action" in Greek society.[192] And, for Neoptolemus at least, the need to redress this αἰσχρόν clearly takes precedence over the need to secure his own advancement and prestige: 'For I ensnared a man with base deceit [αἰσχρά ἀπάτη] and guile [δόλος].'[193] He decides to 'undo the fault' and return the bow.[194] This flies in the face of the traditional scheme of values. No wonder Odysseus is so confused; he thinks that Neoptolemus is trying to 'mock' him.[195] He threatens Neoptolemus with violence:

ΟΔ. Σὺ δ' οὔτε φωνεῖς οὔτε δρασείεις σοφά.
ΝΕ. Ἀλλ' εἰ δίκαια, τῶν σοφῶν κρείσσω τάδε.
ΟΔ. Καὶ πῶς δίκαιον, ἅ γ' ἔλαβες βουλαῖς ἐμαῖς,
πάλιν μεθεῖναι ταῦτα;
ΝΕ. Τὴν ἁμαρτίαν
αἰσχρὰν ἁμαρτὼν ἀναλαβεῖν πειράσομαι.
ΟΔ. Στρατὸν δ' Ἀχαιῶν οὐ φοβῇ, πράσσων τάδε;
ΝΕ. Ξὺν τῷ δικαίῳ τὸν σὸν οὐ ταρβῶ φόβον.

Odysseus: Thy speech is not wise [σοφά], nor yet thy purpose.
Neoptolemus: But if just [δίκαια], that is better than wise [σοφαί].
Odysseus: And how is it just [δίκαιον], to give up what thou hast won by my counsels?
Neoptolemus: My fault [ἁμαρτίαν] hath been shameful [αἰσχράν], and I must try to make amends for it.
Odysseus: Hast thou no fear of the Achaean host, in doing this?

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[191] Soph. *Philoctetes* 1233-1234; Jebb [trans.].
[192] Adkins (1972) 113.
[193] Soph. *Philoctetes* 1228; Jebb [trans.].
[194] ibid. 1224.
[195] ibid. 1235-1237.

> *Neoptolemus*: With justice [δίκαιος] on my side, I do not fear thy terrors.[196]

Neoptolemus will not be swayed. He might have 'won' a victory, but the means by which he secured that victory were αἰσχρόν, and he will have no part in it. Now, 'with δίκαιος on [his] side', he will 'try to make amends' for his 'fault' by returning the bow to Philoctetes, regardless of the dangers that may lie in store for him.

While Sophocles uses one of society's most powerful value-terms to condemn breaches of the co-operative excellences, Euripides uses another to commend behaviour in accordance with them. When Orestes discovers, in the *Electra* (*c*. 415), that the Husbandman – though 'poor', πένης, and of lowly origins, ἀσθενής – has displayed the characteristic ἀρετή of an ἀνὴρ γενναῖος, a man of noble birth, by not attempting to consummate his marriage with Electra, he is so inspired by this show of self-restraint, σωφροσύνη,[197] that he "begins to reflect upon [the nature] of εὐανδρία, the condition of the ἀγαθός man: a type of word which, as is to be expected, traditionally denotes and commends courage and the social attributes of the ἀγαθός":[198]

> οὐκ ἔστ' ἀκριβὲς οὐδὲν εἰς εὐανδρίαν·
> ἔχουσι γὰρ ταραγμὸν αἱ φύσεις βροτῶν.
> ἤδη γὰρ εἶδον ἄνδρα γενναίου πατρὸς
> τὸ μηδὲν ὄντα, χρηστὰ δ' ἐκ κακῶν τέκνα,
> λιμόν τ' ἐν ἀνδρὸς πλουσίου φρονήματι,
> γνώμην δὲ μεγάλην ἐν πένητι σώματι.
> πῶς οὖν τις αὐτὰ διαλαβὼν ὀρθῶς κρινεῖ;
> πλούτωι; πονηρῶι τἄρα χρήσεται κριτῆι.
> ἢ τοῖς ἔχουσι μηδέν; ἀλλ' ἔχει νόσον
> πενία, διδάσκει δ' ἄνδρα τῆι χρείαι κακόν.
> ἀλλ' εἰς ὅπλ' ἐλθών; τίς δὲ πρὸς λόγχην βλέπων
> μάρτυς γένοιτ' ἂν ὅστις ἐστὶν ἀγαθός;
> κράτιστον εἰκῆι ταῦτ' ἐᾶν ἀφειμένα.

[196] Soph. *Philoctetes* 1245-1251; Jebb [trans.].
[197] Eur. *Electra* 253, 267, 261; Kovacs [trans.]. I will be using Diggle's 1981 edition of Euripides' *Electra* throughout.
[198] Adkins (1972) 115.

There is no reliable way to predict nobility [εὐανδρία]. The natural endowments [φύσις] of mortals suffer confusion. I have seen a man born of a noble father [γενναῖος] but himself a nullity [τό μηδέν ὄντα], and noble children [χρηστά] sprung from those of low estate [κακαί]; I have seen resourcelessness in a rich man's pride and greatness in the body of a poor one. How then shall a man distinguish and judge these things aright? By wealth? It is a sorry judge he will be making use of. By poverty? But poverty is unhealthy and teaches a man to be base [κακόν] from need. By considering his conduct in war? Yet who, as he stands facing a spear point, can bear testimony to the bravery [ἀγαθός] of others? It is best to let this subject go as it will.[199]

The traditional standards by which to 'distinguish and judge' a man's worth – birth, wealth, even a man's competence in warfare – have now all been called into serious question:

οὗτος γὰρ ἁνὴρ οὔτ' ἐν Ἀργείοις μέγας
οὔτ' αὖ δοκήσει δωμάτων ὠγκωμένος,
ἐν τοῖς δὲ πολλοῖς ὤν, ἄριστος ηὑρέθη.
οὐ μὴ ἀφρονήσεθ', οἳ κενῶν δοξασμάτων
πλήρεις πλανᾶσθε, τῆι δ' ὁμιλίαι βροτῶν
κρινεῖτε καὶ τοῖς ἤθεσιν τοὺς εὐγενεῖς;

For this man, not one of the great among the Argives, nor yet impressive because of his family's reputation, a man of the people, has been shown to be ἄριστος. All you who wander about full of vain notions, come to your senses and judge the nobility of mortals by their way of life and their character![200]

This is a complete departure from the traditional system of values: ἀγαθός, the most powerful term available to commend a man in Greek society, has always been reserved for the type of men on whom society believed it relied most, men who possessed the qualities that society recognised as being most essential to its safety and security; and, up until now, these qualities have always been the competitive ones: wealth, high-birth, strength, courage and military prowess. Now, the Husbandman – poor and of humble birth, who lacks all of the qualities traditionally valued most highly in society – is

[199] Eur. *Electra* 367-379; Kovacs [trans.].
[200] ibid. 380-385.

commended as ἄριστος – most ἀγαθός – solely on the basis of his self-restraint. Orestes continues:

> οἱ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι τὰς πόλεις οἰκοῦσιν εὖ
> καὶ δώμαθ'· αἱ δὲ σάρκες αἱ κεναὶ φρενῶν
> ἀγάλματ' ἀγορᾶς εἰσιν. οὐδὲ γὰρ δόρυ
> μᾶλλον βραχίων σθεναρὸς ἀσθενοῦς μένει·
> ἐν τῆι φύσει δὲ τοῦτο κἀν εὐψυχίαι.

> Men of this kind are good at administering [εὖ οἰκεῖν] cities and households, while physiques lacking in brains are good only at adorning the marketplace. For a strong arm is not even better at withstanding the spear in battle than a weak one, but this is purely a matter of character and courage.[201]

'Men of this kind' – men who are able to conduct themselves with self-restraint, moderation and discretion, with σωφροσύνη – are worthy of being commended ἄριστος, says Orestes, because such men, far more so than strong-armed 'physiques', are most beneficial to society: they are 'good at administering', εὖ οἰκεῖν, not only their own 'households' but also their 'cities'. It is in fact then not the competitive but the co-operative virtues, at least as far as the civic poets of fifth-century Athenian society are concerned, that prove most beneficial to society.

The Competitive Values Prevailing

The law-courts

The rise of Athenian democracy was accompanied by a concomitant valorisation of the importance of the co-operative excellences to the well-being of society. But to what extent was this change in values actually realised in practice in the different areas of Athenian life? The Athenian law-courts seem to have been particularly democratic in nature: 'Jury service', as Aristotle tells us, was 'open' to all Athenian citizens above the age of 'thirty', provided that they had not fallen into 'debt to the state' or been 'deprived of their civic rights';[202] Pericles' introduction of pay for jurors around 450 B.C. meant

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[201] Eur. *Electra* 386-390; Kovacs [trans.].
[202] Arist. *The Athenian Constitution* 63.3; Rackham [trans.].

that even the poorest citizens were able to serve on the juries; and, when the jurors – selected by lot from a panel of six thousand – were appointed, they were required to swear an oath to vote 'in accordance with the laws and decrees of the People of Athens and of the Council of Five-Hundred', to 'give impartial hearing to prosecutor and defendant alike', and, when making their decision, to do so based 'strictly' on the facts of the case.[203] But were these principles of justice and equality actually realised?

In Lysias' twenty-first speech, the defendant, accused of bribery and corruption, begins his defence by asking the jury – who have already been 'sufficiently informed' of the 'counts of the accusation' – to now give their 'attention' to 'what has yet to be added', so that they may better come to 'understand what kind of person' he is before they deliver their 'verdict'. He then proceeds to plead his case: he has, he claims, spent 'two thousand drachmae' on a 'male chorus'; 'eight hundred drachmae' on 'pyrrhic dancers' at the Great Panathenaea, 'five thousand drachmae' on a 'male chorus' at the Dionysia; 'sixteen minae' on a production of 'comic drama'; and 'three hundred drachmae' on a 'cyclic chorus' at the Little Panathenaea. In addition to 'all these expenses', he has 'equipped warships' for 'seven years' at a 'cost of six talents'; made 'contributions' – 'one of thirty minae and another of four thousand drachmae' – to 'special levies'; and produced 'games for the Promethea' at the expense of 'twelve minae'. And so he continues.[204] But what does any of this have to do with the case in hand? Instead of trying to prove his innocence, the defendant is only interested in emphasising how much money he has spent in service to the state.[205]

Far from being unusual, however, the mention of a defendant's "services to the state, not as a mitigating circumstance when he has been found guilty, but as a plea intended to justify his acquittal," is actually a standard feature in Greek forensic speeches.[206] In Lysias' twelfth speech Eratosthenes, one of the Thirty Tyrants who staged an oligarchic coup in 404 B.C., is charged with having killed Lysias' brother Polemarchus during the Reign of Terror. Given Eratosthenes' history of violence against the democracy – and especially considering that the jurymen's oath expressly forbid the support or approval of

[203] Dem. 24.149-151; Vince [trans.].
[204] Lys. 21.1.1-5.1; Lamb [trans.].
[205] Dem. 24.151; Vince [trans.].
[206] Adkins (1960) 201.

any attempt whatsoever to 'subvert the Athenian democracy'[207] – one should think that there would have been little chance of an acquittal. And yet Lysias feels compelled to say:

> οὐ γὰρ δὴ οὐδὲ
> τοῦτο αὐτῷ προσήκει ποιῆσαι, ὅπερ ἐν τῇδε τῇ πόλει
> εἰθισμένον ἐστί, πρὸς μὲν τὰ κατηγορημένα μηδὲν ἀπολο-
> γεῖσθαι, περὶ δὲ σφῶν αὐτῶν ἕτερα λέγοντες ἐνίοτε ἐξα-
> πατῶσιν, ὑμῖν ἀποδεικνύντες ὡς στρατιῶται ἀγαθοί εἰσιν,
> ἢ ὡς πολλὰς τῶν πολεμίων ναῦς ἔλαβον τριηραρχήσαντες,
> ἢ πόλεις πολεμίας οὔσας φίλας ἐποίησαν· ἐπεὶ κελεύετε
> αὐτὸν ἀποδεῖξαι ὅπου τοσούτους τῶν πολεμίων ἀπέκτειναν
> ὅσους τῶν πολιτῶν, ἢ ναῦς ὅπου τοσαύτας ἔλαβον ὅσας
> αὐτοὶ παρέδοσαν, ἢ πόλιν ἥντινα τοιαύτην προσεκτήσαντο
> οἵαν τὴν ὑμετέραν κατεδουλώσαντο.[208]

> And note that he cannot even resort to the expedient, so habitual among our citizens, of saying nothing to answer the counts of the accusation, but making other statements about themselves which at times deceive you; they represent to you that they are good [ἀγαθοί] soldiers, or have taken many vessels of the enemy while in command of war-ships, or have won over cities from hostility to friendship. Why, only tell him to point out where they killed as many of our enemies as they have of our citizens, or where they took as many ships as they themselves surrendered, or what city they enlisted to compare with yours which they enslaved.[209]

It would seem that Lysias is concerned that, should Eratosthenes 'resort' to the 'habitual' 'expedient' of 'making other statements' about himself – that he is an 'ἀγαθός soldier', for instance, or that he has captured 'many vessels of the enemy' and 'won over' hostile 'cities' – the jury might be swayed to vote in his favour. In an attempt to prevent this from happening, however, Lysias does not argue that such pleas should be considered irrelevant when determining whether or not a man should be convicted, merely that they should not be permitted to carry any weight in this particular case, since any beneficial services that the defendant may have performed are clearly outweighed by the great

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[207] Dem. 24.149; Vince [trans.].
[208] I will be using Albini's 1955 edition throughout.
[209] Lys. 12.38.1-40.1; Lamb [trans.].

damage that he has caused. A similar instance is found in Lysias' thirtieth speech, where Nicomachus is charged with embezzlement and fraud. The accuser inquires:

> Διὰ τί δ' ἄν τις ἀποψηφίσαιτο τούτου; πότερον ὡς ἀν-
> δρὸς ἀγαθοῦ πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους καὶ πολλαῖς μάχαις καὶ
> ναυμαχίαις παραγεγενημένου; ἀλλὰ ὅτε ὑμεῖς ἐκινδυνεύετε
> ἐκπλέοντες, οὗτος αὐτοῦ μένων τοὺς Σόλωνος νόμους ἐλυ-
> μαίνετο. ἀλλ' ὅτι χρήματα δεδαπάνηκε καὶ πολλὰς εἰσφο-
> ρὰς εἰσενήνοχεν; ἀλλ' οὐχ ὅπως ὑμῖν τῶν αὑτοῦ τι ἐπέδω-
> κεν, ἀλλὰ τῶν ὑμετέρων πολλὰ ὑφῄρηται. ἀλλὰ διὰ τοὺς
> προγόνους; ἤδη γάρ τινες καὶ διὰ τοῦτο συγγνώμης ἔτυ-
> χον παρ' ὑμῶν. ἀλλὰ τούτῳ γε προσήκει διὰ μὲν αὑτὸν
> τεθνάναι, διὰ δὲ τοὺς προγόνους πεπρᾶσθαι. ἀλλ' ὡς, ἐὰν
> νῦν αὐτοῦ φείσησθε, αὖθις ἀποδώσει τὰς χάριτας; ὃς
> οὐδ' ὧν πρότερον μετέλαβε παρ' ὑμῶν ἀγαθῶν μέμνηται.

> And what reason is there for acquitting this man? Because he has taken a brave man's part [ἀγαθός] in many battles by land and sea against the enemy? But while you were facing danger on naval expeditions, this man stayed at home and corrupted the laws of Solon. Or because he has disbursed money and contributed to numerous levies? But, so far from bestowing anything of his own upon you, he has embezzled a vast amount of your property. Or because of his ancestors? For this has been a reason in the past for some men obtaining your pardon. But if this man deserves to be put to death on his own account, he ought to be sold on account of his ancestors. Or is it that, if you spare him now, he will repay your favours hereafter? He does not even remember the benefits in which you allowed him to share before.[210]

Again, the accuser does not argue that such pleas – taking the part of an ἀγαθός 'in many battles by land and sea', disbursing money and making contributions to 'numerous levies', or reminding the jury about who one's 'ancestors' were or what they had accomplished – "should be regarded as invalid in court: he simply asserts that the present defendant… is in no position to benefit from them."[211] So although the jury members swore to vote 'in accordance with the laws' and to do so based 'strictly' on the facts of

[210] Lys. 30.26.1-27.6; Lamb [trans.].
[211] Adkins (1972) 122.

the case,[212] whether or not a man is guilty of breaking the law is clearly not the only consideration upon which their decision was based.

The 'liturgy' was "a formal, institutionalised device whereby certain public services" – such as commissioning a trireme, or furnishing an athletic contest or dramatic performance – "were assigned on a rota system to individual members… of the population, who were directly responsible" for all the costs.[213] These services were expensive, and could only be performed by wealthy citizens; and it is here that the democratic ideals of justice and equality begin to founder. Whereas it had previously fallen to the wealthier citizens – the cavalry and hoplite classes – to furnish the most important force for attack and defence, "the power of Athens" now "rested on control of the sea,"[214] and it was the poor who manned the fleets. No doubt this development enabled the poorer citizens to feel that they now played an essential role in the preservation and promotion of the *polis*; but the state only supplied the hulls and tackle of the triremes: "The ramshackle finances of Athens [did] not enable the state to fit out the navy for war, nor (for example) to provide the money for choruses at festivals."[215] It was up to the wealthier individuals to perform these beneficial services, ἀγαθά, for the state since, "without 'liturgies' there would have been no Athenian navy, and no Empire".[216]

The men who performed liturgies held the greatest claim to be termed ἀγαθοί. And since their services were so essential to the safety and prosperity of the state, these ἀγαθοί were also able maintain a very powerful hold over society. In Lysias' twenty-fifth speech the accused, charged with treason against the democracy, includes the following in his defence:

> καίτοι διὰ τοῦτο πλείω
> τῶν ὑπὸ τῆς πόλεως προσταττομένων ἐδαπανώμην, ἵνα καὶ
> βελτίων ὑφ' ὑμῶν νομιζοίμην, καὶ εἴ πού μοί τις συμφορὰ
> γένοιτο, ἄμεινον ἀγωνιζοίμην.

[212] Dem. 24.149, 151; Vince [trans.].
[213] Finley (1983) 36.
[214] Finley (1963) 44.
[215] Adkins (1960) 208.
[216] Adkins (1972) 124.

> But my purpose in spending more than was enjoined upon me by the city was to raise myself the higher [βελτίων] in your opinion, so that if any misfortune should chance to befall me I might fare better [ἀμείνων ἀγωνίζεσθαι] in court.[217]

The ἀγαθοί are all too aware that the well-being of the *polis* is contingent upon their contributions, and exploit the situation shamelessly to their own advantage: they spend 'more' in order to 'fare better in court'. And, judging from the fact the defendant has absolutely no compunction in admitting this to the jury, it would seem that this was not only an accepted but also a highly effective practice.

In Lysias' twenty-first speech, the defendant is charged with bribery, corruption and embezzlement. The penalty that he would incur, if found guilty, is the confiscation of his private fortune. He urges the jury to vote in his favour:

> ἐὰν οὖν ἐμοὶ πεισθῆτε, τά τε δίκαια ψηφιεῖσθε καὶ τὰ λυ-
> σιτελοῦντα ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς αἱρήσεσθε. ὁρᾶτε γάρ, ὦ ἄνδρες
> δικασταί, τὰ προσιόντα τῇ πόλει ὡς ὀλίγα ἐστί, καὶ ταῦτα
> ὡς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐφεστηκότων ἁρπάζεται· ὥστ' ἄξιον ταύτην
> ἡγεῖσθαι πρόσοδον βεβαιοτάτην τῇ πόλει, τὰς οὐσίας τῶν
> ἐθελόντων λῃτουργεῖν. ἐὰν οὖν εὖ βουλεύσησθε, οὐδὲν ἧττον
> ἐπιμελήσεσθε τῶν ἡμετέρων χρημάτων ἢ τῶν ἰδίων τῶν
> ὑμετέρων αὐτῶν, εἰδότες ὅτι ἕξετε πᾶσι χρῆσθαι τοῖς ἡμε-
> τέροις ὥσπερ καὶ πρότερον· οἶμαι δὲ πάντας ὑμᾶς ἐπίστα-
> σθαι ὅτι τῶν ἐμῶν ἐγὼ πολὺ βελτίων ὑμῖν ἔσομαι ταμίας
> τῶν τὰ τῆς πόλεως ὑμῖν ταμιευόντων. ἐὰν δ' ἐμὲ πένητα
> ποιήσητε, καὶ ὑμᾶς αὐτοὺς ἀδικήσετε· ἕτεροι δὲ καὶ ταῦτα
> διανεμοῦνται, ὥσπερ καὶ τἆλλα.

> Now, if you will admit my plea, you will both vote what is just [τά δίκαια] and choose what is to your own advantage [τά λυσιτελοῦντα]. Do but observe, gentlemen of the jury, how slender are the revenues of the State, and how even these are pilfered by their appointed guardians: you ought, therefore, to see the surest revenue for the State in the fortunes of those who are willing to perform public services [λειτουργεῖν]. So, if you are well advised, you will take as great care of our property as of your own personal possessions, knowing that you will be able to avail yourselves of all that we have, as you were in the past. And I think you are all aware that you will

[217] Lys. 25.13.1-13.4; Lamb [trans.].

> find me far superior [πολύ βελτίων], as controller of my property, to those who control for you the property of the State: whereas, if you impoverish me, you will wrong yourselves [ἀδικεῖν] besides; others will divide it up amongst them, as they do the rest.[218]

The State's 'revenues', as the defendant so shrewdly points out, are 'slender', and so the survival of the *polis* depends to a great extent on 'the fortunes of those who are willing to perform public services'. Should the jury choose to acquit him, they will not only vote for 'what is just', τά δίκαια, but also for 'what is to [their] own advantage', τά λυσιτελοῦντα, since they will still 'be able to avail' themselves of his great fortune. If, on the other hand, the jury should decide to convict him, they will only succeed in harming, ἀδικεῖν, themselves, since the defendant's wealth – instead of being spent in service to the *polis* – is sure to be 'pilfered' by 'those who control… the property of the State'. In this particular case justice, τά δίκαια, and the city's interest, τά λυσιτελοῦντα, are united; what might happen should they be opposed is made clear in the opening of Lysias' thirtieth speech:

> Ἤδη, ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί, τινὲς εἰς κρίσιν καταστάν-
> τες ἀδικεῖν μὲν ἔδοξαν, ἀποφαίνοντες δὲ τὰς τῶν προγό-
> νων ἀρετὰς καὶ τὰς σφετέρας αὐτῶν εὐεργεσίας συγγνώμης
> ἔτυχον παρ' ὑμῶν.

> There have been cases, gentleman of the jury, of persons who, when brought to trial, have appeared to be guilty [ἀδικεῖν], but who, on showing forth their ancestors' virtues [ἀρεταί] and their own benefits [εὐεργεσίαι] to the city, have obtained your pardon.[219]

When it comes to a choice between promoting the city's advantage and punishing the unjust, the jury opts for the former: ἀγαθοί who are 'guilty' of breaking the law are 'pardon[ed]' if they can prove that either they or their ancestors have in some way proved beneficial to the interests of 'the city'. The welfare of the *polis*, it seems, is simply more important than the moral career of an individual.

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[218] Lys. 21.12.6-14.6; Lamb [trans.].
[219] ibid. 30.1.1-1.4.

The traditional values prevail in the Athenian courts of law: the jury swore 'not to show favour at their own discretion, but to return a just and lawful verdict';[220] "and yet, as a regular practice, the prosecution allows the defence to bring forward the plea that the speaker is ἀγαθός or ἀγαθός πολίτης, opposing it merely with facts designed to prove that the speaker is not ἀγαθός, instead of objecting to the plea as a blatant attempt to pervert justice… The ἀγαθός πολίτης has inherited the most powerful term of value in Greek… and is linked *overtly* to the promotion or preservation of the security or prosperity of the state." Given the fact that a man may be pardoned for committing an injustice (be it murder, embezzlement, fraud, even treason against the democracy) if he can prove that he is ἀγαθός – prove, that is, that either he or his ancestors have benefited the *polis* in some way – it is clear that "the defining characteristics of the ἀγαθός πολίτης do not include being δίκαιος".[221] So despite their insistence that 'everyone is equal before the law' (Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* II.37.1.4-1.5; Warner [trans.]) and that 'the lesser can defeat the great if justice is on his side' (Eur. *Suppliant Women* 437; Vellacott [trans.]), the importance of the competitive excellences (high-birth, wealth, military prowess, bravery in battle) to civic stability still greatly outweighs the importance of adherence to the co-operative virtues in the Athenian courts of law. But what about in citizen life more generally?

The citizens

If the ἀγαθός has now become the ἀγαθός πολίτης, the 'good citizen' who is most able to promote the safety and prosperity of his city, what were the actual qualities considered most beneficial to society? In Sophocles' *Antigone*, Creon – portrayed as the defender of the *polis*, champion of the rights and duties which life in a *polis* confers and demands of its citizens – believes that 'loyalty to the state' should take precedence over everything else: 'Whoever places a friend above the good of his own country, he is nothing: I have no use for him.'[222] When he discovers that Antigone has defied his orders and buried her

[220] Pl. *Apology* 35c; Tredennick [trans.].
[221] Adkins (1960) 205-206.
[222] Soph. *Antigone* 163 ff.; Fagles [trans.].

traitorous brother, he condemns her to death, branding her a 'traitor' to 'the whole city' for her act of 'naked rebellion' against the laws:

> Ὅστις δ' ὑπερβὰς ἢ νόμους βιάζεται,
> ἢ τοὐπιτάσσειν τοῖς κρατοῦσιν ἐννοεῖ,
> οὐκ ἔστ' ἐπαίνου τοῦτον ἐξ ἐμοῦ τυχεῖν.
> Ἀλλ' ὃν πόλις στήσειε, τοῦδε χρὴ κλύειν
> καὶ σμικρὰ καὶ δίκαια καὶ τἀναντία…
> … Ἀναρχίας δὲ μεῖζον οὐκ ἔστιν κακόν·
> αὕτη πόλεις ὄλλυσιν, ἥδ' ἀναστάτους
> οἴκους τίθησιν, ἥδε συμμάχου δορὸς
> τροπὰς καταρρήγνυσι· τῶν δ' ὀρθουμένων
> σῴζει τὰ πολλὰ σώμαθ' ἡ πειθαρχία.

> But whoever steps out of line, violates the laws [νόμοι] or presumes to hand out orders to his superiors, he will never win praise from me. But that man the city places in authority, his orders must be obeyed, large and small, right and wrong.
>
> Anarchy [ἀναρχία] – there is no greater evil [κακόν] in all the earth. She destroys cities, rips up houses, and breaks the ranks of spearmen into headlong rout. But the ones who last it out, the great mass of them owe their lives to obedience [πειθαρχία].[223]

When the νόμοι are 'violate[d]', when 'authority' is undermined – ἀναρχία, the destroyer of cities, reigns supreme. Obedience, πειθαρχία, Creon argues, is paramount to the well-being of the *polis*. The same view is presented by Thucydides' Cleon, when he tries to dissuade the Athenians from revoking their previous resolution regarding the revolted Mytilenians:

> πάντων
> δὲ δεινότατον εἰ βέβαιον ἡμῖν μηδὲν καθεστήξει ὧν ἂν δόξῃ
> πέρι, μηδὲ γνωσόμεθα ὅτι χείροσι νόμοις ἀκινήτοις χρωμένη
> πόλις κρείσσων ἐστὶν ἢ καλῶς ἔχουσιν ἀκύροις, ἀμαθία τε
> μετὰ σωφροσύνης ὠφελιμώτερον ἢ δεξιότης μετὰ ἀκολασίας,
> οἵ τε φαυλότεροι τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρὸς τοὺς ξυνετωτέρους ὡς
> ἐπὶ τὸ πλέον ἄμεινον οἰκοῦσι τὰς πόλεις. οἱ μὲν γὰρ τῶν
> τε νόμων σοφώτεροι βούλονται φαίνεσθαι…

[223] Soph. *Antigone* 655-656, 663-676; Fagles [trans.].

… καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τοιούτου τὰ πολλὰ σφάλλουσι τὰς πόλεις· οἱ δ' ἀπιστοῦντες τῇ ἐξ αὑτῶν ξυνέσει ἀμαθέστεροι μὲν τῶν νόμων ἀξιοῦσιν εἶναι…

… ὀρθοῦνται τὰ πλείω.

> And this is the very worst thing – to pass measures and then not to abide by them. We should realise that a city is better off [κρείσσων] with bad laws [κακοί νόμοι], so long as they remain fixed, than with good [καλοί] laws that are constantly being altered, that lack of learning combined with sound common sense [σωφροσύνη] is more beneficial [ὠφέλιμώτερος] than the kind of cleverness that gets out of hand, and that as a general rule states are better governed [ἀμείνων οἰκεῖν] by the man in the street than by intellectuals. These are the sort of people who want to appear wiser [σοφώτεροι] than the νόμοι… and who, as a result, very often bring ruin to their country. But the other kind – the people who are not so confident in their own intelligence – are prepared to admit that the νόμοι are wiser than they are… they for the most part prosper.[224]

When the νόμοι are upheld, the city 'prosper[s]'; but when they are disregarded by those who consider themselves to be 'wiser than the νόμοι', the result is 'ruin'.

In contrast to the anarchy and lawlessness of the earlier years – where 'evil men' perpetrated 'violence', ὕβρις, against the city and its laws, 'giv[ing] judgement in favour of the unjust for their own profit or power' (Theog. 1.39-52; Wender [trans.]), and ambitious individuals, 'prompted by the desire for wealth' and power, took 'no heed of the holy foundations of Δίκη' (Sol. 4.5-16, 4.26-29; Freeman [trans.]) – "obedience is at a premium" in the Greek city-state of the later Archaic and Classical Period: "the νόμοι should be supreme even when they are inferior νόμοι, and ignorant acquiescence in their commands is better – better for the city, more conducive to its prosperity and stability – than cleverness."[225] In order to maintain and promote the well-being of the *polis*, Athenian citizens are being urged to respect and obey the laws of the city. The problem, however, is that "the city [is] not the primary object of loyalty".[226]

[224] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* III.37.3.1-5.1; Warner [trans.].
[225] Adkins (1972) 129.
[226] ibid. 131.

When Meno, one of Plato's so-called 'ordinary citizens', asks Socrates how ἀρετή is acquired – whether by 'instruction', 'practice' or 'natural aptitude' – Socrates tells Meno to first provide him with a fitting definition of ἀρετή; Meno willingly complies:

> Ἀλλ' οὐ χαλεπόν, ὦ Σώκρατες, εἰπεῖν. πρῶτον
> μέν, εἰ βούλει ἀνδρὸς ἀρετήν, ῥᾴδιον, ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἀνδρὸς
> ἀρετή, ἱκανὸν εἶναι τὰ τῆς πόλεως πράττειν, καὶ πράττοντα
> τοὺς μὲν φίλους εὖ ποιεῖν, τοὺς δ' ἐχθροὺς κακῶς, καὶ αὐτὸν
> εὐλαβεῖσθαι μηδὲν τοιοῦτον παθεῖν. [227]

> But there is no difficulty about it. First of all, if it is manly ἀρετή you are after, it is easy to see that the ἀρετή of a man consists in managing the city's affairs capably, and so that he will help his friends [φίλοι] and injure his foes [ἐχθροί] while taking care to come to no harm himself.[228]

Meno's interpretation of ἀρετή, the mark of the ἀγαθός πολίτης, is concerned not with the welfare of the community but with the advancement of the individual. Although he includes 'managing the city's affairs capably' as an essential component of ἀρετή, this is by no means out of any concern for the well-being of the larger social group: the ἀγαθός πολίτης must 'manag[e] the city's affairs' in such a way *that* he will be able to promote the interests of his own social unit: 'himself', his family and 'his friends'. This is Meno's first, instinctive, definition of ἀρετή; Socrates makes him elaborate:

> ΣΩ. Τί δέ; οὐκ ἀνδρὸς μὲν ἀρετὴν ἔλεγες πόλιν εὖ
> διοικεῖν, γυναικὸς δὲ οἰκίαν;
> ΜΕΝ. Ἔγωγε.
> ΣΩ. Ἆρ' οὖν οἷόν τε εὖ διοικεῖν ἢ πόλιν ἢ οἰκίαν ἢ ἄλλο ὁτιοῦν,
> μὴ σωφρόνως καὶ δικαίως διοικοῦντα;
> ΜΕΝ. Οὐ δῆτα.
> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν ἄνπερ δικαίως καὶ σωφρόνως διοικῶσιν, δι-
> καιοσύνῃ καὶ σωφροσύνῃ διοικήσουσιν;
> ΜΕΝ. Ἀνάγκη.
> ΣΩ. Τῶν αὐτῶν ἄρα ἀμφότεροι δέονται, εἴπερ μέλλουσιν
> ἀγαθοὶ εἶναι, καὶ ἡ γυνὴ καὶ ὁ ἀνήρ, δικαιοσύνης καὶ σωφροσύνης.

[227] I will be using Burnet's 1903 edition of Plato's *Meno* throughout.
[228] Pl. *Meno* 70a, 71e1-71e5; Guthrie [trans.].

MEN. Φαίνονται.

> *Socrates*: Well, then, didn't you say that a man's ἀρετή lay in directing the city well [εὖ διοικεῖν], and a woman's [ἀρετή] in directing her household well?
> *Meno*: Yes.
> *Socrates*: And is it possible to direct anything well [εὖ διοικεῖν] – city or household or anything else – if not temperately [σωφρόνως] and justly [δικαίως]?
> *Meno*: Certainly not.
> *Socrates*: And that means with temperance [σωφροσύνη] and justice [δικαιοσύνη]?
> *Meno*: Of course.
> *Socrates*: Then both man and woman need the same qualities, δικαιοσύνη and σωφροσύνη, if they are going to be ἀγαθοί.
> *Meno*: It looks like it.[229]

Meno's original understanding of ἀρετή was based on the competitive excellences: to be an ἀγαθός and to have ἀρετή is to be able to secure the advancement of one's own social unit. Under Socrates' guidance, he is now prepared to admit that the co-operative virtues – σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη – might prove necessary in achieving this desired end. Judging by Meno's previous definition, however, one cannot but wonder whether this is in fact the only significance that Meno ascribes to such virtues – that σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη are little more than a useful means to attain one's ultimate goal: to help one's φίλοι, injure one's ἐχθροί and ensure that neither oneself nor any of one's dependants should come to any harm.

This impression is only strengthened when Meno offers a second definition of ἀρετή:

> Δοκεῖ τοίνυν μοι, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀρετὴ εἶναι, καθά-
> περ ὁ ποιητὴς λέγει, "χαίρειν τε καλοῖσι καὶ δύνασθαι·"
> καὶ ἐγὼ τοῦτο λέγω ἀρετήν, ἐπιθυμοῦντα τῶν καλῶν δυνατὸν
> εἶναι πορίζεσθαι.

> It seems to me then, Socrates that ἀρετή is, in the words of the poet, 'to rejoice in the fine [καλά] and have power', and I define it as desiring fine things [τά καλά] and being able to acquire them.[230]

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[229] Pl. *Meno* 73a6-73b5; Guthrie [trans.].
[230] ibid. 77b2-77b5.

When Socrates asks him what he means by 'fine things', Meno replies: 'I include the gaining both of gold and silver and of high and honourable office [τιμή ἀρχή] in the State.'[231] Meno's definition is once again based solely on the competitive scheme of values. And although he is once again willing, when pressed by Socrates, to admit that σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη are a 'means' to acquiring such ἀρετή,[232] there can be little doubt that this is indeed all the significance that he attaches to such virtues – they are but the means to his competitive end: to increase his wealth, to secure a 'high and honourable' position for himself in the city, and to promote the interests of his own social unit. So should Meno choose to behave with σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη in his relations with fellow members of society, a concern for the well-being of the larger social group is by no means the most important consideration upon which this decision would be based. What this implies about Meno's own position regarding the above insistence on loyalty to the state and obedience to the νόμοι is clear: "since administering justly is merely the means to the desired end, then, at the point at which injustice became, or appeared to become, more conducive to the securing of the desired end than justice, anyone who held these values should, if he were clear-headed enough, pursue injustice rather than justice."[233]

This is, in fact, precisely the view taken by another of Plato's 'ordinary citizens'. Socrates in prison, awaiting execution, rejects the offer of his friends to procure his escape. Crito urges him to reconsider:

> Ἔτι δέ, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐδὲ δίκαιόν μοι δοκεῖς ἐπιχειρεῖν
> πρᾶγμα, σαυτὸν προδοῦναι, ἐξὸν σωθῆναι, καὶ τοιαῦτα σπεύ-
> δεις περὶ σαυτὸν γενέσθαι ἅπερ ἂν καὶ οἱ ἐχθροί σου σπεύσαιέν
> τε καὶ ἔσπευσαν σὲ διαφθεῖραι βουλόμενοι. πρὸς δὲ τούτοις
> καὶ τοὺς ὑεῖς τοὺς σαυτοῦ ἔμοιγε δοκεῖς προδιδόναι, οὕς σοι
> ἐξὸν καὶ ἐκθρέψαι καὶ ἐκπαιδεῦσαι οἰχήσῃ καταλιπών…
>
> … σὺ
> δέ μοι δοκεῖς τὰ ῥᾳθυμότατα αἱρεῖσθαι. χρὴ δέ, ἅπερ ἂν ἀνὴρ
> ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἀνδρεῖος ἕλοιτο, ταῦτα αἱρεῖσθαι, φάσκοντά γε δὴ

[231] Pl. *Meno* 78c6-78c7; Guthrie [trans.].
[232] ibid. 78d7-78e2.
[233] Adkins (1972) 133.

ἀρετῆς διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου ἐπιμελεῖσθαι·[234]

> Besides, Socrates, I don't even feel that it is right [δίκαιον] for you to try to do what you are doing, throwing away your life when you might save it [σαυτόν προδοῦναι]. You are doing your best to treat yourself in exactly the same way as your enemies [ἐχθροί] would, or rather did, when they wanted to ruin you. What is more, it seems to me that you are letting your sons down too. You have it in your power to finish their bringing up and education, and instead of that you are proposing to go off and desert them… It strikes me that you are taking the line of least resistance, whereas you ought to make the choice of a good man [ἀγαθός] and a brave one [ἀνδρεῖος], considering that you profess to have made virtue [ἀρετή] your object all through life.[235]

Crito's opinion of Socrates' decision to 'throw away [his] life when [he] might save it' is clear: by doing his 'best' to treat himself 'in exactly the same way as [his] enemies would', Socrates is betraying himself, σαυτόν προδοῦναι. If Socrates has indeed, as he claims, made ἀρετή the 'object' of his life, then, like any 'true' ἀγαθός, he should do everything within his 'power' not to 'desert' his family and expose them to 'ruin'. 'To complete the farce', Crito argues, 'it will look' like Socrates' death – 'when it would have been quite possible and practicable' to procure his escape – was the result of 'some lack of courage and enterprise', κακία and ἀνανδρία, on the part of Socrates' φίλοι. In addition to losing his life, then, Socrates would also be responsible for bringing 'disgrace', αἰσχρά, both on himself and his friends.[236] "Put in the mouth of Crito," says Adkins, "these words can only represent ordinary Greek values."[237]

The 'ordinary man's' conception of the nature of his relationship both to the *polis* and to other members of society is still founded upon the competitive excellences. The primary concern of the ἀγαθός πολίτης is not to further the well-being of his social group by working together with other members of his community for the common good, but to do whatever he can to advance his own interests and those of his φίλοι – his family, friends, as well as any other dependants and relations. While the "city's claims *may*

[234] Burnet's 1900 edition of Plato's *Crito*.
[235] Pl. *Crito* 45c5-45d1, 45d5-45d8; Tredennick [trans.].
[236] ibid. 45e-46a.
[237] Adkins (1960) 230.

override" this fundamental objective in "times of stress" – the Persian Wars, for instance, "created… a temporary upsurge of *polis* patriotism overriding faction or class"[238] – when "the city's interests are not threatened, or seem irrelevant to the case in hand, there is nothing in these standards of value to prevent the ἀγαθός πολίτης from attempting to thwart the laws of the city on behalf of his family and friends, with whom he has closer ties".[239] This is evidently why Crito has such difficulty understanding Socrates' 'unreasonable' behaviour.[240] If Socrates refuses to break the law, he will die and his family will be 'ruin[ed]'. Judging by Crito's view of the situation – that not to do everything within one's power to protect one's own interests is not only to expose oneself to 'disgrace' but also to go against everything that an ἀγαθός stands for – it seems that breaking the law to avoid such an outcome is something than many an ἀγαθός would have been only too ready to do. The need to exert every means at one's disposal, just or no, to promote and preserve the success and well-being of one's own social unit (the individual, family, friends, political factions and alliances) clearly still takes precedence over the interests of the larger social group (the *polis*, Ἑλλάς).

The Empire

Following the Persian Wars, the Greeks had decided to take "combined anticipatory measures" against any further Persian attacks by establishing a league "under Athenian hegemony, with its administrative centre on the island of Delos". As soon as the threat from Persia had subsided, however, "the old desire for complete autonomy began to reassert itself, but Athens would not allow withdrawal from the League and forcibly put down any 'revolt'".[241] When the League's treasury was transferred from Delos to Athens in 454 B.C, Athens' supremacy was secured and the other Greek states – who had originally joined the League as allies – now became her subjects. Since this "position of power gave Athens opportunities which were denied to the smaller cities,"[242] let us now turn to examine the nature of Athens' relations with her subjects.

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238 Green (1973) 117.
239 Adkins (1960) 231.
240 Pl. *Crito* 46a; Tredennick [trans.].
241 Finley (1963) 44-45.
242 Adkins (1960) 220.

The values which guided the Athenians in the government and administration of their empire are clearly exemplified in Cleon and Diodotus' debate about the most appropriate course for the Athenians to take regarding the revolted, and now defeated, Mytilenians. Cleon argues that the Athenians should not revoke their previous decision to put all Mytilenian males to death. In revolting, the Mytilenians have committed a great injustice, ἀδικία, against Athens. And the 'best' thing to do in this sort of situation, Cleon argues, is to respond with immediate 'reprisals': to punish 'the guilty party' in a manner 'most fitted to the crime'. Anyone who wishes to 'contradict' this motion would either have 'to prove' that the ἀδικία of the Mytilenians was 'really a good thing', ὠφέλιμος, for Athens, or that the Athenians' 'suffering' had 'somehow harm[ed]' the Mytilenians.[243] He continues:

> ἕν
> τε ξυνελὼν λέγω· πειθόμενοι μὲν ἐμοὶ τά τε δίκαια ἐς Μυτιληναίους καὶ τὰ ξύμφορα ἅμα ποιήσετε, ἄλλως δὲ γνόντες τοῖς μὲν οὐ χαριεῖσθε, ὑμᾶς δὲ αὐτοὺς μᾶλλον δικαιώσεσθε…
>
> … Μὴ οὖν προδόται γένησθε ὑμῶν αὐτῶν…
>
> … κολάσατε δὲ ἀξίως τούτους τε
> καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ξυμμάχοις παράδειγμα σαφὲς καταστήσατε, ὃς ἂν ἀφιστῆται, θανάτῳ ζημιωσόμενον. τόδε γὰρ ἢν γνῶσιν, ἧσσον τῶν πολεμίων ἀμελήσαντες τοῖς ὑμετέροις αὐτῶν μαχεῖσθε ξυμμάχοις.

> Let me sum the whole thing up. I say that, if you follow my advice, you will be doing the right thing [τά δίκαια] as far as Mytilene is concerned and at the same time will be acting in your own interests [τά σύμφορα]; if you decide differently, you will not win them over, but you will be passing judgement on yourselves…
>
> I urge you, therefore, not to be traitors to your own selves [προδόται γένησθε ὑμῶν αὐτῶν]… Punish them as they deserve, and make an example of them to you other allies, plainly showing that revolt will be punished by death. Once they realise this, you will not have so often to

[243] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* III.38.1.1- 2.1; Warner [trans.].

> neglect war with your enemies because you are fighting with your own allies.[244]

Athens' empire depends on the submission of her subject states. If the Athenians decide not to 'make an example' of the Mytilenians, they will betray themselves, since this course of action will only serve to encourage further rebellion. Athens' 'interest', συμφόρως, 'demands' that the Mytilenians be punished 'as they deserve'.[245] Like a defendant in the law courts, Cleon insists that his proposal is not only just, τά δίκαια, but also beneficial, τά σύμφορα, to Athens.

Diodotus disagrees and, contrary to Cleon's proposition, argues that 'haste' and 'anger' are in fact the worst 'obstacles' to good counsel, εὐβουλία;[246] "and, he insists, it is not about the ἀδικία of the Mytilenians but about the εὐβουλία of the Athenians that they are debating, or should be":[247]

> … οὐ γὰρ περὶ τῆς ἐκείνων ἀδικίας ἡμῖν ὁ
> ἀγών, εἰ σωφρονοῦμεν, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας εὐβουλίας.
> ἤν τε γὰρ ἀποφήνω πάνυ ἀδικοῦντας αὐτούς, οὐ διὰ τοῦτο
> καὶ ἀποκτεῖναι κελεύσω, εἰ μὴ ξυμφέρον, ἤν τε καὶ ἔχοντάς
> τι ξυγγνώμης εἶεν, εἰ τῇ πόλει μὴ ἀγαθὸν φαίνοιτο.

> If we are sensible people, we shall see that the question is not so much whether they are guilty [ἀδικία] as whether we are making the right decision [εὐβουλία] for ourselves. I might prove that they are the most guilty [πάνυ ἀδικοῦντες] people in the world, but it does not follow that I shall propose the death penalty, unless that is in your interests [συμφέρον]; I might argue that they deserve to be forgiven, but should not recommend forgiveness unless that seemed to me the best thing [ἀγαθόν] for the city.[248]

Whether or not the Mytilenians are guilty and deserving of punishment, Diodotus argues, is completely irrelevant. The Athenians are not in a 'law-court' sitting in judgement upon the Mytilenians; consequently, they do not need to 'consider what is fit and δίκαιος'. The only 'question' of any importance whatsoever is how Mytilene 'can be most χρησίμως to

[244] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* III.40.4.1-4.5, III.40.7.1, III.40.7.5-7.9; Warner [trans.].
[245] ibid. III.40.4.4-4.8.
[246] ibid. III.42.1.1-2.1.
[247] Adkins (1960) 221.
[248] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* III.44.1.1-2.3; Warner [trans.].

Athens'. And Cleon's proposal, Diodotus is 'convinced', is most definitely 'not' the course of action that will prove most συμφέρον to the Athenians 'in the future':[249]

> σκέψασθε γὰρ ὅτι
> νῦν μέν, ἤν τις καὶ ἀποστᾶσα πόλις γνῷ μὴ περιεσομένη,
> ἔλθοι ἂν ἐς ξύμβασιν δυνατὴ οὖσα ἔτι τὴν δαπάνην ἀπο-
> δοῦναι καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν ὑποτελεῖν· ἐκείνως δὲ τίνα οἴεσθε ἥντινα
> οὐκ ἄμεινον μὲν ἢ νῦν παρασκευάσεσθαι, πολιορκίᾳ δὲ παρα-
> τενεῖσθαι ἐς τοὔσχατον, εἰ τὸ αὐτὸ δύναται σχολῇ καὶ ταχὺ
> ξυμβῆναι; ἡμῖν τε πῶς οὐ βλάβη δαπανᾶν καθημένοις διὰ
> τὸ ἀξύμβατον καί, ἢν ἕλωμεν, πόλιν ἐφθαρμένην παραλαβεῖν
> καὶ τῆς προσόδου τὸ λοιπὸν ἀπ' αὐτῆς στέρεσθαι; ἰσχύομεν
> δὲ πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους τῷδε.

> Consider this now: at the moment, if a city has revolted and realises that the revolt cannot succeed, it will come to terms while it is still capable of paying an indemnity and continuing to pay tribute afterwards. But if Cleon's method is adopted, can you not see that every city will not only make much more careful preparations for revolt, but will also hold out against siege to the very end, since to surrender early or late means just the same thing? That is, unquestionably, against our interests – to spend money on a siege because of the impossibility of coming to terms, and, if we capture the place, to take over a city that is in ruins so that we lose the future revenue from it. And it is just on this revenue that out strength in war depends.[250]

Athens' 'security', her 'strength in war', Diodotus points out, 'depends' on the 'important contributions' she receives from her subjects. Hence Cleon's 'method' – 'acting like a judge who strictly examines a criminal' – if 'adopted', will prove 'unquestionably' harmful to Athens: any further revolts will be far harder to subdue and a significant amount of 'future revenue' will be lost.[251]

Whereas Cleon holds that justice, τά δίκαια, and the city's interests, τά σύμφορα, are united, Diodotus feels that this is not the case, "and so commends the Athenians to pursue self-interest"; but "for both… the advantage of Athens is the end, to which the Mytilenians and the rest of Athens' allies and subjects stand as means".[252] In this particular instance, the application of these values resulted in a more 'moderate' course of

[249] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* III.44.3.1-4.7; Warner [trans.].
[250] ibid. III.46.2.1-4.1.
[251] ibid. III.46.4.1-5.1.
[252] Adkins (1972) 136.

action:[253] the Athenians decided to rescind their previous resolution to put all Mytilenian males to death. That Athens was more than willing to adopt the more ruthless course of action in the pursuit of her own interests, however, is made devastatingly apparent by her treatment of the Melians. In 416 the Athenians attacked the island of Melos and demanded that she become a tribute-paying member of the empire.

The Athenians tell the islanders that they 'will use no fine phrases' – 'a great mass of words that nobody would believe' – saying, for example, that they have a 'right', δικαίως, to their 'empire' because they were the ones who 'defeated the Persians', or that they have now 'come against' the Melians because of the 'injuries', ἀδικίαι, they have 'done' to Athens. They ask the islanders to adopt the same policy: they must not 'imagine' that they can in any way 'influence' the Athenians by saying that they have 'never joined Sparta in the war', or that they have never 'done' Athens 'any harm', ἀδικεῖν:[254]

> τὰ δυνατὰ δ' ἐξ ὧν ἑκάτεροι ἀληθῶς φρονοῦμεν διαπράσ-
> σεσθαι, ἐπισταμένους πρὸς εἰδότας ὅτι δίκαια μὲν ἐν τῷ
> ἀνθρωπείῳ λόγῳ ἀπὸ τῆς ἴσης ἀνάγκης κρίνεται, δυνατὰ δὲ
> οἱ προύχοντες πράσσουσι καὶ οἱ ἀσθενεῖς ξυγχωροῦσιν.

> Instead we recommend that you should try to get what it is possible for you to get, taking into consideration what we both really do think; since you know as well as we do that, when these matters are discussed by practical people, the standard of justice [δίκαια] depends on the equality of power to compel [ἴση ἀνάγκη] and that in fact the strong [οἱ προύχοντες] do what they have the power to do and the weak [οἱ ἀσθενεῖς] accept what they have to accept.[255]

These are the very same sentiments as those found in Hesiod's 'might is right' parable about the 'imperious hawk' and the 'piteous' 'little' nightingale.[256] 'Justice', the Athenians argue, need only be considered in the event of two equal powers; they are the 'strong[er]' of the two, they hold all the 'power to compel', so the only 'practical' thing for the Melians to do is to 'accept' their fate and acquiesce to her demands.

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[253] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* III.46.4.3; Warner [trans.].
[254] ibid. V.89.1.1-1.5.
[255] ibid. V.89.1.6-1.9.
[256] Hes. *Works and Days* 203-212; Hine [trans.].

The Athenians have discounted 'justice', τό δίκαιον, in favour of 'self-interest', τό συμφέρον. But 'fair play and just dealing', the Melians counter, are in fact the most beneficial, χρήσιμον, principles for 'all men' to uphold:

> Ἧι μὲν δὴ νομίζομέν γε, χρήσιμον ἀνάγκη γάρ,
> ἐπειδὴ ὑμεῖς οὕτω παρὰ τὸ δίκαιον τὸ ξυμφέρον λέγειν
> ὑπέθεσθε μὴ καταλύειν ὑμᾶς τὸ κοινὸν ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ τῷ
> αἰεὶ ἐν κινδύνῳ γιγνομένῳ εἶναι τὰ εἰκότα καὶ δίκαια, καί τι
> καὶ ἐντὸς τοῦ ἀκριβοῦς πείσαντά τινα ὠφεληθῆναι. καὶ
> πρὸς ὑμῶν οὐχ ἧσσον τοῦτο, ὅσῳ καὶ ἐπὶ μεγίστη τιμωρίᾳ
> σφαλέντες ἂν τοῖς ἄλλοις παράδειγμα γένοισθε.

> Then in our view (since you force us to leave justice [τό δίκαιον] out of account and to confine ourselves to self-interest [τό συμφέρον]) – in our view it is at any rate useful [χρήσιμον] that you should not destroy a principle that is to the general good [τό κοινόν ἀγαθόν] of all men – namely, that in the case of all who fall into danger there should be such a thing as fair play and just dealing [τά δίκαια], and that such people should be allowed to use and to profit [ὠφελεῖσθαι] by arguments that fall short of a mathematical accuracy. And this is a principle which affects you as much as anybody, since your own fall would be visited by the most terrible vengeance and would be an example to the world.[257]

The Melians try to dissuade the Athenians from their proposed course of action by advising them to respect 'a principle that is to the general good, τό κοινόν ἀγαθόν, of all men' instead of merely pursuing independent self-interest, since this would prove more 'useful' should they themselves ever 'fall into danger'. The Athenians immediately dismiss their argument and reply that 'they are not so much frightened' of suffering a similar fate at the hand of the Spartans, since 'being conquered by a power which rules over others, as Sparta does,' is not nearly as dangerous as when 'a ruling power is attacked and defeated by its own subjects'.[258] Their only concern is for the advancement of their own empire:

> ὡς δὲ ἐπ' ὠφελίᾳ τε
> πάρεσμεν τῆς ἡμετέρας ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ νῦν τοὺς

[257] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* V.90.1.1-1.7; Warner [trans.].
[258] ibid. V.91.1.1-2.2.

> λόγους ἐροῦμεν τῆς ὑμετέρας πόλεως, ταῦτα δηλώσομεν, βουλόμενοι ἀπόνως μὲν ὑμῶν ἄρξαι, χρησίμως δ' ὑμᾶς ἀμφοτέροις σωθῆναι.

> What we shall now do is to show you that it is for the good [ὠφέλεια] of our own empire that we are here and that it is for the preservation [σωτηρία] of your city that we shall say what we are going to say. We do not want any trouble in bringing you into our empire, and we want you to be spared for the good [χρησίμως] both of yourselves and of ourselves.[259]

The Athenians conclude their argument by saying that their 'aims' and 'actions' are 'perfectly consistent' with the 'principles' by which all men 'govern their own conduct… It is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can.' They are 'merely acting in accordance' with this law, and the Melians would have done 'precisely' the same thing to the Athenians, had they been given the chance.[260] Despite these arguments, however, the Melians decide not to give in to Athens' demands. The Athenians are merciless: they defeat the Melians, kill 'all the men of military age', sell 'the women and children as slaves', and take over the island 'for themselves'.[261]

In the law-courts, in citizen-life, and in Athens' relations with her subjects, the importance of the competitive excellences continued to prevail over the need for adherence to the co-operative virtues. Despite the advent of democracy – with its idealistic principles of ἰσονομία, obedience to the laws and loyalty to the state; the development and implementation of laws and institutions to promote social harmony, institutional continuity and justice; and the attendant insistence on the necessity of embracing the co-operative virtues like σωφροσύνη, δίκη and αἰδώς – the Greeks never quite managed to resolve the underlying tension between independent self-interest and the common good; a resolution that would not only have enabled them to successfully bring about the necessary change in values so essential to the social conditions of the *polis*, but would also have enabled them to realise their fundamental unity as a 'collective', as a distinct community of 'Greek' citizens. The consequence of this refusal

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[259] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* V.91.2.2-2.6; Warner [trans.].
[260] ibid. V.105.
[261] ibid. V.116.4.

to abandon competitive ἀρετή in favour of co-operation and co-existence ultimately proved to be disastrous for Greece.

Why did the Melians choose not to submit to Athens' demands? Survival, at any price, is surely better than total annihilation? The Melians explain the reasoning behind their decision:

> Ἦ που ἄρα, εἰ τοσαύτην γε ὑμεῖς τε μὴ παυθῆναι
> ἀρχῆς καὶ οἱ δουλεύοντες ἤδη ἀπαλλαγῆναι τὴν παρακινδύ-
> νευσιν ποιοῦνται, ἡμῖν γε τοῖς ἔτι ἐλευθέροις πολλὴ κακότης
> καὶ δειλία μὴ πᾶν πρὸ τοῦ δουλεῦσαι ἐπεξελθεῖν.

> Then surely, if such hazards are taken by you to keep your empire and by your subjects [δουλεύοντες] to escape from it, we who are still free [ἐλεύθεροι] would show ourselves great cowards [δειλία] and weaklings [κακότης] if we failed to face everything that comes rather than submit to slavery [δουλεύειν].[262]

If the Melians were to give in to Athens' demands, they 'would show' themselves to be 'great cowards and weaklings', κακοί and δειλοί; and this, judging from their decision, is simply unacceptable: the Melians choose 'to face everything that comes rather than submit to slavery'.

"It was essential," Adkins argues, "for any individual or state that claimed to be ἀγαθός not to submit to any situation which entailed, or appeared to entail, defeat, reduction of ἐλευθερία, freedom, or αὐτάρκεια, self-sufficiency; for any such situation reduced or abolished one's ἀρετή; the most important quality."[263] Given these values, Athens' position of power and the policy of calculated imperial aggression it engendered were bound to be regarded with fear and resentment by her fellow Greeks. "Athens, as portrayed in the Melian Dialogue, felt free to display her ἀρετή as far as her powers would permit; but however she had treated them, she could never have had willing subjects," since any subordination or subjection could only ever have been regarded "as an abrogation of the ἐλευθερία and αὐτάρκεια… of the subject state, and readily felt as

[262] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* V.100.1.1-1.4; Warner [trans.].
[263] Adkins (1972) 146.

δουλεία, slavery."[264] Revolt, which in fact took place on "numerous" occasions,[265] was inevitable; so, too, was war:

> … τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἡγοῦμαι μεγάλους γιγνομένους καὶ φόβον παρέχοντας τοῖς Λακεδαιμονίοις ἀναγκάσαι ἐς τὸ πολεμεῖν·
>
> What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta.[266]

When in 431 Athens and Sparta, each with their own allies, went to war, the Athenians fought to "secure" their "imperial destiny… once and for all",[267] the Spartans to "restor[e] to the Greek cities their freedom and autonomy".[268] The Peloponnesian War lasted for twenty-seven years, with devastating effects:

> Τῶν δὲ πρότερον ἔργων μέγιστον ἐπράχθη τὸ Μηδικόν, καὶ τοῦτο ὅμως δυοῖν ναυμαχίαιν καὶ πεζομαχίαιν ταχεῖαν τὴν κρίσιν ἔσχεν. τούτου δὲ τοῦ πολέμου μῆκός τε μέγα προύβη, παθήματά τε ξυνηνέχθη γενέσθαι ἐν αὐτῷ τῇ Ἑλλάδι οἷα οὐχ ἕτερα ἐν ἴσῳ χρόνῳ. οὔτε γὰρ πόλεις τοσαίδε ληφθεῖσαι ἠρημώθησαν, αἱ μὲν ὑπὸ βαρβάρων, αἱ δ' ὑπὸ σφῶν αὐτῶν ἀντιπολεμούντων εἰσὶ δ' αἳ καὶ οἰκήτορας μετέβαλον ἁλισκόμεναι, οὔτε φυγαὶ τοσαίδε ἀνθρώπων καὶ φόνος, ὁ μὲν κατ' αὐτὸν τὸν πόλεμον, ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ στασιάζειν.
>
> The greatest war in the past was the Persian War; yet in this war the decision was reached quickly as a result of two naval battles and two battles on land. The Peloponnesian War, on the other hand, not only lasted for a long time, but throughout its course brought with it unprecedented suffering [παθήματα] for Hellas. Never before had so many cities been captured and then devastated, whether by foreign armies or by the Hellenic powers themselves; never had there been so many exiles; never such loss of life – both in the actual warfare and in internal revolutions.[269]

[264] Adkins (1972) 139.
[265] Green (1973) 119.
[266] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* I.23.6.2-6.4; Warner [trans.].
[267] Green (1973) 136.
[268] Finley (1963) 52.
[269] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* I.23.1.1-3.1; Warner [trans.].

In the final years of the war it had become evident in war-torn and plague-ridden Athens that the democracy had, in fact, failed: "it had *not* preserved the stability and prosperity of the state."[270] Athens, it was clear, was going to lose the war, and it was inevitable that powerful individuals should seize the opportunity to exploit the situation in the pursuit of their own success and prestige, their own ἀρετή, to do so would, after all, simply be to act in accordance with the prevailing Greek values. Two oligarchic coups were staged in Athens, one in 411 and another in 404. While the first regime, known as the Five Thousand, was 'reasonable and moderate' in its administration,[271] the second, the Thirty Tyrants, 'turned to savagery and wickedness on a large scale': '… they left none of the citizens alone, but put to death those who were outstanding for their wealth, birth or reputation, cunningly removing those whom they had cause to fear and whose property they wanted to plunder. Within a short space of time they had killed no fewer than fifteen hundred.'[272]

In 404, after a winter of starvation under siege, Athens at last surrendered, and from there on circumstances worsened. The first thing the Spartans did – the 'liberators' who had successfully managed to 'liberate the Hellenes from their fellow Hellenes'[273] – was to put an end to the Athenian empire. Would the Greek states finally manage to find some way in which they could peacefully co-exist? The Spartans did precisely as the Athenians had done before them: they pursued the course of action most beneficial, συμφέρον, to themselves, with little consideration for the needs and rights of their fellow countrymen. First they proceeded to return "the Asia Minor Greeks to Persian suzerainty (in payment for Persian gold)," and then attempted "to establish a tribute-paying empire of [their] own, with military governors and garrisons, on the corpse of the Athenian Empire".[274] In effect, then, the Greeks had simply exchanged one form of tyranny for another. Next in line to seize control was Thebes, and their behaviour toward their fellow Greeks proved to be no better than that of the Spartans: "both regimes made themselves notorious through their rigidity, authoritarianism, wanton aggression and atrocities."[275]

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[270] Adkins (1960) 237.
[271] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* VIII.97; Warner [trans.].
[272] Arist. *The Athenian Constitution* 37.2, 35.4; Rhodes [trans.].
[273] Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* VIII.46; Warner [trans.].
[274] Finley (1963) 52.
[275] Green (1973) 136.

Sparta, Athens, Elis, Achaea and Mantinea banded together against Thebes, but as soon as they accomplished their objective in 362 and defeated their common oppressor, "the Greeks states at once relapsed into separatism and chaos".[276] And then, in 359, Philip II came to the throne of Macedon: "What Philip saw, very clearly, was that Macedonia's centralised, autocratic system of government could prove immensely advantageous… against the ill-coordinated, quarrelsome [and] anarchic" Greek states.[277] As his own power and dominion increased over the next twenty years, Greece remained hamstrung by internecine warfare and civil strife. The Greek states made a last ditch effort to save themselves by forming an alliance against Philip, but it was a case of 'too little, too late'. Philip's victory at Chaeronea on the 2nd of August 338 was decisive. His rule passed to his son Alexander, whose "vast empire… formed the basis for those great 'Successor Kingdoms' which dominated the Greek-speaking world until their final absorption by Rome".[278]

This is the type of world in which and for which the Homeric poems were both composed and received – a world in which the members of society frequently pursue individual self-interest at the expense of the community; in which a man's worth is determined not by the extent to which he shows regard for his fellow men and furthers the interests of his social group, but by the extent to which he achieves individual success and prestige; in which the leaders of society, instead of subordinating their own desires to the interests of the community, jeopardise its welfare in the pursuit of their own profit or power; and in which the need to exert every means at one's disposal, just or no, to assert one's own pre-eminence always takes precedence over the need, as members of a human society, to work together for the common good. These were the sociopolitical conditions, values and ethics with which Homer's audiences were confronted, and consequently it was precisely Homer's treatment of and response to this social context that would have determined the extent of his popularity and appeal. Let us now turn to consider the relation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to the social, political and ethical reality of Archaic and Classical Greece.

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[276] Green (1973) 153.
[277] ibid. 162.
[278] ibid. 172.

Chapter 3
Δαίμονι ἶσος

Heroic tensions

We have seen that the Homeric poems reflect a vanished epoch of glory and success that seems to suggest most clearly the height of the Mycenaean Age. This historical period "has consistently been treated as one of the chief exemplars" of a Heroic Age, an "age of a special kind of militaristic and aristocratic society, whose leaders are bound by a rigid code of personal honour and self-esteem and by the glorification of physical prowess and personal possessions".[279] In his *Works and Days*, Hesiod contextualises this Heroic Age in his description of the five stages of the human race: from the earliest 'mortal men' – 'a golden race' who, 'like the gods', 'lived with happy hearts untouched by work or sorrow' – to the present 'race of iron': 'Now, by day, men work and grieve unceasingly; by night, they waste away and die.'[280] The heroes belong to the 'fourth generation', an era "of virtue and strength, interrupting the sequence of decline just before the coming of the present age":[281]

> Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ γαῖα κάλυψεν,
> αὖτις ἔτ' ἄλλο τέταρτον ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ
> Ζεὺς Κρονίδης ποίησε, δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον,
> ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος, οἳ καλέονται
> ἡμίθεοι, προτέρῃ γενεὴ κατ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν.

> But when this bronze generation, however, was finally buried, Zeus, son of Kronos, created a whole new fourth generation here on the fertile earth who were better and fonder of justice; this was a godlike race of heroical men who were known as demigods, the last generation before our own on the broad earth.[282]

The heroes are thus "defined as such by… [their] membership of a specific generation or race of men, belonging at a particular point along the scale of human history"[283].

[279] Kirk (1976) 10.
[280] Hes. *Works and Days* 109-115, 174-179; Wender [trans.].
[281] Clarke (2004) 79.
[282] Hes. *Works and Days* 156-160; Hine [trans.].
[283] Clarke (2004) 79.

"The main theme of a [heroic] culture is," according to Finley, "constructed on two notes – prowess and honour. The one is the hero's essential attribute, the other his essential aim." The Homeric heroes are unparalleled in the single-mindedness with which they adhere to this ideology: "every value, every judgment, every action, all skills and talents have the function of either defining honour or realising it."[284] Strength, bravery, physical prowess, honour and glory, these are the values which organise heroic society and which Hektor, consequently, prays that Astyanax will embody:

> Ζεῦ ἄλλοι τε θεοὶ δότε δὴ καὶ τόνδε γενέσθαι
> παῖδ' ἐμὸν ὡς καὶ ἐγώ περ ἀριπρεπέα Τρώεσσιν,
> ὧδε βίην τ' ἀγαθόν, καὶ Ἰλίου ἶφι ἀνάσσειν·
> καί ποτέ τις εἴποι πατρός γ' ὅδε πολλὸν ἀμείνων
> ἐκ πολέμου ἀνιόντα· φέροι δ' ἔναρα βροτόεντα
> κτείνας δήϊον ἄνδρα, χαρείη δὲ φρένα μήτηρ.

> Zeus, and you other immortals, grant that this boy, who is my son, may be as I am, pre-eminent [ἀριπρεπής] among the Trojans, great [ἀγαθός] in strength, as I am, and rule strongly over Ilion; and some day let them say of him: 'He is better [ἀμείνων] by far than his father', as he comes in from the fighting; and let him kill his enemy and bring home the blooded spoils, and delight the heart of his mother.[285]

The heroes are characterised by a compulsive need to win social approbation and prestige: pre-eminence, glory, honour, and the respect and admiration of other members of society. The chief means by which such approbation is won is through bravery and success in battle. "Martial excellence," as Clarke points out, "is part of a reciprocal contract: the noblemen are honoured by their people because they achieve fame and thus glorify the people as a whole, and this in turn encourages the warriors to continue their display of prowess and maintain their good name."[286] It is in precisely these terms that the Lykian, Sarpedon, defines the relation of the social prerogatives enjoyed by the heroes to the duties and responsibilities that such prerogatives entail:

[284] Finley (1982) 115.
[285] Hom. *Il*. 6.476-481; Lattimore [trans.].
[286] Clarke (2004) 77-78.

> Γλαῦκε τί ἢ δὴ νῶϊ τετιμήμεσθα μάλιστα
> ἕδρῃ τε κρέασίν τε ἰδὲ πλείοις δεπάεσσιν
> ἐν Λυκίῃ, πάντες δὲ θεοὺς ὣς εἰσορόωσι,
> καὶ τέμενος νεμόμεσθα μέγα Ξάνθοιο παρ' ὄχθας
> καλὸν φυταλιῆς καὶ ἀρούρης πυροφόροιο;
> τὼ νῦν χρὴ Λυκίοισι μέτα πρώτοισιν ἐόντας
> ἑστάμεν ἠδὲ μάχης καυστείρης ἀντιβολῆσαι,
> ὄφρά τις ὧδ' εἴπῃ Λυκίων πύκα θωρηκτάων·
> οὐ μὰν ἀκλεέες Λυκίην κάτα κοιρανέουσιν
> ἡμέτεροι βασιλῆες, ἔδουσί τε πίονα μῆλα
> οἶνόν τ' ἔξαιτον μελιηδέα· ἀλλ' ἄρα καὶ ἲς
> ἐσθλή, ἐπεὶ Λυκίοισι μέτα πρώτοισι μάχονται.

> Glaukos, why is it you and I are honoured [τιμᾶσθαι] before others with pride of place, the choice meats and the filled wine cups in Lykia, and all men look on us as if we were immortals, and we are appointed a great piece of land by the banks of Xanthos, good land, orchard and vineyard, and ploughland for the planting of wheat? Therefore it is our duty in the forefront of the Lykians to take our stand, and bear our part of the blazing of battle, so that a man of the close-armoured Lykians may say of us: 'Indeed, these are no ignoble men [ἀκλεέες] who are lords of Lykia, these kings of ours, who feed upon the fat sheep appointed and drink the exquisite sweet wine, since indeed there is strength of valour [ἐσθλή] in them, since they fight in the forefront of the Lykians.'[287]

When heroes perform their 'duty' to display their 'strength of valour' and 'bear' their 'part of the blazing of battle', they are 'honoured' above all other men as if they were 'immortals'. But why this powerful need to 'win glory'? Sarpedon continues:

> ὦ πέπον εἰ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε
> αἰεὶ δὴ μέλλοιμεν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε
> ἔσσεσθ', οὔτέ κεν αὐτὸς ἐνὶ πρώτοισι μαχοίμην
> οὔτέ κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν·
> νῦν δ' ἔμπης γὰρ κῆρες ἐφεστᾶσιν θανάτοιο
> μυρίαι, ἃς οὐκ ἔστι φυγεῖν βροτὸν οὐδ' ὑπαλύξαι,
> ἴομεν ἠέ τῳ εὖχος ὀρέξομεν ἠέ τις ἡμῖν.

> Man, supposing you and I, escaping this battle, would be able to live on forever, ageless, immortal, so neither would I myself go on fighting in the

[287] Hom. *Il*. 12.310-321; Lattimore [trans.].

> foremost nor would I urge you into the fighting where men win glory. But now, seeing that the spirits of death stand close about us in their thousands, no man can turn aside nor escape them, let us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others.[288]

There would be no need to 'win glory' if men were 'able to live on forever'; but, as it is, 'no man' can 'turn aside' or 'escape' the 'spirits of death', and it is for this reason that the need "to perpetuate one's status in the form of continuing [glory] after death" becomes the strongest imperative. Fame provides the heroes with "a kind of surrogate immortality: just as the warrior's greatness in battle ensures his continued prestige during his life, so by implication the tale of his deeds will ensure that his identity persists among future generations."[289] To the heroes, then, everlasting fame, κλέος ἄφθιτος, signifies both the ultimate goal and the ultimate reward, and this is precisely what Hektor boasts he will achieve when he defeats the 'bravest of all the Achaians' in a duel:

> καί ποτέ τις εἴπῃσι καὶ ὀψιγόνων ἀνθρώπων
> νηῒ πολυκλήϊδι πλέων ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον·
> ἀνδρὸς μὲν τόδε σῆμα πάλαι κατατεθνηῶτος,
> ὅν ποτ' ἀριστεύοντα κατέκτανε φαίδιμος Ἕκτωρ.
> ὥς ποτέ τις ἐρέει· τὸ δ' ἐμὸν κλέος οὔ ποτ' ὀλεῖται.

> And some day one of the men to come will say, as he sees it, one who in his benched ship sails on the wine-blue water: 'This is the mound of a man who died long ago in battle, who was one of the bravest [ἀριστεύειν], and glorious Hektor killed him.' So will he speak some day, and my glory [κλέος] will not be forgotten.[290]

Being forced to suffer the reverse of such fame – ἀκλεής, ingloriousness and ignominy – is the one fate that all heroes fear most. When Achilleus, for example, is faced with the terrifying realisation that he, 'the best of Achaians', is in danger of suffering 'a dismal death' at the hands of the River Skamandros, he wishes that he had had the good fortune of being killed by Hektor, 'the greatest', ἄριστος, of the Trojans:

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[288] Hom. *Il.* 12.322-328; Lattimore [trans.].
[289] Clarke (2004) 77, 78.
[290] Hom. *Il.* 7.73, 87-91; Lattimore [trans.].

τώ κ' ἀγαθὸς μὲν ἔπεφν', ἀγαθὸν δέ κεν ἐξενάριξε·
νῦν δέ με λευγαλέῳ θανάτῳ εἵμαρτο ἁλῶναι
ἐρχθέντ' ἐν μεγάλῳ ποταμῷ ὡς παῖδα συφορβόν,
ὅν ῥά τ' ἔναυλος ἀποέρσῃ χειμῶνι περῶντα.

> A brave man [ἀγαθός] would have been the slayer, as the slain was a brave man [ἀγαθός]. But now this is a dismal death I am doomed to be caught in, trapped in a big river as if I were a boy and a swineherd swept away by a torrent when he tries to cross in a rainstorm.[291]

The only "weakness" or "unheroic trait" is "cowardice and the consequent failure to pursue heroic goals".[292] Such behaviour incurs dishonour and is felt to be "unbearable," Dodds argues, because it "exposes a man to the contempt or ridicule of his fellows" and "causes him to 'lose face'".[293] Menelaos plays upon this fear of public ridicule, of 'what people will say', when he rebukes the Achaians for refusing to accept Hektor's challenge to a duel:

ὤ μοι ἀπειλητῆρες Ἀχαιΐδες οὐκέτ' Ἀχαιοί·
ἦ μὲν δὴ λώβη τάδε γ' ἔσσεται αἰνόθεν αἰνῶς
εἰ μή τις Δαναῶν νῦν Ἕκτορος ἀντίος εἶσιν.
ἀλλ' ὑμεῖς μὲν πάντες ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα γένοισθε
ἥμενοι αὖθι ἕκαστοι ἀκήριοι ἀκλεὲς αὔτως·

> Ah me! You brave in words, you women, not men, of Achaia! This will be a defilement upon us, shame [λώβη] upon shame piled, if no one of the Danaans goes out to face Hektor. No, may all of you turn to water and earth, all of you who sit by yourselves with no life in you, utterly dishonoured [ἀκλεέες].[294]

The basic principle around which the whole of this society is structured, then, is the relentless pursuit and preservation of honour, τιμή, and fame, κλέος. As for the heroes themselves, they are ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν, 'the race of the half-god mortals'.[295] They are so called both because of "the literal fact of [their] divine parentage" and "because they stand at an intermediate stage between the gods' infinite vitality and the sickly

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[291] Hom. *Il*. 1.244, 21.279, 21.280-283; Lattimore [trans.].
[292] Finley (1982) 20.
[293] Dodds (1951) 18.
[294] Hom. *Il*. 7.96-100; Lattimore [trans.].
[295] ibid. 12.23.

feebleness of modern man”. Although this means that the heroes “are open to the accusation” that their own prowess could never compete with, let alone ‘surpass’, that of their fathers – ‘the strongest [κάρτιστοι] generation of earth-born mortals’ (*Il*. 4.374, 1.266) – “the more potent contrast,” Clarke argues, “is with the weaker race that has come after them”:

> Just as the gods’ defining characteristic is their abundance of life, which involves both immortality and superhuman power, so the basic difference between the heroic generation and our own is their greater capacity for self-propelled vigour, which is the essence of excellence in both physical and mental life. This is what Homeric Greek calls μένος, the force of onrushing energy that is manifested in swift physical and mental movement embodied in fluid essences like blood and semen.[296]

Dodds argues that this μένος represents a “communication of power from god to man”: “When a man feels μένος in his chest, or ‘thrusting up pungently in his nostrils’ (*Od*. 24.318), he is conscious of a mysterious access of energy; the life in him is strong, and he is filled with a new confidence and eagerness.”[297] It typically manifests during a battle, such as when Athene heeds Diomedes’ prayer for assistance against the ‘vaunting’ Pandaros by granting him ‘the μένος’ of his ‘untremulous… father’, Tydeus (*Il*. 5.106, 125-126), or when Glaukos’ attempt to ‘stir’ the Lykians on to battle only succeeds when Apollo ‘put[s] μένος into his spirit’ (*Il*. 16.525, 529). In addition to μένος, the heroes also display ἀγηνορίη, the “key characteristic of [their] behaviour,” according to Chantraine, and “the nearest Homeric equivalent to our word ‘heroism’”. This “abstract noun correspond[s] to the adjective ἀγήνωρ,” and literally means “‘having abundant or excessive manhood’”. By virtue of their ἀγήνωρ and μένος, the heroes possess an “extreme level of male energy” which enables them to “reach heights of action, thought and emotion that approach the level of gods” and which “lesser men of later times can never” achieve.[298]

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[296] Clarke (2004) 79-80.
[297] Dodds (1951) 8.
[298] Clarke (2004) 80.

The poems "emphasise that the heroes are closer to the gods than ordinary mortals"[299] by the application of traditional epithets such as 'born of Zeus' (*Il*. 16.707), 'cherished by Zeus' (*Od*. 4.156), 'the equal of Ares' (*Il*. 5.576), 'a man equal to the gods' (*Od*. 1.324), 'resembling the immortals' (*Il*. 11.60), 'divine' (*Il*. 16.638), 'with the appearance of a god' (*Od*. 4.310) and 'godlike'(*Od*. 14.173). In Book 2 'powerful Agamemnon' is even described as having 'eyes and head like Zeus who delights in thunder', a 'girth… like Ares' and 'the chest of Poseidon' (*Il*. 2.477-479). These heroes, however, are not gods, merely god-*like*. And rather than elevating his heroes to the status of gods, Homer seems to go out of his way to bring them closer to the world of the audience by forcing them into an understanding of the unchanging conditions that both characterise and bind their existence as ordinary human beings. At various points throughout the poems, he employs the above epithets in precisely those contexts where a "hero is forced to recognise just how unlike a god he actually is". There is that "tension" described by Graziosi and Haubold "between our perception of the heroes as close to the gods, and their bitter realisation that there is an insurmountable gulf between themselves and their divine ancestors".[300]

This 'tension' is made evident, for example, in *Iliad* 5: Diomedes, 'raging' with the 'strength', σθένος, of a 'lion', oversteps the limits of his own mortality by daring to attack not only Aphrodite, 'a god without warcraft', but also the war god himself, 'manslaughtering Ares' (*Il*. 5.135-139, 331, 518). "It is Apollo, the god most pressingly concerned with safeguarding the distinction between human and divine,"[301] who warns Diomedes that he had best 'take care' not to delude himself into believing that he can in any way 'strive' against the strength of the immortal gods:

> τρὶς μὲν ἔπειτ' ἐπόρουσε κατακτάμεναι μενεαίνων,
> τρὶς δέ οἱ ἐστυφέλιξε φαεινὴν ἀσπίδ' Ἀπόλλων·
> ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἶσος,
> δεινὰ δ' ὁμοκλήσας προσέφη ἑκάεργος Ἀπόλλων·
> φράζεο Τυδεΐδη καὶ χάζεο, μηδὲ θεοῖσιν
> ἶσ' ἔθελε φρονέειν, ἐπεὶ οὔ ποτε φῦλον ὁμοῖον

[299] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 126.
[300] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 126.
[301] ibid. 126.

ἀθανάτων τε θεῶν χαμαὶ ἐρχομένων τ' ἀνθρώπων.

> Three times, furious to cut him down, he drove forward, and three times Apollo battered aside the bright shield, but as a fourth time, like more than man [δαίμονι ἶσος], he charged, Apollo who strikes from afar cried out to him in the voice of terror: 'Take care, give back, son of Tydeus, and strive no longer to make yourself like the gods in mind, since never the same is the breed of gods, who are immortal, and men who walk groundling.'[302]

Human beings, says Apollo, are 'never' equal, ἴσος, to the immortal gods. The heroes are confronted with this reality time and again. When Patroklos, 'slaughter[ing]' one Trojan hero after another, goes against Achilleus' orders and attempts to 'mount' the walls of 'gate-Towering Ilion', Apollo commands him to 'give way' and not to challenge what has already been 'destined' by the gods:

τρὶς μὲν ἐπ' ἀγκῶνος βῆ τείχεος ὑψηλοῖο
Πάτροκλος, τρὶς δ' αὐτὸν ἀπεστυφέλιξεν Ἀπόλλων
χείρεσσ' ἀθανάτῃσι φαεινὴν ἀσπίδα νύσσων.
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἶσος,
δεινὰ δ' ὁμοκλήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
χάζεο διογενὲς Πατρόκλεες· οὔ νύ τοι αἶσα
σῷ ὑπὸ δουρὶ πόλιν πέρθαι Τρώων ἀγερώχων,
οὐδ' ὑπ' Ἀχιλλῆος, ὅς περ σέο πολλὸν ἀμείνων.

> Three times Patroklos tried to mount the angle of the towering wall, and three times Phoibos Apollo battered him backward with the immortal hands beating back the bright shield. As Patroklos for the fourth time, like something more than a man [δαίμονι ἶσος], came at him he called aloud, and spoke winged words in the voice of danger: 'Give way, illustrious Patroklos: it is not destined that the city of the proud Trojans shall fall before your spear nor even at the hand of Achilleus, who is far better than you are.'[303]

Even Achilleus, the son of an immortal goddess, is forced to recognise that he is not, in fact, an 'equal' of the gods, δαίμονι ἶσος, when, despite his best efforts, Apollo 'easily' prevents him from killing Hektor:

αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς

[302] Hom. *Il*. 5.436-442; Lattimore [trans.].
[303] ibid. 16.692, 698, 702-709.

ἐμμεμαὼς ἐπόρουσε κατακτάμεναι μενεαίνων,
σμερδαλέα ἰάχων· τὸν δ' ἐξήρπαξεν Ἀπόλλων
ῥεῖα μάλ' ὥς τε θεός, ἐκάλυψε δ' ἄρ' ἠέρι πολλῇ.
τρὶς μὲν ἔπειτ' ἐπόρουσε ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεὺς
ἔγχεϊ χαλκείῳ, τρὶς δ' ἠέρα τύψε βαθεῖαν.
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπέσσυτο δαίμονι ἶσος,
δεινὰ δ' ὁμοκλήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
ἐξ αὖ νῦν ἔφυγες θάνατον κύον·

> Meanwhile Achilleus made a furious charge against him, raging to kill him with a terrible cry, but Phoibos Apollo caught up Hektor easily, since he was a god, and wrapped him in thick mist. Three times swift-footed brilliant Achilleus swept in against him with the brazen spear. Three times his stroke went into the deep mist. But as a fourth time, like something more than a man [δαίμονι ἶσος], he charged in, Achilleus with a terrible cry called in winged words after him: 'Once again now you escaped death, dog.'[304]

The 'godlike' heroes, confronted with the undeniable superiority of the gods they strive so desperately to emulate, "are forced… to face their own limitations as human beings," to "learn to understand their own mortality" and to "come to view it in human terms".[305] This 'humanising' aspect is particularly evident in Homer's treatment of his two main protagonists, Achilleus and Odysseus. In the course of the poems, these two characters undergo developments that force them to recognise the limitations of their human condition and ultimately gain an understanding of what it means to be human. Rather than allowing them to continue to think of themselves primarily as descendants of the gods, Homer brings Achilleus and Odysseus closer to the human world of the audience by forcing them into an acceptance of their new place in a world of ordinary human existence.

Ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς

"No one on the plain of Troy is more agonisingly close to divinity than Achilleus."[306] As well as being the son of Thetis and the great-grandson of Zeus, Achilleus is also 'the best of the Achaians' (*Il*. 1.244) – he is the one hero 'who stands as a great bulwark of battle over all the Achaians' (*Il*. 1.283-284), who is capable of warding off 'the strength of

[304] Hom. *Il*. 20.441-449; Lattimore [trans.].
[305] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 126, 102.
[306] Clarke (2004) 82.

manslaughtering Hektor' (*Il*. 9.351-352), and who was raised 'to be always best in battle and pre-eminent beyond all others' (*Il*. 11.783). Not only is he "the hero who is most often compared with the gods… but also we observe in action how like the gods he is, and above all how like Zeus himself".[307] Like Zeus, for example, 'who before now has broken the crests of many cities and will break them again' (*Il*. 2.117-118), Achilleus, 'the sacker of cities' (*Il*. 8.372), boasts that he has sacked twenty-three cities 'through the generous Troad' (*Il*. 9.328-329). Similarly, when Achilleus informs the ambassadors that he will return to Phthia, despite their pleas, ('tomorrow… you will see, if you have a mind to and if it concerns you, my ships in the dawn at sea on the Hellespont where the fish swarm'), his very language echoes that of Zeus when he taunts Hera for her failed attempt at mutiny ('Tomorrow at the dawning…you will see, if you have the heart, a still mightier son of Kronos perishing the ranged numbers of Argive spearmen').[308] Even Achilleus' "quarrel with Agamemnon over his loss of 'honour', τιμή," (*Il*. 16.53-54) is paralleled "in heaven when Poseidon resents [Zeus' claim] to higher rank" (*Il*. 15.185-199).[309] Achilleus, moreover, is also the hero who is most able to influence the gods. When he is humiliated by Agamemnon in Book 1 and turns to his goddess mother for help, he reminds her that she was the 'only' immortal to help save Zeus from 'shameful destruction… that time when all the other Olympians sought to' usurp his power (*Il*. 1.393-412); "this episode gives Achilleus, as the son of Thetis, a powerful hold on Zeus and enables him to dictate the very course of world history."[310]

And it is because Achilleus is so close to the gods that he has such an exaggerated response to his quarrel with Agamemnon. As the 'best of the Achaians', ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν (*Il*. 1.412), Achilleus is also the hero who displays the greatest propensity for ἀγηνορίη and as such possesses the most "godlike and passionate nature". It is this "that drives him to such extreme anger at Agamemnon's insult: thematically it is vital that his rage is called μῆνις, 'remembering wrath' (*Il*. 1.1), a word elsewhere overwhelmingly associated with the anger of gods against mortals who have neglected to pay them due respect."[311]

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[307] Griffin (1980) 88.
[308] Hom. *Il*. 9.356-361, 8.470-472; Lattimore [trans.].
[309] Griffin (1980) 88.
[310] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 140.
[311] Clarke (2004) 82.

When Achilleus refuses Agamemnon's offer of 'innumerable gifts' and decides not to return to the battlefield, Diomedes sums up the defining characteristic of Achilleus' nature:

> Ἀτρεΐδη κύδιστε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον
> μὴ ὄφελες λίσσεσθαι ἀμύμονα Πηλεΐωνα
> μυρία δῶρα διδούς· ὃ δ' ἀγήνωρ ἐστὶ καὶ ἄλλως·
> νῦν αὖ μιν πολὺ μᾶλλον ἀγηνορίῃσιν ἐνῆκας.

> Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon, I wish you had not supplicated the blameless son of Peleus with innumerable gifts offered. He is ἀγήνωρ without this, and now you have driven him far deeper into his ἀγηνορίη.[312]

Clarke argues that "we miss the point if we ask whether Diomedes means to attack Achilleus for his stubbornness, or to praise him for his uncompromising sense of his own worth: the point is rather that the source of Achilleus' implacable anger is precisely his unparalleled level of vitality, which has made him unable to 'conquer his mighty spirit' (*Il*. 9.496)."[313] As the supreme warrior, Achilleus is fiercely concerned with his own claims to τιμή and κλέος: he is 'the best of the Achaians' (*Il*. 1.244); his 'hands' always perform 'the greater part of the painful fighting' (*Il*. 1.165-166); he is the one who 'fight[s] incessantly forever' against the 'enemies' of the Achaians (*Il*. 9.317) and who 'forever' sets his 'life on the hazard of battle' (*Il*. 9.323); he is the only hero capable of holding back 'the strength of manslaughtering Hektor' (*Il*. 9.351-352) and of rescuing 'the afflicted sons of the Achaians from the Trojan onslaught' (*Il*. 9.247-248); and it is he, above all, 'whom Zeus in his heart loves' (*Il*. 9.117) and 'whom the immortals honour' (*Il*. 9.110-111). As such, Achilleus believes that he deserves to be given τιμή 'beyond all other mortals' (*Il*. 1.505); a belief that is further compounded by the fact that he is destined to die young:

> μῆτερ ἐπεί μ' ἔτεκές γε μινυνθάδιόν περ ἐόντα,
> τιμήν πέρ μοι ὄφελλεν Ὀλύμπιος ἐγγυαλίξαι
> Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης·

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[312] Hom. *Il*. 9.697-700; Lattimore [trans.].
[313] Clarke (2004) 82.

> Since, my mother, you bore me to be a man with a short life, therefore Zeus
> of the loud thunder on Olympos should grant me honour at least.[314]

Achilleus is an exceptionally 'heroic' figure; in the course of the poem, however, he is faced with a number of developments that break down this superhuman conception of self and ultimately force Achilleus to reconstitute himself on a more human plane. When Agamemnon strips Achilleus of his gift of honour, γέρας, he disgraces the man who believes himself to be 'the best of the Achaians' as if he were 'some dishonoured [ἀτίμητος] vagabond'.[315] This dishonour and humiliation precipitates a crisis that strikes at the very heart of Achilleus' existence, at the heart of everything that he has ever known or believed to be true about himself, about "his place in the heroic scheme of things,"[316] and about the values that underpin heroic society. Seized with μῆνις, he withdraws from the war. When Agamemnon finally comes to recognise his 'madness', ἄτη, and that he cannot take Troy without Achilleus, he offers to return Briseis, together with 'gifts in abundance'.[317] Though the 'women', 'citadels', 'gold', 'tripods' "and other goods… Agamemnon promises in *Iliad* 9 betoken a transferal of honour on an unprecedented scale,"[318] Achilleus declines the offer.

"Fame in the form of κλέος," as we have seen, "is invoked as some sort of compensation for death" in heroic society.[319] The Iliadic heroes "have only the bleakest of prospects in the afterlife: Hades is a place of darkness and decay (ζόφος, ἔρεβος, εὐρώς), and there is no Heaven, no Valhalla, no reward beyond the grave in the Isles of the Blest or Elysium."[320] Since death itself is so unappealing, "there has to be, from the point of view of the protagonists, something that makes it worthwhile to risk their lives".[321] This is the role afforded κλέος, won by heroic deeds to compensate and console the hero for his death. But when Achilleus – the hero who 'forever set[s his] life on the

[314] Hom. *Il*. 1.352-354; Lattimore [trans.].
[315] Hom. *Il*. 1.355-356, 9.647-648; Lattimore [trans.].
[316] Hainsworth (1993) 101.
[317] Hom. *Il*. 9.115-157; Lattimore [trans.].
[318] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 129.
[319] ibid. 102.
[320] Clarke (2004) 78.
[321] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 129.

hazard of battle' (*Il*. 9.322) – is subjected to such 'heartrending insolence', θυμαλγής λώβη (*Il*. 9.387), he is forced into the realisation that κλέος is not as simple and straightforward – as valuable, as consoling to mortality – as he initially thought it to be. Whereas before it had never occurred to Achilleus to choose between κλέος and life, now he feels compelled to consider the issue:

> μήτηρ γάρ τέ μέ φησι θεὰ Θέτις ἀργυρόπεζα
> διχθαδίας κῆρας φερέμεν θανάτοιο τέλος δέ.
> εἰ μέν κ' αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι,
> ὤλετο μέν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται·
> εἰ δέ κεν οἴκαδ' ἵκωμι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
> ὤλετό μοι κλέος ἐσθλόν, ἐπὶ δηρὸν δέ μοι αἰὼν
> ἔσσεται, οὐδέ κέ μ' ὦκα τέλος θανάτοιο κιχείη.

> For my mother Thetis the goddess of the silver feet tells me I carry two sorts of destiny toward the day of my death. Either, if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans, my return home is gone, but my κλέος shall be everlasting [ἄφθιτος]; but if I return home to the beloved land of my fathers, the excellence [ἐσθλόν] of my κλέος is gone, but there will be a long life left for me, and my end in death will not come to me quickly.[322]

Achilleus is filled with resentment as he broods on Agamemnon's insult: if 'the best of the Achaians' can be disgraced like 'some dishonoured vagabond' then the very values upon which heroic society is based, at least as far as Achilleus is concerned, are utterly worthless:

> ἴση μοῖρα μένοντι καὶ εἰ μάλα τις πολεμίζοι·
> ἐν δὲ ἰῇ τιμῇ ἠμὲν κακὸς ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλός·
> κάτθαν' ὁμῶς ὅ τ' ἀεργὸς ἀνὴρ ὅ τε πολλὰ ἐοργώς.
> οὐδέ τί μοι περίκειται, ἐπεὶ πάθον ἄλγεα θυμῷ
> αἰεὶ ἐμὴν ψυχὴν παραβαλλόμενος πολεμίζειν.

> Fate is the same for the man who holds back, the same if he fights hard. We are all held in a single honour [τιμή], the brave [ἐσθλός] with the weaklings [κακός]. A man dies still if he has done nothing, as one who has done much. Nothing is won for me, now that my heart has gone through its afflictions in forever setting my life on the hazard of battle.[323]

[322] Hom. *Il*. 9.410-416; Lattimore [trans.].
[323] ibid. 1.244, 9.648, 9.318-322.

Achilleus rejects the heroic way of life altogether: faced with the choice between a 'long life' and 'everlasting' fame, κλέος ἄφθιτον, Achilleus decides that τιμή and κλέος are simply not worth dying for. And from this point of view the prospect of 'gifts in abundance' no longer provides enough of an incentive to risk one's life in battle:

> ληϊστοὶ μὲν γάρ τε βόες καὶ ἴφια μῆλα,
> κτητοὶ δὲ τρίποδές τε καὶ ἵππων ξανθὰ κάρηνα,
> ἀνδρὸς δὲ ψυχὴ πάλιν ἐλθεῖν οὔτε λεϊστὴ
> οὔθ' ἑλετή, ἐπεὶ ἄρ κεν ἀμείψεται ἕρκος ὀδόντων.

> Of possessions cattle and fat sheep are things to be had for the lifting, and tripods can be won, and the tawny high heads of horses, but a man's life cannot come back again, it cannot be lifted nor captured again by force, once it has crossed the teeth's barrier.[324]

This "rejection of the high and perilous life of the hero for the simpler and lowlier values" is not, however, the act of "wisdom" that Clarke believes it to be.[325] This is heroic pride at its best. Achilleus is suffering from an extreme case of heroic anger, μῆνις, because he, 'glorious Achilleus', 'conspicuous among heroes', has been subjected to θυμαλγής λώβη.[326] These are no high-minded exhortations. The ranting and raving, the exaggerated rage toward Agamemnon, the hyperbolical assertions of his own worth (*Il*. 9.369-377) – this all sounds the distinct note of wounded pride:

> ἐχθρὰ δέ μοι τοῦ δῶρα, τίω δέ μιν ἐν καρὸς αἴσῃ.
> οὐδ' εἴ μοι δεκάκις τε καὶ εἰκοσάκις τόσα δοίη
> ὅσσά τέ οἱ νῦν ἔστι, καὶ εἴ ποθεν ἄλλα γένοιτο,
> οὐδ' ὅσ' ἐς Ὀρχομενὸν ποτινίσεται, οὐδ' ὅσα Θήβας
> Αἰγυπτίας, ὅθι πλεῖστα δόμοις ἐν κτήματα κεῖται…
>
> … οὐδ' εἴ μοι τόσα δοίη ὅσα ψάμαθός τε κόνις τε,
> οὐδέ κεν ὧς ἔτι θυμὸν ἐμὸν πείσει' Ἀγαμέμνων…

> I hate his gifts. I hold him light as the strip of a splinter. Not if he gave me ten times as much, and twenty times over as he possesses now, not if more

[324] Hom. *Il*. 9.120, 9.406-409; Lattimore [trans.].
[325] Clarke (2004) 82.
[326] Hom. *Il*. 9.434, 18.56, 9.387; Lattimore [trans.].

> should come to him from elsewhere, or gave all that is brought in to Orchomenos, all that is brought in to Thebes of Egypt, where the greatest possessions lie up in the houses… not if he gave me gifts as many as the sand or the dust is, not even so would Agamemnon have his way with my spirit…[327]

The Achaians have taken "the proper action" toward Achilleus according to the *mores* of heroic society:[328] they have offered him worthy recompense. Even a man whose 'brother' or 'child' has been murdered, as Aias points out, accepts compensation from the 'guilty one' and then 'curbs' his 'heart' and his 'anger'.[329] Achilleus admits that Aias has a point, that he *should* now be able to 'make gracious the spirit within' and relent:

> πάντά τί μοι κατὰ θυμὸν ἐείσαο μυθήσασθαι·
> ἀλλά μοι οἰδάνεται κραδίη χόλῳ ὁππότε κείνων
> μνήσομαι ὥς μ' ἀσύφηλον ἐν Ἀργείοισιν ἔρεξεν
> Ἀτρεΐδης ὡς εἴ τιν' ἀτίμητον μετανάστην.

> All that you have said seems spoken after my own mind. Yet still the heart in me swells up in anger, when I remember the disgrace that he wrought upon me before the Argives, the son of Atreus, as if I were some dishonoured vagabond.[330]

But for Achilleus the loss of Briseis no longer matters – as he says, he has plenty of other 'fair-girdled women' (*Il*. 9.366); what drives his 'heart' to 'swell up in anger' is that, in a society where "the image a hero has of himself is that presented to him by his peers… Agamemnon's [insult] and the others' acquiescence has reduced 'the best of the Achaians' to a nonentity".[331] This outrage has made material compensation irrelevant: even if Agamemnon were able to offer as many gifts 'as the sand or the dust is, not even so would' Achilleus be tempted to accept them. Aias' verdict on this refusal to accept compensation is that Achilleus suffers from too much ἀγηνορίη (*Il*. 9.635); a view that is shared by both Diomedes (*Il*. 9.699) and Patroklos (*Il*. 16.29-35). While "one such judgement," Hainsworth argues, "may be dismissed as characterisation… three look like an indirect authorial comment… and furnish a clue to the audience as to how they are to

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[327] Hom. *Il*. 9.378-382, 9.385-386; Lattimore [trans.].
[328] Hainsworth (1993) 120.
[329] Hom. *Il*. 9.632-636; Lattimore [trans.].
[330] ibid. 9.639, 9.645-648.
[331] Hainsworth (1993) 114.

interpret the attitude so described; in short that Achilleus" – though acting through the highest of heroic motives – "has now put himself in the wrong".[332] This certainly seems to be the view taken by Phoinix when he tells Achilleus that 'before this' – before Agamemnon 'promised' Achilleus such worthy recompense and sent the 'best men' 'of all the Argives' to 'supplicate' him – Achilleus' 'anger' has not been a cause for 'blame' and righteous indignation, νεμεσητός, and so implies that any further obstinacy and lack of compassion on Achilleus' part will now be condemned.[333] In the quest to restore his lost τιμή, Achilleus goes too far; he is too stubborn.

His refusal to make peace with Agamemnon precipitates the next great crisis in Achilleus' existence: the death of Patroklos. When Achilleus learns that his 'dear companion has perished' – 'whom [he] loved beyond all other companions, as well as [his] own life' (*Il*. 18.80-82) – he is shattered:

> αὐτὸς δ' ἐν κονίῃσι μέγας μεγαλωστὶ τανυσθεὶς
> κεῖτο, φίλῃσι δὲ χερσὶ κόμην ἤσχυνε δαΐζων.

> And he himself, mightily in his might, in the dust lay at length, and took and tore at his hair with his hands, and defiled it.[334]

The 'mightiest' of heroes is brought low, wracked with grief. His estimation of his own self-worth drops even lower with the painful realisation that he – 'who [is] such as no other of the bronze-armoured Achaians in battle' – failed to act as a 'light of safety' to his best friend and is thus ultimately responsible for his death:

> νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ οὐ νέομαί γε φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
> οὐδέ τι Πατρόκλῳ γενόμην φάος οὐδ' ἑτάροισι
> τοῖς ἄλλοις, οἳ δὴ πολέες δάμεν Ἕκτορι δίῳ,
> ἀλλ' ἧμαι παρὰ νηυσὶν ἐτώσιον ἄχθος ἀρούρης,
> τοῖος ἐὼν οἷος οὔ τις Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων
> ἐν πολέμῳ· ἀγορῇ δέ τ' ἀμείνονές εἰσι καὶ ἄλλοι.

> Now, since I am not going back to the beloved land of my fathers, since I was no light of safety to Patroklos, nor to my other companions, who in their numbers went down before glorious Hektor, but sit here beside my

[332] Hainsworth (1993) 141.
[333] Hom. *Il*. 9.518-523; Lattimore [trans.].
[334] ibid. 18.26-27.

> ships, a useless weight on the good land, I, who am such as no other of the bronze-armoured Achaians in battle, though there are others also better in council.[335]

The 'best of the Achaians', initially reduced to 'some dishonoured vagabond' by Agamemnon, is now reduced, in his own eyes at least, to nothing but 'a useless weight on the good land'.[336]

Faced with such intense sorrow and guilt, "Achilleus' socially determined need for honour, τιμή," is replaced with an "internalised need for vengeance, τίσις".[337] Come what may, it is imperative that he avenge Patroklos' death:

> νῦν δ' ἵνα καὶ σοὶ πένθος ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μυρίον εἴη
> παιδὸς ἀποφθιμένοιο, τὸν οὐχ ὑποδέξεαι αὖτις
> οἴκαδε νοστήσαντ', ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἐμὲ θυμὸς ἄνωγε
> ζώειν οὐδ' ἄνδρεσσι μετέμμεναι, αἴ κε μὴ Ἕκτωρ
> πρῶτος ἐμῷ ὑπὸ δουρὶ τυπεὶς ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσῃ,
> Πατρόκλοιο δ' ἕλωρα Μενοιτιάδεω ἀποτίσῃ.

> As it is, there must be on your heart a numberless sorrow for your son's death, since you can never again receive him won home again to his country; since the spirit within does not drive me to go on living and be among men, except on condition that Hektor first be beaten down under my spear, lose his life and pay the price [ἀποτίνειν] for stripping Patroklos, the son of Menoitios.[338]

The word τίσις is probably derived, Graziosi and Haubold argue, "from the same root as τιμή, and is closely related to it in meaning": "Whereas τιμή is the status one acquires, τίσις is the retribution one exacts. Like τιμή, τίσις is crucial in the making of [heroic society]."[339] Achilleus makes amends with Agamemnon and rejoins the fighting. No longer the disgruntled and dishonoured hero, sulking in his tent while 'singing' the glorious deeds of heroes that he no longer allows himself to perform (*Il*. 9.189), Achilleus once again becomes δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς, 'far greatest of the Achaians', and the epitome of heroic excellence:

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335 Hom. *Il*. 18.101-106; Lattimore [trans.].
336 ibid. 1.244, 9.648.
337 Clarke (2004) 82.
338 Hom. *Il*. 18.88-93; Lattimore [trans.].
339 Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 131.

> αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς ὦρτο Διῒ φίλος· ἀμφὶ δ' Ἀθήνη
> ὤμοις ἰφθίμοισι βάλ' αἰγίδα θυσσανόεσσαν,
> ἀμφὶ δέ οἱ κεφαλῇ νέφος ἔστεφε δῖα θεάων
> χρύσεον, ἐκ δ' αὐτοῦ δαῖε φλόγα παμφανόωσαν.
> ὡς δ' ὅτε καπνὸς ἰὼν ἐξ ἄστεος αἰθέρ' ἵκηται
> τηλόθεν ἐκ νήσου…
>
> … ὣς ἀπ' Ἀχιλλῆος κεφαλῆς σέλας αἰθέρ' ἵκανε·

> But Achilleus, the beloved son of Zeus, rose up, and Athene swept about his powerful shoulders the fluttering aegis; and she, the divine among goddesses, about his head circled a golden cloud, and kindled from it a flame far-shining. As when a flare goes up into the high air from a city from an island far away… so from the head of Achilleus the blaze shot into the bright air.[340]

The Trojans are 'dumbfounded' at the sight of 'blazing' Achilleus and, when they hear his 'brazen voice' shouting 'across the ditch', 'twelve of [their] best men' instantly fall dead, while all the rest are seized with 'endless terror'.[341]

In his rampant pursuit of τίσις, however, Achilleus stretches the limits of his own mortality. As he moves closer to accomplishing his goal, it is not the expression of the 'godlike' in his nature that becomes apparent, but the bestial: Achilleus undergoes "a descent toward the reckless and self-destructive fury of a flesh-eating animal".[342] He is merciless to suppliants, saying that 'not one of all the Trojans' deserve to 'escape death' now that Patroklos – a man 'far' 'better' than any of them – has died (*Il*. 21.99-113); he refuses Hektor's request that they make an 'agreement' not to 'defile' the loser's 'corpse', arguing that 'there are no trustworthy oaths between men and lions, nor wolves and lambs' (*Il*. 22.254-267); he expresses a brutal urge to 'hack' 'away' Hektor's 'meat' and 'eat it raw' (*Il*. 22.346-348); he sacrifices 'twelve noble sons of the great-hearted Trojans' beside Patroklos' funeral pyre (*Il*. 23.175-176); once he has killed Hektor, he makes 'holes' in his heels and drags him behind his chariot (*Il*. 22.396-404); and finally abandons his corpse, 'throw[ing] down the dead man and leav[ing] him to lie sprawled on his face in the dust' (*Il*. 24.17-18).

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[340] Hom. *Il*. 16.21, 18.203-208, 18.214; Lattimore [trans.].
[341] ibid. 18.218-231.
[342] Clarke (2004) 81.

Apollo is outraged; he complains that Achilleus' behaviour exceeds the limitations of mortal nature:

> ὣς Ἀχιλεὺς ἔλεον μὲν ἀπώλεσεν, οὐδέ οἱ αἰδὼς
> γίγνεται, ἥ τ' ἄνδρας μέγα σίνεται ἠδ' ὀνίνησι.
> μέλλει μέν πού τις καὶ φίλτερον ἄλλον ὀλέσσαι
> ἠὲ κασίγνητον ὁμογάστριον ἠὲ καὶ υἱόν·
> ἀλλ' ἤτοι κλαύσας καὶ ὀδυράμενος μεθέηκε·
> τλητὸν γὰρ Μοῖραι θυμὸν θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν.
> αὐτὰρ ὅ γ' Ἕκτορα δῖον, ἐπεὶ φίλον ἦτορ ἀπηύρα,
> ἵππων ἐξάπτων περὶ σῆμ' ἑτάροιο φίλοιο
> ἕλκει· οὐ μήν οἱ τό γε κάλλιον οὐδέ τ' ἄμεινον.
> μὴ ἀγαθῷ περ ἐόντι νεμεσσηθέωμέν οἱ ἡμεῖς·
> κωφὴν γὰρ δὴ γαῖαν ἀεικίζει μενεαίνων.

> So Achilleus has destroyed pity, and there is not in him any shame; which does much harm to men but profits them also. For a man must some day lose one who was even closer than this; a brother from the same womb, or a son. And yet he weeps for him, and sorrows for him, and then it is over, for the Destinies put in mortal men the heart of endurance [τλητός θυμός]. But this man, now he has torn the heart of life from great Hektor, ties him to his horses and drags him around his beloved companion's tomb; and nothing is gained thereby for his good [τό κάλλιον], or his honour [τό ἀμείνων]. Great [ἀγαθός] as he is, let him take care not to make us angry; for see, he does dishonour to the dumb earth in his fury.[343]

Apollo contrasts Achilleus' excessive reaction to Patroklos' death with the appropriate behaviour for human beings in such times of grief: they 'weep' and 'sorrow', 'and then it is over', even if they have lost 'a brother… or a son'. Because they are mortal, Apollo argues, it is inevitable that they be forced to experience the pain of losing their loved ones; but this is why 'the Destinies' have given to 'mortal men the heart of endurance'. So instead of raging against a defining and unavoidable feature of the human condition, 'like a fierce lion' who 'has given way to his ἀγήνωρ θυμός' (*Il*. 24.41-43), Achilleus must learn to accept that there is nothing – no degree of 'fury', no act of revenge, no amount of τιμή and κλέος – that can either bring Patroklos back or console Achilleus for his death. In contrast to the gods, who enjoy a cheerful and care-free existence, mortals

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[343] Hom. *Il*. 24.44-54; Lattimore [trans.].

are doomed to live a life of pain and suffering. If Achilleus is to learn to be fully human, then he must learn to endure both grief and the consciousness of mortality.

In Book 24 Priam comes to supplicate Achilleus for the return of Hektor's body. He entreats Achilleus to 'remember' his own father, who, like Priam himself, is 'on the door-sill of sorrowful old age'; he laments the death of all his sons; and, in an act of astounding humility, kisses the 'hands of the man who has killed [his] children'.[344] Achilleus' behaviour, throughout the poem, has been obsessively selfish and narcissistic. Caring little for the suffering of others, Achilleus has remained ruthlessly fixated on his own anguish – *his* loss of τιμή, *his* grief over the death of Patroklos, *his* need for τίσις. Now, confronted by the man who has 'gone through what no other mortal on earth has gone through' (*Il*. 24.505), Achilleus is finally moved to feel 'pity' for someone else:

> Ὣς φάτο, τῷ δ' ἄρα πατρὸς ὑφ' ἵμερον ὦρσε γόοιο·
> ἁψάμενος δ' ἄρα χειρὸς ἀπώσατο ἦκα γέροντα.
> τὼ δὲ μνησαμένω ὃ μὲν Ἕκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο
> κλαῖ' ἁδινὰ προπάροιθε ποδῶν Ἀχιλῆος ἐλυσθείς,
> αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς κλαῖεν ἑὸν πατέρ', ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε
> Πάτροκλον· τῶν δὲ στοναχὴ κατὰ δώματ' ὀρώρει.
> αὐτὰρ ἐπεί ῥα γόοιο τετάρπετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς,
> καί οἱ ἀπὸ πραπίδων ἦλθ' ἵμερος ἠδ' ἀπὸ γυίων,
> αὐτίκ' ἀπὸ θρόνου ὦρτο, γέροντα δὲ χειρὸς ἀνίστη
> οἰκτίρων πολιόν τε κάρη πολιόν τε γένειον…

> So he spoke, and stirred in the other a passion of grieving for his own father. He took the old man's hand and pushed him gently away, and the two remembered, as Priam sat huddled at the feet of Achilleus and wept close for manslaughtering Hektor and Achilleus wept now for his own father, now again for Patroklos. The sound of their mourning moved in the house. Then when great Achilleus had taken full satisfaction in sorrow and the passion for it had gone from his mind and body, thereafter he rose from his chair, and took the old man by the hand and set him on his feet again, in pity for the grey head and the grey beard…[345]

The two men become united in their experience of grief. Priam says that 'the sharp grief for [Hektor] will carry [him] downward into Death's house' (*Il*. 22.425-426), while Achilleus vows that, 'though the dead forget the dead in the house of Hades', he will 'still

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[344] Hom. *Il*. 24.486-506; Lattimore [trans.].
[345] ibid. 24.507-516.

remember [his] beloved companion' 'even there' (*Il.* 22.389-390). As 'the two' 'remember' their loved ones together and fill 'the house' with 'the sound of their mourning', "we see the community of suffering which links all men, even conqueror and captive, slayer and father of the slain".[346]

Being able to sympathise with the suffering of his fellow mortals allows Achilleus to see further: "life," he now understands, "is overshadowed by inevitable wretchedness and certain death."[347] To be human, says the greatest warrior who ever sailed to Troy, is to 'bear up' in the face of adversity and to endure with courage the many 'sorrows' that gods 'bestow' on men:

> οὐ γάρ τις πρῆξις πέλεται κρυεροῖο γόοιο·
> ὡς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι
> ζώειν ἀχνυμένοις· αὐτοὶ δέ τ' ἀκηδέες εἰσί.
> δοιοὶ γάρ τε πίθοι κατακείαται ἐν Διὸς οὔδει
> δώρων οἷα δίδωσι κακῶν, ἕτερος δὲ ἑάων·
> ᾧ μέν κ' ἀμμίξας δώῃ Ζεὺς τερπικέραυνος,
> ἄλλοτε μέν τε κακῷ ὅ γε κύρεται, ἄλλοτε δ' ἐσθλῷ·
> ᾧ δέ κε τῶν λυγρῶν δώῃ, λωβητὸν ἔθηκε,
> καί ἑ κακὴ βούβρωστις ἐπὶ χθόνα δῖαν ἐλαύνει,
> φοιτᾷ δ' οὔτε θεοῖσι τετιμένος οὔτε βροτοῖσιν…
>
> … ἄνσχεο, μὴ δ' ἀλίαστον ὀδύρεο σὸν κατὰ θυμόν·
> οὐ γάρ τι πρήξεις ἀκαχήμενος υἷος ἑῆος,
> οὐδέ μιν ἀνστήσεις, πρὶν καὶ κακὸν ἄλλο πάθῃσθα.

> There is not any advantage to be won from grim lamentation. Such is the way the gods spun life for unfortunate mortals [δειλοί βροτοί], that we live in unhappiness, but the gods themselves have no sorrows. There are two urns that stand on the door-sill of Zeus. They are unlike for the gifts they bestow: an urn of evils, an urn of blessings. If Zeus who delights in thunder mingles these and bestows them on man, he shifts, and moves now in evil [κακόν], again in good fortune [ἐσθλόν]. But when Zeus bestows from the urn of sorrows, he makes a failure of man, and the evil hunger drives him over the shining earth, and he wanders respected neither of gods nor mortals… But bear up, nor mourn endlessly in your heart, for there is not

[346] Griffin (1980) 69.
[347] Clarke (2004) 76.

> anything to be gained from grief for your son; you will never bring him back; sooner you must go through yet another sorrow.[348]

Achilleus outlines a vision of the universality of doom that characterises the human condition: "the Olympians' gifts to mortals – which bring woe as well as joy – are the essence of our suffering in a life which will culminate in decrepitude and death."[349] Achilleus, through his suffering – his quarrel with Agamemnon, which led to bitter reflections on the life of heroism itself; his maniacal lust for revenge, which led to the ultimate realisation that there can be no compensation for death among mortals; and, finally, his encounter with the grief-stricken Priam, which led to a sense of his own humanity and a feeling of compassion for others – has come to a new understanding of his place in human society and he "includes himself among the 'wretched mortals', δειλοί βροτοί".[350] Whereas Achilleus initially thought of himself only in terms of his elevation above ordinary human existence – as the 'godlike' son of a divine mother – in the course of the narrative, Graziosi and Haubold argue, his understanding of the true nature of the human condition deepens to the extent that he not only "comes to… see himself primarily" as his father's son but also "comes to realise the full significance of his standard epithet, Πηλείδης or Πηληϊάδης, son of Peleus": "in the distant past, men were godlike, offspring of the gods, now we are all wretched mortals born of other wretched mortals."[351]

Πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς

Let us now turn to the hero of the *Odyssey*. While Achilleus and Odysseus fought alongside one another at Troy, Odysseus survives the Trojan War and, in the course of his journey home, is confronted with a world that is remarkably different to that portrayed in the *Iliad*. The world of the *Iliad*, Griffin argues, "embod[ies] attitudes to the fundamental questions" of heroism and the values of heroic society – honour, fame, anger, pride, shame, vengeance, and the confrontation of death – and so, "though terrible,

[348] Hom. *Il.* 24.524-533, 24.549-551; Lattimore [trans.].
[349] Clarke (2004) 75.
[350] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 141.
[351] ibid. 140-141.

remains a place in which heroism is possible". In the *Odyssey*, however, a new world order prevails:

> In the *Odyssey* the world is menacing, not with the sharp clarity of heroic death, but with the mysteriousness of undeclared motives, inscrutable people, liars and cheats. Disloyalty and deception, not heroic rage and strife for honour, are the causes of disaster, and Odysseus must struggle not against the clear and passionate will of Achilleus, as he does in the ninth and the nineteenth books of the *Iliad*, nor with the heroes of Troy in battle, but with mutinous sailors, offensive servants, disloyal subjects, and with monsters and goddesses against whom heroic prowess is useless.[352]

Odysseus – confronted with circumstances far different from those portrayed in the *Iliad* and for which skills other than martial excellence are needed – is the embodiment of a new type of hero, a hero whose "particular, defining quality" – "his ingenuity," μῆτις, – "ensures his survival in a world of unpredictable challenges and temptations":[353]

> Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ
> πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσε·
> πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,
> πολλὰ δ' ὅ γ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,
> ἀρνύμενος ἥν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἑταίρων.

> Tell me, Muse, the story of that resourceful [πολύτροπος] man who was driven to wander far and wide after he had sacked the holy citadel of Troy. He saw the cities of many people and he learnt their ways. He suffered great anguish on the high seas in his struggles to preserve his life and bring his comrades home.[354]

Whereas Achilleus is savagely inflexible and uncompromising, Odysseus, as is announced in the very first lines of the *Odyssey*, is capable of adapting to new circumstances: he is πολύτροπος, the 'man of many turns', and πολύμητις, the 'man of many wiles'.

Achilleus, as we have seen, spends the majority of the *Iliad* ruthlessly fixated on the assertion of his own τιμή and κλέος. Odysseus, on the other hand, spends the whole of the *Odyssey* in pursuit of his own ultimate objective – νόστος, a safe homecoming. In

352 Griffin (1980) 80.
353 Silk (2004) 32.
354 Hom. *Od*. 1.1-5; Rieu [trans.].

Book 11, the two heroes meet in the Underworld and reflect on the value of life. Odysseus commends Achilleus as being 'the most fortunate man' that ever lived:

σεῖο δ', Ἀχιλλεῦ,
οὔ τις ἀνὴρ προπάροιθε μακάρτερος οὔτ' ἄρ' ὀπίσσω·
πρὶν μὲν γάρ σε ζωὸν ἐτίομεν ἶσα θεοῖσιν
Ἀργεῖοι, νῦν αὖτε μέγα κρατέεις νεκύεσσιν
ἐνθάδ' ἐών· τῶ μή τι θανὼν ἀκαχίζευ, Ἀχιλλεῦ.

> But you, Achilleus, are the most fortunate [μακάρτερος] man that ever was or will be! For in the old days when you were on Earth, we Argives honoured [τίειν] you as though you were a god [ἶσα θεοῖσιν]; and now, down here, you have great power [μέγα κρατεῖν] among the dead. Do not grieve at your death, Achilleus.[355]

Achilleus has attained the ultimate heroic goal: "honoured like a god in life… mighty among the dead thereafter".[356] Achilleus disagrees:

μὴ δή μοι θάνατόν γε παραύδα, φαίδιμ' Ὀδυσσεῦ.
βουλοίμην κ' ἐπάρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλῳ,
ἀνδρὶ παρ' ἀκλήρῳ, ᾧ μὴ βίοτος πολὺς εἴη,
ἢ πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν.

> And do not you make light of death, illustrious Odysseus. I would rather work the soil as a serf [θητεύειν] on hire to some landless impoverished peasant than be King [ἀνάσσειν] of all these lifeless dead.[357]

The man who spent the greater part of the *Iliad* complaining that Agamemnon had insulted his honour by treating him like 'some dishonoured vagabond' (*Il*. 9.648, 16.59), now asserts that no amount of τιμή can compensate for death. Life is all that matters, even at the cost of having to 'work the soil as a serf on hire to some landless impoverished peasant'. Odysseus embraces this view to the utmost. The consummate survivor, he will do anything to stay alive, including lie, steal and cheat. Whereas, in the *Iliad*, Achilleus warns Odysseus that he 'detest[s]' the sort of man 'who hides one thing in the depths of his heart, and speaks forth another' just as much as he 'detest[s] the

355 Hom. *Od*. 11.482-486; Rieu [trans.].
356 Griffin (1980) 100-101.
357 Hom. *Od*. 11.488-491; Rieu [trans.].

doorways of Death' (*Il*. 9.312-313), in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus' dishonesty has become both a justifiable and a necessary means to survival. His behaviour is validated by Athena's open endorsement:

> κερδαλέος κ' εἴη καὶ ἐπίκλοπος, ὅς σε παρέλθοι
> ἐν πάντεσσι δόλοισι, καὶ εἰ θεὸς ἀντιάσειε.
> σχέτλιε, ποικιλομῆτα, δόλων ἄατ', οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλες,
> οὐδ' ἐν σῇ περ ἐὼν γαίῃ, λήξειν ἀπατάων
> μύθων τε κλοπίων, οἵ τοι πεδόθεν φίλοι εἰσίν.
> ἀλλ' ἄγε μηκέτι ταῦτα λεγώμεθα, εἰδότες ἄμφω
> κέρδε', ἐπεὶ σὺ μέν ἐσσι βροτῶν ὄχ' ἄριστος ἁπάντων
> βουλῇ καὶ μύθοισιν, ἐγὼ δ' ἐν πᾶσι θεοῖσι
> μήτι τε κλέομαι καὶ κέρδεσιν·

> Anyone who met you, even a god, would have to be a consummate trickster [κερδαλέος ἐπίκλοπος] to surpass you in subterfuge [δόλος]. You were always an obstinate, cunning and irrepressible intriguer. So don't propose, even in your own country, to drop the tricks [ἀπάται] and lying tales [κλοπίοι μῦθοι] you love so much! But no more of this. We both know how to get our own way: in the world of men you have no rival [ἄριστος ἁπάντων] in judgement and argument, while I am pre-eminent among the gods for ingenuity [μήτις] and ability to get what I want [κέρδος].[358]

Whereas Achilleus' cause was taken up by the gods primarily because he was the son of a goddess, Odysseus wins Athena's support through his own merit – his superior intellect:

> αἰεί τοι τοιοῦτον ἐνὶ στήθεσσι νόημα·
> τῶ σε καὶ οὐ δύναμαι προλιπεῖν δύστηνον ἐόντα,
> οὕνεκ' ἐπητής ἐσσι καὶ ἀγχίνοος καὶ ἐχέφρων.

> That shows how your mind always works! And that is why I cannot desert you in your misfortunes: you are so persuasive [ἐπητής], so quick-witted [ἀγχίνοος], so self-possessed [ἐχέφρων].[359]

"This is the new ideal" of the hero:

> Strength, military preparedness, a dogged sense of honour, and excessive obstinacy now count for much less. Now, whoever is ingenious like

[358] Hom. *Od*. 13.291-299; Rieu [trans.].
[359] ibid. 13.330-332.

> Odysseus enjoys the favour of the gods. The gods no longer love the strong arm more than the clever head.[360]

Odysseus is intelligent, resourceful, highly adaptable, and unwavering in his determination to survive. Graziosi and Haubold are right to point out that these character traits are not only "appropriate and, indeed necessary, in the new circumstances he has to face," but are "also intensely desirable in the world 'as it is now': it is clear that any human being can profit from Odysseus' qualities of flexibility, intelligence and endurance, whereas we would be less well served by a godlike desire for τιμή and τίσις."[361] Homer, in his conceptualisation and characterisation of the Odyssean hero, presents us with a man whose traits are more recognisably and attainably 'human'. This is not to say, however, that Odysseus is any less 'heroic' than Achilleus. While Achilleus is ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς, Odysseus is πολύμητις δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς. Both are δῖος, 'godlike', 'brilliant', 'illustrious', but their heroism manifests itself in different ways: Achilleus' in his physical prowess and emotional magnificence, Odysseus' in his ingenuity. The predicaments of both heroes are taken up by the immortals, and become the cause of a great deal of discussion and dissension on Olympus. Achilleus is responsible for the death of Hektor, Odysseus for the eventual fall of Troy. And while he may not, like Achilleus, be the son of a goddess, he is no less close to the gods – the 'favourite of Zeus',[362] he is loved by Athena, hated by Poseidon, and the lover of both Calypso and Circe. And, just like Achilleus, Odysseus too is forced to undergo developments that ultimately bring him closer to the world of the audience and to an understanding of the conditions and limitations that bind his existence in a human community.

Odysseus' journey home is fraught with hardships and misfortunes. As will become apparent, however, the majority of these misfortunes are caused by an obstinate refusal to embrace the new values so essential to survival in this post-Troy world. After Odysseus and his crew set sail from Troy, for example, they come to Ismarus, the city of the Cicones, and do precisely what we would expect any conquering heroes of Troy to do:

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[360] Latacz (1996) 151.
[361] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 138-139.
[362] Hom. *Od*. 11.92; Rieu [trans.].

ἔνθα δ' ἐγὼ πόλιν ἔπραθον, ὤλεσα δ' αὐτούς.
ἐκ πόλιος δ' ἀλόχους καὶ κτήματα πολλὰ λαβόντες
δασσάμεθ', ὡς μή τίς μοι ἀτεμβόμενος κίοι ἴσης.

> I sacked this place and destroyed its menfolk. The women and the vast plunder that we took from the town we divided so that no one, as far as I could help it, should go short of his proper share.[363]

But when Odysseus commands his men 'to escape with all possible speed', the 'fools', νήπιοι, refuse: 'There was plenty of wine, plenty of livestock; and they kept on drinking and butchering sheep and shambling crooked-horned cattle by the shore.' The Cicones raise 'a cry for help' among their 'inland neighbours, who are both more numerous and better men [ἀρείων]', and launch an attack, killing 'six' of Odysseus' 'strong-greaved companions'.[364] Arrogance, over-confidence and intemperance have no place in the world of the *Odyssey* and lead only to disaster and inglorious death; prudence, self-restraint, moderation, knowing when to use one's intellect rather than one's strength – these are the virtues needed to 'preserve', ἀρέσθαι, one's 'life', ψυχή, and one's 'homecoming', νόστος.[365] The problem resurfaces time and again. When Odysseus and his crew come to the floating island of Aeolia, they are aided by Aeolus, the wind-god, who gives Odysseus a leather bag 'in which he had imprisoned the boisterous energies of all the winds'.[366] But the crew's own 'senseless stupidity', ἀφραδία, dooms Aeolus' measures 'to failure' and results in yet more 'grief':

οἱ δ' ἕταροι ἐπέεσσι πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀγόρευον
καί μ' ἔφασαν χρυσόν τε καὶ ἄργυρον οἴκαδ' ἄγεσθαι,
δῶρα παρ' Αἰόλοο μεγαλήτορος Ἱπποτάδαο.
ὧδε δέ τις εἴπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον·
'ὢ πόποι, ὡς ὅδε πᾶσι φίλος καὶ τίμιός ἐστιν
ἀνθρώποισ', ὅτεών κε πόλιν καὶ γαῖαν ἵκηται.
πολλὰ μὲν ἐκ Τροίης ἄγεται κειμήλια καλὰ
ληΐδος· ἡμεῖς δ' αὖτε ὁμὴν ὁδὸν ἐκτελέσαντες
οἴκαδε νισόμεθα κενεὰς σὺν χεῖρας ἔχοντες.

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[363] Hom. *Od*. 9.40-42; Rieu [trans.].
[364] ibid. 9.43-61.
[365] ibid. 1.5.
[366] ibid. 10.20.

καὶ νῦν οἱ τά γε δῶκε χαριζόμενος φιλότητι
Αἴολος. ἀλλ' ἄγε θᾶσσον ἰδώμεθα, ὅττι τάδ' ἐστίν,
ὅσσος τις χρυσός τε καὶ ἄργυρος ἀσκῷ ἔνεστιν.'

> The crew began to discuss matters among themselves, and word went round that I was bringing home a fortune in gold and silver which the great-hearted Aeolus son of Hippotas had given me. And this is what they said as they exchanged glances: 'It's not fair! What a captain we have, valued wherever he goes and welcomed in every port! Back he comes from Troy with a splendid haul of plunder, though we who have gone every bit as far come home with empty hands – and now Aeolus has given him all this into the bargain, as a favour for friendship's sake! Come on; let's find out and see how much gold and silver is hidden in that bag.'[367]

Their 'evil counsels', κακή βουλή, prevail: they open the bag, and all the ships are carried off course.[368] Allowing one's anxieties regarding appropriate honour and fair recompense to overcome one's prudence and self-restraint is clearly not the way to get things done. Eventually, the entire 'strong-willed [ἀγήνωρ] company' is wiped-out for their lack of restraint.[369] On the island of Thrinacia, they refuse to heed Odysseus' warning not to eat the sun-god's cattle. They are made to pay for this 'wanton fit of recklessness', ἀτασθαλία κακή, with their lives (*Od*. 12.300):

αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,
νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἠελίοιο
ἤσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ.

> It was their own transgression [ἀτασθαλία] that brought them to their doom, for in their folly [νήπιοι] they devoured the oxen of Hyperion the Sun-god and he saw to it that they would never return.[370]

If Odysseus, unlike his men, is to have any chance of achieving his objective, his νόστος, then he must learn to accept the limits of his own mortality and to embrace the new values so essential to success in this new world; until he does, he is doomed to suffer frustration. Trapped in the cave of the Cyclops Polyphemus, Odysseus contains the

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[367] Hom. *Od*. 10.27, 10.34-45; Rieu [trans.].
[368] ibid. 10.46.
[369] ibid. 12.324.
[370] ibid. 1.7-9.

impulse to attack him with his 'sharp sword' and relies, instead, on his intelligence to contrive an alternate means of escape:

> τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ βούλευσα κατὰ μεγαλήτορα θυμὸν
> ἄσσον ἰών, ξίφος ὀξὺ ἐρυσσάμενος παρὰ μηροῦ,
> οὐτάμεναι πρὸς στῆθος, ὅθι φρένες ἧπαρ ἔχουσι,
> χείρ' ἐπιμασσάμενος· ἕτερος δέ με θυμὸς ἔρυκεν.
> αὐτοῦ γάρ κε καὶ ἄμμες ἀπωλόμεθ' αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον·
> οὐ γάρ κεν δυνάμεσθα θυράων ὑψηλάων
> χερσὶν ἀπώσασθαι λίθον ὄβριμον, ὃν προσέθηκεν.
> ὣς τότε μὲν στενάχοντες ἐμείναμεν Ἠῶ δῖαν.

> On first thoughts I planned to summon my courage [μεγαλήτωρ θυμός], draw my sharp sword from the scabbard at my side, creep up to him, feel for the right place with my hand and stab him in the breast where the liver is supported by the midriff. But on second thoughts I refrained [ἐρύκειν], realising that we would seal our own fate as well as his, because we would have found it impossible with our unaided hands to push aside the huge rock with which he had closed the great mouth of the cave. So with sighs and groans we waited for the blessed light of day.[371]

In his triumph, however, he cannot conquer the urge to gloat over a defeated enemy and to demand fame for heroic achievement. His men try to restrain him, but to no avail:

> 'σχέτλιε, τίπτ' ἐθέλεις ἐρεθιζέμεν ἄγριον ἄνδρα;
> ὃς καὶ νῦν πόντονδε βαλὼν βέλος ἤγαγε νῆα
> αὖτις ἐς ἤπειρον, καὶ δὴ φάμεν αὐτόθ' ὀλέσθαι.
> εἰ δὲ φθεγξαμένου τευ ἢ αὐδήσαντος ἄκουσε,
> σύν κεν ἄραξ' ἡμέων κεφαλὰς καὶ νήϊα δοῦρα
> μαρμάρῳ ὀκριόεντι βαλών· τόσσον γὰρ ἵησιν.'
> ὣς φάσαν, ἀλλ' οὐ πεῖθον ἐμὸν μεγαλήτορα θυμόν,
> ἀλλά μιν ἄψορρον προσέφην κεκοτηότι θυμῷ·
> 'Κύκλωψ, αἴ κέν τίς σε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
> ὀφθαλμοῦ εἴρηται ἀεικελίην ἀλαωτύν,
> φάσθαι Ὀδυσσῆα πτολιπόρθιον ἐξαλαῶσαι,
> υἱὸν Λαέρτεω, Ἰθάκῃ ἔνι οἰκί' ἔχοντα.'

> 'Why do you want to provoke the savage in this obstinate way [σχέτλιος]? The rock he threw into the sea just now drove the ship back to the land, and

[371] Hom. *Od*. 9.299-306; Rieu [trans.].

> we thought it was all up with us. Had he heard a cry, or so much as a word, from a single man, he'd have smashed in our heads and the ship's timbers with another jagged boulder from his hand. We're within easy range for him!'
>
> But my temper [μεγαλήτωρ θυμός] was up; their words did not dissuade me, and in my rage I shouted back at him once more: 'Cyclops, if anyone ever asks you how you came by your blindness, tell him your eye was put out by Odysseus, sacker of cities, the son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca.'[372]

Armed with the knowledge of Odysseus' name, Polyphemus appeals to his father, Poseidon, to curse 'the heroic Odysseus with relentless malice': to let him arrive home 'late, in wretched plight, having lost all his comrades, in a foreign ship, and let him find trouble in his home'.[373]

Odysseus is forced to endure misery upon misery in his struggle to win home: he loses all of his companions (*Od*. 12.417-419); he hears Achilleus' description of the misery of death (*Od*. 11.488-491) as well as Agamemnon's account of his own horrific demise (*Od*. 11.409-412); he learns of his mother's death (*Od*. 11.84-87) and his father's miserable old age (*Od*. 11.187-196); he experiences not only the goodwill of the gods, but also their cruel indifference to the suffering of ordinary mortals (*Od*. 9.551-555, 12.295-296, 13.312-328, 18.130-137); he is kept prisoner for seven years by the goddess Calypso (*Od*. 7.244-260); and he is hounded by Poseidon's wrath to such an extent that he wishes he were dead: 'Three and four times blessed are those countrymen of mine who fell long ago on the broad plains of Troy in loyal service to the sons of Atreus. If only I too could have met my fate and died the day the Trojan hordes let fly at me with their bronze spears over Achilleus' corpse!' (*Od*. 5.306-310). In the course of his struggles, Odysseus gradually begins to move "below and beyond the glamour of heroism to a more fundamental level of the human condition" so that, by the time he is washed up on the coast of Phaeacia, "he has been reduced to the barest common level of humanity":[374]

> ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἄμφω γούνατ' ἔκαμψε
> χεῖράς τε στιβαράς· ἁλὶ γὰρ δέδμητο φίλον κῆρ·
> ᾤδεε δὲ χρόα πάντα, θάλασσα δὲ κήκιε πολλὴ
> ἂν στόμα τε ῥῖνάς θ'· ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἄπνευστος καὶ ἄναυδος

[372] Hom. *Od*. 9.494-505; Rieu [trans.].
[373] ibid. 1.20-21, 9.534-535.
[374] Clarke (2004) 89, 87.

κεῖτ' ὀλιγηπελέων, κάματος δέ μιν αἰνὸς ἵκανεν…

… τὴν δὲ σχεδὸν ὕδατος εὗρεν
ἐν περιφαινομένῳ… οὓς ὑπ' Ὀδυσσεὺς
δύσετ'. ἄφαρ δ' εὐνὴν ἐπαμήσατο χερσὶ φίλησιν
εὐρεῖαν· φύλλων γὰρ ἔην χύσις ἤλιθα πολλή,
ὅσσον τ' ἠὲ δύω ἠὲ τρεῖς ἄνδρας ἔρυσθαι
ὥρῃ χειμερίῃ, εἰ καὶ μάλα περ χαλεπαίνοι.
τὴν μὲν ἰδὼν γήθησε πολύτλας δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
ἐν δ' ἄρα μέσσῃ λέκτο, χύσιν δ' ἐπεχεύατο φύλλων.

> Odysseus' knees gave way and his sturdy arms sagged; he was exhausted by his struggle with the sea. All his flesh was swollen and streams of brine gushed from his mouth and nostrils. Winded and speechless he lay there too weak to stir, overwhelmed by terrible fatigue… Not far from the river he found a copse in a clearing… Odysseus crawled in his shelter, and at once heaped up the dry leaves into a wide bed – the ground was littered with piles of them, enough to provide covering for two or three men in the hardest winter weather. The noble long-suffering Odysseus was delighted with his bed, and lay down in the middle of it covering himself with a blanket of leaves.[375]

Just like Achilleus, Odysseus, 'sacker of cities', πτολιπόρθιος, has been brought low.[376] Having lost all of his treasure, alone and utterly exhausted, with only 'a leafy bough' to 'conceal his naked manhood', he has literally been 'stripped' of all his heroic pretensions.[377] This experience of degradation and humiliation ultimately enables Odysseus to reach the same level of understanding and acceptance that Achilleus reaches at the end of the *Iliad* – the wretchedness of the human condition and the inevitability of human suffering:

οὐδὲν ἀκιδνότερον γαῖα τρέφει ἀνθρώποιο
πάντων, ὅσσα τε γαῖαν ἔπι πνείει τε καὶ ἕρπει.
οὐ μὲν γάρ ποτέ φησι κακὸν πείσεσθαι ὀπίσσω,
ὄφρ' ἀρετὴν παρέχωσι θεοὶ καὶ γούνατ' ὀρώρῃ·
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ καὶ λυγρὰ θεοὶ μάκαρες τελέωσι,
καὶ τὰ φέρει ἀεκαζόμενος τετληότι θυμῷ.
τοῖος γὰρ νόος ἐστὶν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων,

[375] Hom. *Od*. 5.453-457, 475-487; Rieu [trans.].
[376] ibid. 9.504.
[377] ibid. 6.128-129.

οἷον ἐπ' ἦμαρ ἄγῃσι πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε.

> Of all the creatures that breathe and creep about on Mother Earth there is none so helpless [ἀκιδνότερος] as man. As long as the gods grant his prosperity [ἀρετήν] and health he imagines he will never suffer misfortune [κακόν] in the future. Yet when the blessed gods bring him troubles he has no choice but to endure them with a patient heart [τετληότι θυμῷ]. The reason is that the view we mortals take on this earthly life depends on what Zeus, the Father of gods and men, sends us day by day.[378]

Survival, Odysseus is now able to recognise, comes at a price: he has to abandon "the traditional means through which heroes try to secure their own fame,"[379] and adopt, instead, the typically unheroic traits of moderation and self-control. When Odysseus finally decides to reveal his true identity to the Phaeacians in Book 9, he discards the Iliadic notion of κλέος as a means of ensuring one's survival after death and instead makes use of his reputation to receive some much-needed help on his journey home:

νῦν δ' ὄνομα πρῶτον μυθήσομαι, ὄφρα καὶ ὑμεῖς
εἴδετ', ἐγὼ δ' ἂν ἔπειτα φυγὼν ὕπο νηλεὲς ἦμαρ
ὑμῖν ξεῖνος ἔω καὶ ἀπόπροθι δώματα ναίων.
εἴμ' Ὀδυσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν
ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει.

> I shall start by giving you my name: I wish you all to know it so that in times to come, if I escape the evil day, I may always be your friend [ξένος], though my home is far from here.
> I am Odysseus, Laertes' son. The whole world talks of my stratagems, and my fame has reached the heavens.[380]

"The perspective," Graziosi and Haubold argue, "is that of a survivor who builds new relationships in a changing world: the name, and with it Odysseus' claim to fame, establishes a basis for guest-friendship, ξενία, between himself and the Phaeacians, should he ever make it home."[381] Odysseus' plan – using his κλέος not as a means of transcending death but as a means to preserve his life – pays off: the Phaeacians load him

[378] Hom. *Il*. 24.525 ff.; Lattimore [trans.], *Od*. 18.130-137; Rieu [trans.].
[379] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 138.
[380] Hom. *Od*. 9.16-20; Rieu [trans.].
[381] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 137.

with ‘clothing’, ‘gold ornaments’, ‘tripods’ and ‘other gifts’ and send him home to Ithaca.[382]

When he arrives, Odysseus is forced to endure the very same fate that Achilleus believed himself to have been subjected to by Agamemnon’s insult: the ‘repulsive’, ἀεικέλιος, position of the ‘dishonoured vagabond’ (*Od*. 13.402, *Il*. 9.648, 16.59). Whereas Achilleus responded with divine wrath, μῆνις, Odysseus is the very picture of restraint. When he discovers, for example, that his maids have been sleeping with the Suitors, he manages ‘to quell’ the heroic urge to take immediate revenge by displaying prowess in battle and, instead, rebukes his heart to be ‘patien[t]’ and ‘endure’:

> στῆθος δὲ πλήξας κραδίην ἠνίπαπε μύθῳ·
> “τέτλαθι δή, κραδίη· καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ' ἔτλης,
> ἤματι τῷ, ὅτε μοι μένος ἄσχετος ἤσθιε Κύκλωψ
> ἰφθίμους ἑτάρους· σὺ δ' ἐτόλμας, ὄφρα σε μῆτις
> ἐξάγαγ' ἐξ ἄντροιο ὀϊόμενον θανέεσθαι.”
> ὣς ἔφατ', ἐν στήθεσσι καθαπτόμενος φίλον ἦτορ·
> τῷ δὲ μάλ' ἐν πείσῃ κραδίη μένε τετληυῖα
> νωλεμέως·

> But, striking his chest, he called his heart to order and said: ‘Patience, my heart! You had something far more ignominious [κύντερος] than this to endure when the invincible Cyclops devoured your brave comrades. And yet you managed to hold out, till your cunning notion [μῆτις] got you clear of the cave where you had thought your end had come.’ So Odysseus was able by such self-rebuke to quell all mutiny in his heart and steel it to endure steadily [τετληυῖα νωλεμέως].[383]

Odysseus’ ordeal in the palace “is cast as a test of the kind of virtue that Apollo defines as quintessentially human in *Iliad* 24: endurance” (*Il*. 24.49).[384] He is repeatedly dishonoured and insulted: he is kicked ‘on the hip’ by Melanthius the goatherd (*Od*. 17.233-234), struck ‘on the back’ with a ‘stool’ by Antinous (*Od*. 17.462-463), and has a ‘cow’s hoof’ ‘hurled’ at him as the expression of his inferior social standing (*Od*. 20.292-300). Whereas we can imagine only too well what the likes of an Achilleus would have

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[382] Hom. *Od*. 13.10-15; Rieu [trans.].
[383] ibid. 20.17-24.
[384] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 145.

done in this situation, Odysseus – the man who flew into a rage when the Phaeacian Euryalus dared to insult his athletic ability (*Od*. 8.159-185) – quietly endures this abuse. His ability to hold back and persevere goes right along with having to postpone all assertions of his own honour and worth.

When the right opportunity presents itself, however, Odysseus does not hesitate to assert his identity as pre-eminent Greek hero, sacker of Troy, fearsome warrior and rightful king of Ithaca by slaughtering all the Suitors and exacting his revenge:

> εὗρεν ἔπειτ' Ὀδυσῆα μετὰ κταμένοισι νέκυσσιν
> αἵματι καὶ λύθρῳ πεπαλαγμένον ὥς τε λέοντα,
> ὅς ῥά τε βεβρωκὼς βοὸς ἔρχεται ἀγραύλοιο·
> πᾶν δ' ἄρα οἱ στῆθός τε παρήϊά τ' ἀμφοτέρωθεν
> αἱματόεντα πέλει, δεινὸς δ' εἰς ὦπα ἰδέσθαι·
> ὣς Ὀδυσεὺς πεπάλακτο πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὕπερθεν.

> She [Eurycleia] found Odysseus among the corpses of the dead, spattered with blood and gore, like a lion when he comes from feeding on some farmer's bullock, with the blood dripping from his breast and jaws on either side, a fearsome spectacle. That was how Odysseus looked, with the gore spattered on his legs and arms.[385]

Clarke argues that "the imagery is unmistakably that of the Iliadic warrior, driven by the force and violence of his nature to seize what is his due".[386] But Odysseus is no longer an Iliadic warrior. Having done what was necessary to reclaim his position as master of his household and ruler of Ithaca, he immediately restrains himself:

> ἡ δ' ὡς οὖν νέκυάς τε καὶ ἄσπετον εἴσιδεν αἷμα,
> ἴθυσέν ῥ' ὀλολύξαι, ἐπεὶ μέγα εἴσιδεν ἔργον·
> ἀλλ' Ὀδυσεὺς κατέρυκε καὶ ἔσχεθεν ἱεμένην περ
> καί μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
> "ἐν θυμῷ, γρηῦ, χαῖρε καὶ ἴσχεο μηδ' ὀλόλυζε·
> οὐχ ὁσίη κταμένοισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν εὐχετάασθαι.

> But when Eurycleia saw the dead men and the sea of blood she felt like crying out in triumph at the mighty achievement that confronted her. Odysseus, however, checked her exuberance with a sharp rebuke.

[385] Hom. *Od*. 22.401-406; Rieu [trans.].
[386] Clarke (2004) 87.

> 'Restrain yourself old woman, and gloat in silence. I'll have no cries of triumph here. It is an impious thing to exult over the slain.'[387]

To 'gloat', εὐχετᾶσθαι, over the Suitors' deaths, to 'exult' in the downfall of others, says the hero who could not resist 'shout[ing] out derisive words at Polyphemus', is not the proper way to behave.[388] Through "his experience of thoroughly inglorious degradation, of the instability of good fortune and of the gods' remote and unpredictable power," Odysseus' "sense of humanity has been confirmed and deepened"[389] to the point where he is now able to understand what it means to be human and to accept the limitations that both characterise and bind his existence in a world of ordinary human beings: 'Of all the creatures that breathe and creep about on Mother Earth there is none so helpless as man.'[390]

Odysseus never actually arrives home. The seer Teiresias tells him in Book 11:

> αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν μνηστῆρας ἐνὶ μεγάροισι τεοῖσι
> κτείνῃς ἠὲ δόλῳ ἢ ἀμφαδὸν ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ,
> ἔρχεσθαι δὴ ἔπειτα, λαβὼν εὐῆρες ἐρετμόν,
> εἰς ὅ κε τοὺς ἀφίκηαι, οἳ οὐκ ἴσασι θάλασσαν
> ἀνέρες οὐδέ θ' ἅλεσσι μεμιγμένον εἶδαρ ἔδουσιν·

> But when you have killed these Suitors in your palace, by stratagem or in a straight fight with the naked sword, you must set out once more. Take a well-cut oar and go on till you reach a people who know nothing of the sea and never use salt with their food…[391]

As Odysseus tells Penelope in Book 23, he has 'not yet come to the end of [his] trials'.[392] This postponement of the ultimate end of the story dooms Odysseus to a life of endless travel and "there is a sense in which he becomes himself the eternal wanderer whom Achilleus describes to Priam as the ultimate example of human wretchedness" (*Il.* 24.531-533).[393] Just like Achilleus, then, Odysseus too comes to understand the full significance of his own standard epithet, πολύτλας, 'much-enduring':

[387] Hom. *Od*. 22.407-412; Rieu [trans.].
[388] ibid. 9.474.
[389] Clarke (2004) 88.
[390] Hom. *Od*. 18.130; Rieu [trans.].
[391] ibid. 11.119-123.
[392] ibid. 23.248-249.
[393] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 147.

> Suffering and endurance distinguish human beings from the gods. Because Odysseus never ceases to be a traveler, he continues to embody the suffering to which we are all subjected and the endurance we must all develop.[394]

Achilleus and Odysseus are brought closer to the world of the audience – to the world of human beings 'as they are now'. While they start off as being defined by their elevation above ordinary human existence – as the 'godlike' offspring of their divine ancestors – in the course of the poems both characters are made to undergo developments that gradually force them into the realisation of their own limitations as human beings. No longer defined primarily as descendants of the gods, they eventually come to learn what it means to be human and to accept their new position as 'helpless', ἀκιδνότερος, and 'wretched mortals', δειλοί βροτοί.[395] As Simonides would write:

> ἄνθρωπος ἐὼν μή ποτε φάσῃς ὅ τι γίνεται αὔριον,
> μηδ' ἄνδρα ἰδὼν ὄλβιον ὅσσον χρόνον ἔσσεται·
> ὠκεῖα γὰρ οὐδὲ τανυπτερύγου μυίας
> οὕτως ἁ μετάστασις.[396]

> You are man: then never say what will happen tomorrow, nor, when you see a prosperous man, how long he will prosper; for not even the movement of a long-winged fly is so swift.[397]

The emergence of the notion of 'community' as represented in the slow development of the *polis* occasioned the need for "a new measure of man, more suited to the changed" social, political and economic "conditions of Greek society"[398] – men who understand that the success of any communal venture depends on their ability to work together; who prove themselves not by the obsessive pursuit of individual success and prestige, but by respecting the norms of human society and furthering the interests of their social group; and who recognise and accept the conditions that both characterise and bind their existence in a human community. Bearing in mind that Homer's appeal was contextually

[394] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 147.
[395] Hom. *Od*. 18.130; Rieu [trans.], *Il*. 24.525; Lattimore [trans.].
[396] I will be using Page's 1962 edition of Simonides' *Fragmenta* throughout.
[397] Simon. fr. 521; Campbell [trans.].
[398] Gentili [tr. Cole] (1988) 64.

determined, the significance of this attempt to ‘tame’ the hero – to force him to become less ‘heroic’ and more ‘human’ – to the sociopolitical reality of Archaic and Classical Greece becomes clear when we turn to examine the broader implications of the role afforded the heroes in Homeric society.

Chapter 4
Οἱ ἄριστοι

Like the aristocracy of Archaic Greece, the heroes are hereditary aristocrats who monopolise most of the wealth and all of the power. The group – be it οἶκος, *polis*, or army contingent – needs to be defended as efficiently as possible; and since it is the heroes who "form the most efficient force for attack and defence which Homeric society possesses,"[399] they are commended with the terms ἀγαθός, ἐσθλός and ἀρετή because they represent the class of men that society relies on most. Homeric society values these men for their possession and display of the qualities and skills which it recognises as being most essential to its safety and security: wealth, high-birth, courage, physical and military prowess, and skill in counsel and strategy. And because society's need of these competitive excellences is so strong, the co-operative virtues are far less esteemed. This is essentially the same alignment of values that was found to prevail and ultimately prove so disruptive in Archaic and Classical Greek society. Although Adkins argues that "the poems give the impression" that the members of Homeric society – despite this heavy reliance on the competitive excellences and comparative lack of regard for the co-operative ones – can "coexist peacefully for the most part,"[400] I would argue that Homer seems to go to a great deal of effort to illustrate just how far from true this assessment actually is.

Homeric society rewards the ἀγαθοί for their display of the competitive excellences with τιμή and κλέος. The possession of τιμή, as we have seen, is the driving force behind every Homeric hero. But "it is in the very nature of honour," as Finley points out, "that it must be exclusive, or at least hierarchic. When everyone attains equal honour, then there is no honour for anyone."[401] In their pursuit of τιμή and κλέος, the heroes are always in potential competition with one another as each strives "to defend [his] own τιμή, if possible to acquire more, and at all events not to lose any of what [he] already has".[402] The poems abound with examples of what happens when such competition becomes

[399] Adkins (1960) 35.
[400] Adkins (1972) 21.
[401] Finley (1982) 120.
[402] Adkins (1972) 15.

actual: the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilleus that is mentioned in passing as the subject of a song sung by the bard Demodocus (*Od*. 8.72-78); the quarrel between Odysseus and Aias over the arms of Achilleus (*Od*. 11.543-551); another between Odysseus and the Phaeacian Euryalus over who possesses the greatest capacity for physical prowess (*Od*. 8.153 ff.). It is precisely this aspect of heroic society – namely the extent to which the competitive pursuit of status inevitably leads to conflict, ἔρις – that forms the main focus of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: the quarrels between Agamemnon and Achilleus, Odysseus and the Suitors.

Agamemnon and Achilleus:

"It is an overall Iliadic theme that Achilleus is 'best of the Achaians'";[403] indeed, this is the title that he repeatedly claims for himself (*Il*. 1.244, 1.412, 16.274). The problem, of course, is that he is not the only hero with claims to this title. Whereas Achilleus, as the best warrior, can lay claim to superior physical strength, Agamemnon, as the commander-in-chief of all the Greek troops, can lay claim to supreme political strength:

> τῶν ἑκατὸν νηῶν ἦρχε κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
> Ἀτρεΐδης· ἅμα τῷ γε πολὺ πλεῖστοι καὶ ἄριστοι
> λαοὶ ἕποντ'· ἐν δ' αὐτὸς ἐδύσετο νώροπα χαλκὸν
> κυδιόων, πᾶσιν δὲ μετέπρεπεν ἡρώεσσιν
> οὕνεκ' ἄριστος ἔην πολὺ δὲ πλείστους ἄγε λαούς.

> Of their hundred ships the leader was powerful Agamemnon, Atreus' son, with whom followed far the best and bravest people; and among them he himself stood armoured in shining bronze, glorying, conspicuous among the great fighters, since he was the greatest [ἄριστος] among them all, and led the most people.[404]

The two heroes are clearly contrasted with one another: Agamemnon is the paramount commander without which the war in Troy would not have been fought; Achilleus is the paramount warrior without which that war cannot be won. This distinction is made clear from the outset:

[403] Nagy (1979) 26.
[404] Hom. *Il*. 2.576-580; Lattimore [trans.].

Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή,
ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε
Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

> And the will of Zeus was accomplished since that time when first there stood in division of conflict Atreus' son the lord of men [ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν] and brilliant [δῖος] Achilleus.[405]

The build-up to their quarrel begins when Chryses, the priest of Apollo, enters the Achaian camp – 'carrying gifts beyond count and holding in his hands' the insignia of his priestly office – to appeal for the ransom of his daughter. He makes his request respectfully, and adds that by complying the Achaians will be 'giving honour to Zeus' son who strikes from afar, Apollo'.[406] 'All the rest of the Achaians', we are told, 'cried out in favour that the priest be respected and the shining ransom be taken'.[407] But "Agamemnon is no respecter of rank or sanctity" when it poses "some threat to his claim on an honour-gift (γέρας)":[408] he flouts the conventions of society by rejecting a suppliant bearing gifts and sends the priest away with a speech that is both insulting, ἀτιμάζειν, and blasphemous (*Il*. 1.11, 1.94).

'On the tenth' day of the plague, Achilleus takes the initiative and summons 'the people to assembly'. He "addresses Agamemnon as a concerned commander of the Myrmidon contingent in the army" and as a "representative of the general mood in the Achaian camp",[409] and suggests that they consult 'some holy man, some prophet, even an interpreter of dreams' (*Il*. 1.54-63). The seer Kalchas – who is only too aware, given Agamemnon's treatment of Chryses, that his testimony on the need to return the girl will be met with extreme anger by Agamemnon – feels it necessary to secure Achilleus' protection before he agrees to speak: 'For a king when he is angry with a man beneath him is too strong.'[410] Achilleus complies:

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[405] Hom. *Il*. 1.5-7; Lattimore [trans.].
[406] ibid. 1.11-21.
[407] ibid. 1.22-23.
[408] Zanker (1994) 56.
[409] Latacz (1996) 95.
[410] Hom. *Il*. 1.80; Lattimore [trans.].

οὔ τις ἐμεῦ ζῶντος καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ δερκομένοιο
σοὶ κοίλῃς παρὰ νηυσὶ βαρείας χεῖρας ἐποίσει
συμπάντων Δαναῶν, οὐδ' ἢν Ἀγαμέμνονα εἴπῃς,
ὃς νῦν πολλὸν ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν εὔχεται εἶναι.

> No man so long as I am alive above earth and see daylight shall lay the weight of his hands on you beside the hollow ships, not one of all the Danaans, even if you mean Agamemnon, who now claims [εὔχεσθαι] to be far the greatest of all the Achaians [ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν].[411]

While "on the lips of any other hero," Griffin argues, 'Agamemnon, who now claims to be far the greatest of all the Achaians,' "would have no second meaning… Achilleus believes, and will very soon say, that *he* is the best man among them, and the struggle between them is over that precise point."[412] The 'bitter collision' begins to unfold.[413]

Kalchas was right not to put too much reliance on his status as the Achaians' soothsayer: Agamemnon, 'the heart within filled black to brim with anger', strikes out at the socially inferior seer when he names him as the cause for Apollo's anger.[414] Agamemnon proceeds from his verbal abuse of the seer to a demand for compensation for the loss of his γέρας:

αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γέρας αὐτίχ' ἑτοιμάσατ' ὄφρα μὴ οἶος
Ἀργείων ἀγέραστος ἔω, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ἔοικε·
λεύσσετε γὰρ τό γε πάντες ὅ μοι γέρας ἔρχεται ἄλλῃ.

> Find me then some prize that shall be my own, lest I only among the Argives go without, since that were unfitting; you are all witnesses to this thing, that my prize goes elsewhere.[415]

Agamemnon is so concerned with the conception of his own standing and worth that he once again flouts the conventions of society by attempting to reclaim a prize that has already been apportioned. Achilleus responds to this proposal with indignation: he calls Agamemnon 'greediest for gain of all men', tells him that it is 'unbecoming for the people to call back things once given', and instructs Agamemnon to 'give the girl back',

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[411] Hom. *Il*. 1.88-91; Lattimore [trans.].
[412] Griffin (1980) 53.
[413] Hom. *Il*. 1.8; Lattimore [trans.].
[414] ibid. 1.103.
[415] ibid. 1.118-120.

adding that the Achaians will 'repay' him in the future.[416] No longer just 'a concerned commander' of one of the many contingents, Achilleus is now acting on his belief that he is both ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν and the 'equal', τόν ὁμοῖον, of the supreme Greek commander (*Il*. 1.244, 16.53) by presuming to tell Agamemnon, the man who believes that his own 'greater authority' affords him the only claim to be titled πολλόν ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν (*Il*. 1.91, 16.54), what to do.

This is too much for Agamemnon:

> μὴ δ' οὕτως ἀγαθός περ ἐὼν θεοείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ
> κλέπτε νόῳ, ἐπεὶ οὐ παρελεύσεαι οὐδέ με πείσεις.
> ἦ ἐθέλεις ὄφρ' αὐτὸς ἔχῃς γέρας, αὐτὰρ ἔμ' αὔτως
> ἧσθαι δευόμενον, κέλεαι δέ με τῆνδ' ἀποδοῦναι;

> Not that way, good fighter [ἀγαθός] though you be, godlike Achilleus, strive to cheat, for you will not deceive, you will not persuade me. What do you want? To keep your own prize and have me sit here lacking one? Are you ordering me to give this girl back?[417]

It is precisely "the excessive prowess of Achilleus" as a pre-eminent warrior, ἀγαθός, "viewed as a turbulent subordinate," that "fuels the angry over-reaction of Agamemnon, [that] has always worried him. He refers to it explicitly at line 178, ['if you are very strong indeed, that is a god's gift'], and again at 290, ['And if the everlasting gods have made him a spearman, yet they have not given him the right to speak abusively'].[418] Agamemnon is bitterly resentful of the fact that Achilleus' superior physical prowess enables him to lay claim to the paramount position of honour among the Achaians. So too, of course, does Achilleus resent the fact that Agamemnon's superior social standing allows him to do the same: he far surpasses Agamemnon in achievement, it is through the work of his 'hands' that Agamemnon wins τιμή 'from the Trojans', and yet, because Agamemnon is socially superior, he always get stuck with an inferior γέρας 'when the time comes to distribute the booty' (*Il*. 1.159-167).

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[416] Hom. *Il*. 1.122-129; Lattimore [trans.].
[417] ibid. *Il*. 1.131-134.
[418] Griffin (1980) 53.

We have now reached the heart of the quarrel. Chryseis is no longer the issue; she will shortly set sail for Chryse and return to her father. The central problem now is the explosion of anger, χόλος, and strife, ἔρις, which is always bound to erupt when two heroes – in a society that is organised by the competitive pursuit of τιμή – both contend to be ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν. Agamemnon responds to what he conceives of as Achilleus' impertinence by asserting his identity as the supreme commander: he rejects Achilleus' suggestion of delayed recompense and demands that he be given a 'new γέρας… to atone for the girl lost', adding that he himself will seize one if the Achaians fail to comply with his wishes.[419] But this excessive self-assertion of his own superior authority, far from eliciting any feelings of submission or deference in Achilleus, only serves to incense Achilleus even further; he launches a scathing attack on Agamemnon: 'You wine sack, with a dog's eyes, with a deer's heart' (*Il*. 1.225). He addresses Agamemnon as 'O wrapped in shamelessness' (*Il*. 1.149), charges him with being concerned only with his own 'wealth' and 'luxury' (*Il*. 1.171), accuses him of lacking the 'courage' 'to arm' with his 'people for battle' (*Il*. 1.225-227), and insults his competence as leader of the Achaians (*Il*. 1.150-151).

The quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilleus is essentially about the threat that each hero poses to the other's status and identity. Both men, for different but equally valid reasons, believe themselves to be ἀγαθός *par excellence*, and each feels himself to be entitled to 'τιμή beyond all'.[420] Agamemnon attempts to assert his own identity as πολλόν ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν by humiliating Achilleus in front of the entire Greek army:

> ἐγὼ δέ κ' ἄγω Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρῃον
> αὐτὸς ἰὼν κλισίην δὲ τὸ σὸν γέρας ὄφρ' ἐῢ εἰδῇς
> ὅσσον φέρτερός εἰμι σέθεν, στυγέῃ δὲ καὶ ἄλλος
> ἶσον ἐμοὶ φάσθαι καὶ ὁμοιωθήμεναι ἄντην.

> But I shall take the fair-cheeked Briseis, your prize, I myself going to your shelter, that you may learn well how much greater [φέρτερος] I am than you, and another man may shrink back from likening himself to me and contending against me.[421]

[419] Hom. *Il*. 1.135-139; Lattimore [trans.].
[420] ibid. 1.505-506, 9.38.
[421] ibid. 1.184-187.

While Achilleus tries to assert his own superior status by "design[ing] his revenge precisely to show the hazards involved in dishonouring 'the best of the Achaians'":[422]

> ἦ ποτ' Ἀχιλλῆος ποθὴ ἵξεται υἷας Ἀχαιῶν
> σύμπαντας· τότε δ' οὔ τι δυνήσεαι ἀχνύμενός περ
> χραισμεῖν, εὖτ' ἂν πολλοὶ ὑφ' Ἕκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο
> θνήσκοντες πίπτωσι· σὺ δ' ἔνδοθι θυμὸν ἀμύξεις
> χωόμενος ὅ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισας.

> Some day longing for Achilleus will come to the sons of the Achaians, all of them. Then stricken at heart though you be, you will be able to do nothing, when in their numbers before man-slaughtering Hektor they drop and die. And then you will eat out the heart within you in sorrow, that you did no honour to the best of the Achaians [ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν].[423]

The argument has reached a deadlock. 'Nestor the fair spoken', 'from whose lips the streams of words ran sweeter than honey' (*Il*. 1.247-249), intervenes and tries to settle the dispute:

> μήτε σὺ τόνδ' ἀγαθός περ ἐὼν ἀποαίρεο κούρην,
> ἀλλ' ἔα ὥς οἱ πρῶτα δόσαν γέρας υἷες Ἀχαιῶν·
> μήτε σὺ Πηλείδη 'θελ' ἐριζέμεναι βασιλῆϊ
> ἀντιβίην, ἐπεὶ οὔ ποθ' ὁμοίης ἔμμορε τιμῆς
> σκηπτοῦχος βασιλεύς, ᾧ τε Ζεὺς κῦδος ἔδωκεν.
> εἰ δὲ σὺ καρτερός ἐσσι θεὰ δέ σε γείνατο μήτηρ,
> ἀλλ' ὅ γε φέρτερός ἐστιν ἐπεὶ πλεόνεσσιν ἀνάσσει.
> Ἀτρεΐδη σὺ δὲ παῦε τεὸν μένος· αὐτὰρ ἔγωγε
> λίσσομ' Ἀχιλλῆϊ μεθέμεν χόλον, ὃς μέγα πᾶσιν
> ἕρκος Ἀχαιοῖσιν πέλεται πολέμοιο κακοῖο.

> You, great man [ἀγαθός] that you are, yet do not take the girl away but let her be, a prize as the sons of the Achaians gave her first. Nor, son of Peleus, think to match your strength [ἐρίζειν] with the king, since never equal with the rest is the portion of honour [τιμή] of the sceptred king to whom Zeus gives magnificence. Even though you are the stronger man [καρτερός], and the mother who bore you was immortal, yet is this man greater [φέρτερος] who is lord over more than you rule. Son of Atreus, give up your anger;

[422] Zanker (1994) 76.
[423] Hom. *Il*. 1.240-244; Lattimore [trans.].

> even I entreat you to give over your bitterness against Achilleus, he who stands as a great bulwark of battle over all the Achaians.[424]

Nestor acknowledges Achilleus' superior physical 'might', καρτερός, as well as his divine descent, but nevertheless appeals to Achilleus not to rival, ἐρίζειν, Agamemnon who, as 'the sceptred king', is more powerful, φέρτερος, since he rules over 'more' men – Achilleus' natural talents and attributes cannot prevail over Agamemnon's socially conceded advantages. Nestor also acknowledges Agamemnon's "claim… as a man of high standing," ἀγαθός, to seize Briseis for himself, but appeals to him to 'let her be, a prize as the sons of the Achaians gave her first', on the grounds that it would be "morally bad" to act "on such a claim".[425]

Nestor's advice is 'fair and orderly' (*Il*. 1.286): he acknowledges "how indispensable each [man] is to the common welfare of the army" and implores them to put their χόλος aside and recognise "how crucially important their co-operation is to the whole army".[426] But it has no affect whatsoever on either party. Agamemnon continues his attack on Achilleus as a self-important troublemaker who 'wishes to be above all others' and is attempting to usurp Agamemnon's prerogative as king 'to hold power over all, and to be lord of all, and give them their orders' (*Il*. 1.287-289). And Achilleus continues to refuse to recognise Agamemnon as his superior: as far as Achilleus is concerned, he is the 'equal', τόν ὁμοῖον, of Agamemnon, and he will in no way put up with being treated like one of Agamemnon's subjects, like a δειλός or οὐτιδανός, forced to 'carry out every order' that Agamemnon 'may happen to give [him]' (*Il*. 16.53, 1.293-294).

Agamemnon and Achilleus associate the competitive pursuit of τιμή "so totally with the defense of [their] personal worth and dignity" that all "moral constraints to behave fairly have broken down"[427] and all entreaties on the importance of adhering to the co-operative virtues have become ineffectual. In Book 9 Odysseus pleads with Achilleus to cease from his heart-grieving anger, χόλος θυμαλγής, towards Agamemnon and asks him to take heed of Peleus' farewell advice:

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[424] Hom. *Il*. 1.275-284; Lattimore [trans.].
[425] Zanker (1994) 58.
[426] Latacz (1996) 101.
[427] Zanker (1994) 59, 58.

τέκνον ἐμὸν κάρτος μὲν Ἀθηναίη τε καὶ Ἥρη
δώσουσ' αἴ κ' ἐθέλωσι, σὺ δὲ μεγαλήτορα θυμὸν
ἴσχειν ἐν στήθεσσι· φιλοφροσύνη γὰρ ἀμείνων·

> My child, for the matter of strength, Athene and Hera will give it if it be their will, but be it yours to hold fast in your bosom the anger of the proud heart, for consideration [φιλοφροσύνη] is better [ἀμείνων].[428]

But the pull of competitive ἀρετή and the overriding impulse to assert his own τιμή nullify any previous motivation that Achilleus may have had to behave kindly or considerately, with φιλοφροσύνη, and he chooses to ignore this advice in favour of his father's other piece of parting advice:

Πηλεὺς μὲν ᾧ παιδὶ γέρων ἐπέτελλ' Ἀχιλῆϊ
αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων·

> And Peleus the aged was telling his own son, Achilleus, to be always the best [ἀριστεύειν] and pre-eminent [ὑπέροχος] beyond all others.[429]

Aias also entreats Achilleus to 'make gracious the spirit within [him]' and embrace the co-operative virtues (*Il*. 9.639). He accuses Achilleus of disregarding 'that friends' affection', φιλότης, with which he claims the Achaians have 'honoured' Achilleus 'far beyond all others', and appeals for 'pity' on the grounds that the ambassadors, 'out of all the Achaians', are the men who most 'desire' to have Achilleus' 'honour [κήδιστοι] and love [φίλτατοι]'.[430] But such "emotional ties" are "a weak bargaining point for the characters of the *Iliad*" when they go up against "the stronger… incentive" of personal τιμή:[431] Achilleus replies that Aias' counsel, though reasonable, is simply not strong enough to overpower the χόλος he has towards Agamemnon for humiliating him 'as if [he] were some dishonoured vagabond', ἀτίμητον μετανάστην (*Il*. 9.645-648).

Such, then, are the serious shortcomings of the Homeric alignment of values: "Moral responsibility has no place in them; and the social virtues, in which such responsibility has its place, neither have sufficient attraction to gain a hearing nor are backed by

[428] Hom. *Il*. 9.260, 9.254-256; Lattimore [trans.].
[429] ibid. 11.783-784.
[430] ibid. 9.630-642.
[431] Zanker (1994) 22, 21.

sufficient force to compel one."[432] Homeric society values the competitive excellences above all else; any attempt to compel an ἀγαθός to adhere to the less highly esteemed co-operative virtues – especially when his τιμή is threatened – is always going to prove difficult. If the ἀγαθοί refuse to embrace the social virtues like justice, self-restraint and co-operation, "as, given their competitive scheme of values, they are only too likely to do," society is all but powerless to check them:

> The organisation to coerce them does not exist: and since any concession might be regarded by public opinion as a sign of failure or weakness, and failure is αἰσχρόν, than which nothing is worse, there is always the danger that such a situation as arose between Agamemnon and Achilleus will occur again.[433]

This type of 'situation', in which the competitive pursuit of personal honour effects a breakdown in social cohesion which ultimately jeopardises the security and well-being of the social group, does, of course, 'occur again' – in the quarrel between Odysseus and the Suitors.

Odysseus and the Suitors

In the seventeenth year of Odysseus' absence, 108 Suitors from Ithaca and the surrounding islands and mainland invade Odysseus' palace in an attempt to get their hands on Odysseus' power and wealth by forcing Penelope to marry one of them. The Suitors take advantage of Penelope's anomalous situation, the youth and helplessness of Odysseus' growing son, Telemachus, and the superiority of their own numbers to flout the conventions of society:

> μνηστήρων οὐχ ἥδε δίκη τὸ πάροιθε τέτυκτο,
> οἵ τ' ἀγαθήν τε γυναῖκα καὶ ἀφνειοῖο θύγατρα
> μνηστεύειν ἐθέλωσι καὶ ἀλλήλοισ' ἐρίσωσιν·
> αὐτοὶ τοί γ' ἀπάγουσι βόας καὶ ἴφια μῆλα
> κούρης δαῖτα φίλοισι, καὶ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα διδοῦσιν·
> ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀλλότριον βίοτον νήποινον ἔδουσιν.

432 Adkins (1960) 52.
433 ibid. 52.

> Yours is by no means the right [δίκη] and time-honoured way for rivals to conduct their suit for a lady of good family and a rich man's daughter! Such suitors bring in their own cattle and sheep to make a banquet for the lady's friends, and also give her valuable presents. They do not enjoy free meals at her expense.[434]

Instead of courting Penelope 'in the regular way', δικαίως, the Suitors take up a life of idleness and greed as they 'live free off another man' and 'squander' his 'wealth' (*Od*. 14.90, 1.160, 17.537): 'they spend their days' feasting on Odysseus' 'jostling sheep and shambling cattle' (*Od*. 4.319-320), get drunk on his 'sparkling wine' (*Od*. 17.536), and 'haul' his maidservants about 'for their foul purposes' (*Od*. 16.108-109). In addition to this, the Suitors completely disregard the principles of hospitality, ξενία, and repeatedly 'maltreat' strangers and guests (*Od*. 20.318). Their 'wicked abandon[ment] of all standards of civilised behaviour' is heavily criticised throughout the poem (*Od*. 24.458): Athena labels them as 'domineering and insolent' and says that 'any decent man would be disgusted at the sight of such disgraceful, αἶσχος, behaviour' (*Od*. 1.227-229); Nestor voices a prayer that the Suitors be made to 'pay… for their violence' and have 'all thoughts of courtship knocked out of their heads for ever' (*Od*. 3.216-224); Menelaos becomes 'hot with indignation' when he discovers that 'the cowards' are trying 'to creep into the brave man's bed' and hopes that the Suitors will come to 'a sorry wedding' and 'a swift death'(*Od*. 4.332-334, 4.346); and Telemachus, when he discovers that the Suitors are plotting to murder him, says that even death is 'far better' than having to witness such 'disgraceful' behaviour:

> εἰ δ' ἤδη μ' αὐτὸν κτεῖναι μενεαίνετε χαλκῷ,
> καί κε τὸ βουλοίμην, καί κεν πολὺ κέρδιον εἴη
> τεθνάμεν ἢ τάδε γ' αἰὲν ἀεικέα ἔργ' ὁράασθαι,
> ξείνους τε στυφελιζομένους δμῳάς τε γυναῖκας
> ῥυστάζοντας ἀεικελίως κατὰ δώματα καλά.

> But if you are all set now to murder me, well, I should prefer it so and think it a far better thing to die than day after day to look on while disgraceful things like this are done, my guests are maltreated, and my maids are hauled about this lovely house for your foul purposes.[435]

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[434] Hom. *Od*. 18.275-280; Rieu [trans.].
[435] ibid. 20.315-319.

The Suitors are continually reprimanded for their atrocious behaviour. When Penelope, for example, discovers the plot against Telemachus' life, she decides 'to confront her Suitors in all their brutal pride', ὑπέρβιος ὕβρις. She reminds Antinous that his family is heavily indebted to Odysseus: Antinous' father 'once sought refuge' in Ithaca 'from the fury of the mob' and would surely have been 'killed', 'had not Odysseus come to his rescue and controlled their violence'. Instead of honouring this obligation, however, Antinous is doing everything within his power to destroy Odysseus' οἶκος: he is 'living free' at his 'expense', 'courting' his wife, and proposing 'to kill' his only son (*Od*. 16.410, 16.424-433). In an effort to save Telemachus, Penelope argues that though Antinous has a high reputation for being ἄριστος 'in judgement and eloquence', his behaviour – his refusal to show 'compassion' and 'mercy' to one who finds himself in a similar position to that of his own father – clearly proves that he is not so:

> Ἀντίνο', ὕβριν ἔχων, κακομήχανε, καὶ δέ σέ φασιν
> ἐν δήμῳ Ἰθάκης μεθ' ὁμήλικας ἔμμεν ἄριστον
> βουλῇ καὶ μύθοισι· σὺ δ' οὐκ ἄρα τοῖος ἔησθα.
> μάργε, τίη δὲ σὺ Τηλεμάχῳ θάνατόν τε μόρον τε
> ῥάπτεις, οὐδ' ἱκέτας ἐμπάζεαι, οἷσιν ἄρα Ζεὺς
> μάρτυρος; οὐδ' ὁσίη κακὰ ῥάπτειν ἀλλήλοισιν.

> Antinous, you're an arrogant and evil schemer – and they say that in judgement and eloquence you're the best man [ἄριστος] among your contemporaries in Ithaca! Now I know you're not. You covetous fool, how dare you plot against Telemachus' life, showing no compassion to suppliants, even though they are under Zeus' eye. It's sacrilege for someone who has received mercy to plot against someone in need of mercy.[436]

But this line of argument "is impossible". Antinous' position as ἀγαθός is neither determined nor affected by his relation to the social virtues; whether he chooses to adhere to co-operative virtues or not, he remains an ἀγαθός none the less: "his ἀρετή is unsmirched by his ill-mannered behaviour."[437] Penelope makes another attempt to restrain the Suitors' wicked behaviour when she reproaches Antinous for threatening the disguised Odysseus with violence:

[436] Hom. *Od*. 16.418-423; Rieu [trans.].
[437] Adkins (1960) 39, 44.

> Ἀντίνο', οὐ μὲν καλὸν ἀτέμβειν οὐδὲ δίκαιον
> ξείνους Τηλεμάχου, ὅς κεν τάδε δώμαθ' ἵκηται.

> Antinous, it is neither good manners [καλόν] nor common decency [δίκαιον] to show such meanness to people who come to this house as Telemachus' guests.[438]

Eumaeus also rebukes Antinous for calling the disguised Odysseus a 'vagabond', a 'loathsome beggar' and a 'plate-licker at our feast':

> Ἀντίνο', οὐ μὲν καλὰ καὶ ἐσθλὸς ἐὼν ἀγορεύεις·

> Antinous, you may be nobly born [ἐσθλός] but there's nothing noble [καλά] in your speech.[439]

Although Penelope and Eumaeus "can maintain" that Antinous is behaving in a manner which is 'neither good manners nor common decency' – οὐ καλός, οὐ δίκαιος, οὐ καλά – they "cannot say that [he] becomes κακός or not ἐσθλός as a result":[440] for the ἀρετή of an ἀγαθός is simply not determined by these social virtues.

Similarly, when Eurymachus comments on the 'disgrace', ἔλεγχος, which all the Suitors would suffer if 'the common people' were to discover that 'some casual tramp' had managed to string Odysseus' bow 'with the greatest ease' while they themselves had failed miserably (*Od*. 21.321-329), Penelope retorts:

> Εὐρύμαχ', οὔ πως ἔστιν ἐϋκλεῖας κατὰ δῆμον
> ἔμμεναι, οἳ δὴ οἶκον ἀτιμάζοντες ἔδουσιν
> ἀνδρὸς ἀριστῆος· τί δ' ἐλέγχεα ταῦτα τίθεσθε;

> Eurymachus, no men who desecrate and destroy a great man's household can anyhow have a high reputation [εὐκλεής] among the people, so why would that comment bring disgrace [ἔλεγχος] on you?[441]

"Evidently Penelope wishes" to imply that the Suitors' behaviour in attempting to 'desecrate and destroy a great man's household' is also "ἔλεγχος, and indeed more of an

438 Hom. *Od*. 21.312-313; Rieu [trans.].
439 ibid. 17.376-377, 17.381.
440 Adkins (1960) 44.
441 Hom. *Od*. 21.331-333; Rieu [trans.].

ἔλεγχος than to fail in drawing the bow": a line of argument which is, again, "impossible". "Αἰσχρόν… and the allied ἐλεγχείη," according to Adkins, are "the most powerful words available to denigrate actions";[442] but these words are used only to condemn failure in terms of the competitive excellences, not in terms of the social virtues. So the Suitors' failure to string Odysseus' bow is indeed, as Eurymachus says, an ἔλεγχος, while their immoral attempt to 'desecrate and destroy' Odysseus' οἶκος, should they "*succeed*,"[443] would have no negative impact on their 'high reputation', εὐκλεής, whatsoever; indeed, it would actually serve to enhance their ἀρετή and their standing as ἀγαθοί.

Needless to say these reprimands make little impact on the Suitors. They tell Penelope that Telemachus is their 'dearest friend on earth' and that none of them would ever 'lay violent hands' on him, all the while plotting 'death for Telemachus in [their] hearts', and shamelessly continue their effort to bring their 'business' of 'destroying' Odysseus' household 'to a satisfactory end'.[444] At the advice of Athena, Telemachus summons an assembly in the hopes of stirring the Ithacan nobles to take action against the Suitors. Telemachus appeals for assistance in 'the affliction, κακά, that has fallen on [his] οἶκος' on the grounds that his father was both an ἐσθλός and a 'gentle king' and implies that the Ithacan nobles now have a duty to protect Odysseus' household in its time of 'great distress' (*Od*. 2.45-47, 2.41). The problem, however, is that the assailants themselves are 'the sons of ἄριστοι' (*Od*. 2.51), and are therefore entitled to the same prerogatives as Odysseus. Mentor rages against the inevitable outcome of this situation:

> κέκλυτε δὴ νῦν μευ, Ἰθακήσιοι, ὅττι κεν εἴπω·
> μή τις ἔτι πρόφρων ἀγανὸς καὶ ἤπιος ἔστω
> σκηπτοῦχος βασιλεύς, μηδὲ φρεσὶν αἴσιμα εἰδώς,
> ἀλλ' αἰεὶ χαλεπός τ' εἴη καὶ αἴσυλα ῥέζοι,
> ὡς οὔ τις μέμνηται Ὀδυσσῆος θείοιο
> λαῶν, οἷσιν ἄνασσε, πατὴρ δ' ὣς ἤπιος ἦεν.
> ἀλλ' ἦ τοι μνηστῆρας ἀγήνορας οὔ τι μεγαίρω

[442] Adkins (1960) 39, 33.
[443] ibid. 39.
[444] Hom. *Od*. 16.437-448, 16.372-373; Rieu [trans.].

ἔρδειν ἔργα βίαια κακορραφίῃσι νόοιο·
σφὰς γὰρ παρθέμενοι κεφαλὰς κατέδουσι βιαίως
οἶκον Ὀδυσσῆος, τὸν δ' οὐκέτι φασὶ νέεσθαι.
νῦν δ' ἄλλῳ δήμῳ νεμεσίζομαι, οἷον ἅπαντες
ἧσθ' ἄνεω, ἀτὰρ οὔ τι καθαπτόμενοι ἐπέεσσι
παύρους μνηστῆρας κατερύκετε πολλοὶ ἐόντες.

> My fellow citizens, kindness, generosity, and justice should no longer be the aims of any man who wields the royal sceptre – in fact he might just as well devote his days to tyranny and lawless deeds, since none of those whom the godlike Odysseus ruled with a father's loving care give a thought to him today. Of course it is not for me to pass judgment on the villainy of these black-hearted Suitors – it is their own skins they are risking when they squander Odysseus' estate in the belief that he is gone for ever. No, it is the rest of you sitting there in silence that stir my indignation. They are few and you are many. Yet not a word have they had from you in condemnation or restraint![445]

It matters little – in a society dominated by the competitive excellences – that Odysseus was a kind, generous and just king. Yes, the Suitors are guilty of atrocious behaviour towards the house of Odysseus. Nevertheless, they remain ἀγαθοί. And it is not just that the Suitors, as members of the aristocracy, are ἀγαθοί by birth; their behaviour is also in accordance with what Homeric society expects and indeed, values, in an ἀγαθός. The Suitors are doing everything in their power to promote the success and well-being of their own οἶκοι: they are 'competing' for 'the incomparable prize', ἀρετή, of Penelope's hand in marriage (*Od*. 2.206); they are preserving 'their own wealth' by 'living in luxury' at another man's 'expense' (*Od*. 17.532-533,16.389-390); they are doing their best to destroy their enemy, Telemachus, and so gain 'possession' of his 'inheritance' – Odysseus' 'property and estates' (*Od*. 16.384-388); and they are each of them 'risking' their lives to attain the highest position of power and honour in Homeric society – 'to make himself King, βασιλεύειν, of the fair city and land of Ithaca'(*Od*. 2.237, 22.52-53). So the villainous means by which the Suitors have set about to accomplish these tasks, as long as they prove *successful*, can in no way damage their ἀρετή or expose them to shame, αἰσχρόν, in the eyes of society. Little wonder that the assembly has no 'word' of

[445] Hom. *Od*. 2.229-241; Rieu [trans.].

‘condemnation’ or ‘restraint’ to make against the Suitors: the Ithacan nobles ‘scatter to their homes’ and the Suitors make their way back ‘to King Odysseus’ palace’.[446]

This is not a ‘moral’ society, at least not in the usual sense of the word: “to do κακά, to do harm, is not to be κακός; to be κακός is to be the sort of person to whom κακά may be done with impunity, since he cannot defend himself: and it is this condition which is αἰσχρόν.”[447] It is for this reason that the Suitors – despite their ‘vicious crimes, their willful disregard of what is right’ (*Od*. 3.206-207) – remain ἀγαθοί, ἐσθλοί and ἄριστοι;[448] but it is also for this reason that the conflict between Odysseus and the Suitors is destined to end in ‘evil death and black doom’.[449] Having slain Antinous, Odysseus finally ‘throws off his rags’ and confronts the Suitors:

> ὦ κύνες, οὔ μ' ἔτ' ἐφάσκεθ' ὑπότροπον οἴκαδε νεῖσθαι
> δήμου ἄπο Τρώων, ὅτι μοι κατεκείρετε οἶκον
> δμῳῇσίν τε γυναιξὶ παρευνάζεσθε βιαίως
> αὐτοῦ τε ζώοντος ὑπεμνάασθε γυναῖκα,
> οὔτε θεοὺς δείσαντες, οἳ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,
> οὔτε τιν' ἀνθρώπων νέμεσιν κατόπισθεν ἔσεσθαι.
> νῦν ὕμιν καὶ πᾶσιν ὀλέθρου πείρατ' ἐφῆπται.

> You dogs! You never thought to see me back from Troy. So you fleeced my household; you raped my maids; you courted my wife behind my back though I was alive – with no more fear of the gods in heaven than of the human vengeance that might come. One and all, your fate is sealed.[450]

The Suitors took their chance and did everything within their power to advance their own interests, dishonouring both Odysseus and his οἶκος in the process. But their plan has not succeeded, and now it is time for Odysseus to have his ‘vengeance’. Eurymachus tries to avert the blame by claiming that Antinous was ‘responsible for everything’; and, since he has already ‘got his deserts and been killed’, Odysseus should now take pity on the rest of

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[446] Hom. *Il*. 2.258-259; Rieu [trans.].
[447] Adkins (1960) 42.
[448] Hom. *Od*. 1.245, 4.778, 16.122, 19.130, 21.187, 22.29-30, 22.204, 23.121-122, 24.108; Rieu [trans.].
[449] ibid. 22.14.
[450] ibid. 22.1, 22.35-41.

the Suitors and allow them to make 'amends' for the damage they have caused.[451] Odysseus, in true heroic fashion, rejects this offer of future recompense:

> Εὐρύμαχ', οὐδ' εἴ μοι πατρώϊα πάντ' ἀποδοῖτε,
> ὅσσα τε νῦν ὔμμ' ἐστὶ καὶ εἴ ποθεν ἄλλ' ἐπιθεῖτε,
> οὐδέ κεν ὣς ἔτι χεῖρας ἐμὰς λήξαιμι φόνοιο,
> πρὶν πᾶσαν μνηστῆρας ὑπερβασίην ἀποτεῖσαι.

> Eurymachus, not if you made over all your patrimony to me, everything you possess, and anything else that may come your way, would I keep my hands from killing until you Suitors had paid for all your transgressions.[452]

The Suitors, by their own admission, have 'committed' 'unforgivable outrages' against Odysseus and his household and have, as a result, not only insulted Odysseus' honour, but have also sealed their own fate.[453] Were he to allow such an insult to go unavenged, Odysseus himself would incur shame, αἰσχρόν, and dishonour. And in a society where the highest sanction is public opinion, no ἀγαθός would willingly allow himself to be ridiculed for failing to exact the maximum penalty when he had the opportunity. There is only one possible outcome: to reassert his lost τιμή, to restore order to the world of social relations, and to complete the restitution of his identity as king of Ithaca and ἀγαθός *par excellence* – the Suitors must die.

[451] Hom. *Od*. 22.48-55; Rieu [trans.].
[452] ibid. 22.61-64.
[453] ibid. 22.46-47.

Chapter 5
Ποιμήν λαῶν

The competitive pursuit of honour and prestige typically leads to conflict among the members of the ruling class of Homeric society. To make matters worse, there is a pervasive tendency for these private conflicts over τιμή to escalate into full-blown communal warfare: the war between the Lapiths and the Centaurs, which began when the Centaur Eurytion 'perpetrated' an 'outrage' against Peirithous' bride (*Od*. 21.295-304, *Il*. 1.263-270, 2.740-744); the war between the Kouretes and the Aitolians, which originated in the quarrel between Meleagros and his uncles over the allocation of a prestigious hunting trophy – the 'head' and 'bristling hide' of the Kalydonian boar (*Il*. 9.529-599); Herakles' earlier destruction of Troy, which resulted from the 'haughty' Laomedon's refusal to give Herakles the immortal horses he had been promised as a reward for killing 'the Sea Beast' (*Il*. 5.145-148, 5.648-641, 20.145-148); and, of course, the entire Trojan war, which was initiated when Paris inflicted 'shame' and 'defilement' on Menelaos by abducting Helen (*Il*. 3.99-100, 13.622-623, 17.92). Once war has actually broken out, moreover, the heroes' obsessive pursuit of their own τιμή and κλέος – having caused the war in the first place – now proceeds to inflict even greater damage on society.

We have already seen that Sarpedon defines the social prerogatives awarded to the heroes in terms of the duties and responsibilities that accompany such honour:

> Γλαῦκε τί ἢ δὴ νῶϊ τετιμήμεσθα μάλιστα
> ἕδρῃ τε κρέασίν τε ἰδὲ πλείοις δεπάεσσιν
> ἐν Λυκίῃ, πάντες δὲ θεοὺς ὣς εἰσορόωσι,
> καὶ τέμενος νεμόμεσθα μέγα Ξάνθοιο παρ' ὄχθας
> καλὸν φυταλιῆς καὶ ἀρούρης πυροφόροιο;
> τὼ νῦν χρὴ Λυκίοισι μέτα πρώτοισιν ἐόντας
> ἑστάμεν ἠδὲ μάχης καυστείρης ἀντιβολῆσαι,
> ὄφρά τις ὧδ' εἴπῃ Λυκίων πύκα θωρηκτάων·
> οὐ μὰν ἀκλεέες Λυκίην κάτα κοιρανέουσιν
> ἡμέτεροι βασιλῆες, ἔδουσί τε πίονα μῆλα
> οἶνόν τ' ἔξαιτον μελιηδέα· ἀλλ' ἄρα καὶ ἲς
> ἐσθλή, ἐπεὶ Λυκίοισι μέτα πρώτοισι μάχονται.

> Glaukos, why is it you and I are honoured before others with pride of place, the choice meats and the filled wine cups in Lykia, and all men look on us as if we were immortals, and we are appointed a great piece of land by the banks of Xanthos, good land, orchard and vineyard, and ploughland for the planting of wheat? Therefore it is our duty in the forefront of the Lykians to take our stand, and bear our part of the blazing of battle, so that a man of the close-armoured Lykians may say of us: 'Indeed, these are no ignoble men who are lords of Lykia, these kings [βασιλῆες] of ours, who feed upon the fat sheep appointed and drink the exquisite sweet wine, since indeed there is strength of valour [ἐσθλή] in them, since they fight in the forefront of the Lykians.'[454]

Homeric society is organised around the reciprocal concepts of privilege and obligation. The heroes are the leaders of Homeric society and are 'honoured' with tokens of social prestige such as τιμή and κλέος. In return for this privilege, they have a 'duty' towards wider society: to ensure and protect the well-being of their people. In the Homeric poems leaders are typically referred to as ποιμένες λαῶν, 'shepherds of the people'.[455] This phrase presents us with "a model of social interaction" and "was regarded [as] a standard example of metaphorical language in classical antiquity".[456]

The role of a shepherd is to guarantee the safety of his flock. In the Homeric poems, however, we find many references to shepherds who fail to perform this duty.[457] For example:

> ὡς δὲ λύκοι ἄρνεσσιν ἐπέχραον ἢ ἐρίφοισι
> σίνται ὑπ' ἐκ μήλων αἱρεύμενοι, αἵ τ' ἐν ὄρεσσι
> ποιμένος ἀφραδίῃσι διέτμαγεν· οἳ δὲ ἰδόντες
> αἶψα διαρπάζουσιν ἀνάλκιδα θυμὸν ἐχούσας·
> ὣς Δαναοὶ Τρώεσσιν ἐπέχραον·

> They as wolves make havoc among lambs or young goats in their fury, catching them out of their flocks, when the sheep separate in the mountains through the thoughtlessness of the shepherd [ποιμήν], and the wolves seeing

[454] Hom. *Il*. 12.310-321; Lattimore [trans.].

[455] Hom. *Il*. 1.263, 2.243, 4.296, 5.144, 6.214, 9.81, 10.3, 11.92, 13.411, 14.22, 17.348, 19.386, 22.277; Lattimore [trans.]. *Od*. 3.156, 3.469, 4.24, 4.532, 14.497, 15.151, 17.109, 18.70, 20.106, 24.368, 24.456; Rieu [trans.].

[456] Haubold (2000) 17.

[457] Hom. *Od*. 17.246; Rieu [trans.]. *Il*. 5.136-140, 17.61-69, 18.161-164, 18.525-529; Lattimore [trans.].

> them suddenly snatch them away, and they have no heart for fighting; so the Danaans ravaged the Trojans…[458]

The shepherd, through his own ‘thoughtlessness’, loses his flock. In another example he is so incompetent that he does not even ‘know’ how to perform his duty:

> αὐτὰρ ὅ γ' ὥς τε λέων ὀλοόφρων βουσὶν ἐπελθών,
> αἵ ῥά τ' ἐν εἱαμενῇ ἕλεος μεγάλοιο νέμονται
> μυρίαι, ἐν δέ τε τῇσι νομεὺς οὔ πω σάφα εἰδὼς
> θηρὶ μαχέσσασθαι ἕλικος βοὸς ἀμφὶ φονῇσιν·
> ἤτοι ὃ μὲν πρώτῃσι καὶ ὑστατίῃσι βόεσσιν
> αἰὲν ὁμοστιχάει, ὃ δέ τ' ἐν μέσσῃσιν ὀρούσας
> βοῦν ἔδει, αἳ δέ τε πᾶσαι ὑπέτρεσαν· ὣς τότ' Ἀχαιοὶ
> θεσπεσίως ἐφόβηθεν…

> Hektor came on against them, as a murderous lion on cattle who in the low-lying meadow of a great marsh pasture by hundreds, and among them a herdsmen [νομεύς] who does not quite know how to fight a wild beast off from killing a horn-curved ox, and keeps pace with the first and last of the cattle always, but the lion making his spring at the middle eats an ox as the rest stampede; so now the Achaians fled in unearthly terror…[459]

“Failure of the shepherd,” Haubold argues, “is the rule” rather than “the exception” in the Homeric poems. And “if some passages” point out that “things would be even worse” without the shepherd (*Il*. 10.485-488, 11.548-555, 15.323-326, 17.109-112), this only serves to “strengthen our impression that the shepherd… stands at the centre of a paradox: he is indispensable and yet ineffective.”[460]

The metaphor ‘shepherd of the people’ implies certain responsibilities: the leader of the people is expected to ensure the well-being of his group in the same way that a shepherd is expected to guarantee the well-being of his flock. He must grant stability to the social world by making certain that his people, λαοί, are safe. The problem, however, is that the leaders of Homeric society, just like their metaphorical counterparts, “regularly fail to look after their people: in fact, they are consistently held responsible for destroying

[458] Hom. *Il*. 16.352-356; Lattimore [trans.].
[459] ibid. 15.630-637.
[460] Haubold (2000) 20.

them."[461] This, according to Hektor, is precisely what Paris is in danger of doing when he willingly withdraws from the battle:

> τὸν δ' Ἕκτωρ νείκεσσεν ἰδὼν αἰσχροῖς ἐπέεσσι·
> δαιμόνι' οὐ μὲν καλὰ χόλον τόνδ' ἔνθεο θυμῷ,
> λαοὶ μὲν φθινύθουσι περὶ πτόλιν αἰπύ τε τεῖχος
> μαρνάμενοι· σέο δ' εἵνεκ' ἀϋτή τε πτόλεμός τε
> ἄστυ τόδ' ἀμφιδέδηε· σὺ δ' ἂν μαχέσαιο καὶ ἄλλῳ,
> ὅν τινά που μεθιέντα ἴδοις στυγεροῦ πολέμοιο.
> ἀλλ' ἄνα μὴ τάχα ἄστυ πυρὸς δηΐοιο θέρηται.

> But Hektor saw him, and in words of shame [αἰσχρόν] rebuked him: 'Strange man! It is not fair [οὐ καλά] to keep in your heart this coldness. The people [λαοί] are dying around the city and around the steep wall as they fight hard; and it is for you that this war with its clamour has fired up about our city. You yourself would fight with another whom you saw anywhere hanging back from the hateful encounter. Up then, to keep our town from burning at once in the hot fire.'[462]

The pervasiveness of this tendency – for the shepherd not to fulfill his obligation to ensure the safety of his λαοί – is emphasised by the fact that it "is reflected in one of the largest and most flexible formulaic clusters of the type λαός + verb: 'he destroyed the people'" (*Il*. 2.115, 5.643, 6.223, 9.22, 22.107, *Od*. 3.304, 7.60, 9.265, 11.500, 24.428).[463]

Agamemnon

As the commander-in-chief of the Greek army, Agamemnon is the foremost 'shepherd of the people' on the Greek side.[464] His status as a pre-eminent hero is guaranteed, as we have seen, by his position as 'leader' of by far 'the most λαοί'.[465] As such, Agamemnon is under the greatest obligation to protect those λαοί. His attitude toward this obligation is made clear from the outset. Chryses comes to the Achaian camp to appeal for the ransom of his daughter whom the Achaians had taken captive on one on their many plundering forays:

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[461] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 108.
[462] Hom. *Il*. 6.325-331; Lattimore [trans.].
[463] Haubold (2000) 28-29.
[464] Hom. *Il*. 2.243, 10.3, 11.187, 11.202, 14.22; Lattimore [trans.].
[465] ibid. 2.576-580.

Ἀτρεΐδαι τε καὶ ἄλλοι ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί,
ὑμῖν μὲν θεοὶ δοῖεν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες
ἐκπέρσαι Πριάμοιο πόλιν, εὖ δ' οἴκαδ' ἱκέσθαι·
παῖδα δ' ἐμοὶ λύσαιτε φίλην, τὰ δ' ἄποινα δέχεσθαι,
ἁζόμενοι Διὸς υἱὸν ἑκηβόλον Ἀπόλλωνα.

> Sons of Atreus and you other strong-greaved Achaians, to you may the gods grant who have their homes on Olympos Priam's city to be plundered and a fair homecoming thereafter, but may you give me back my own daughter and take the ransom, giving honour to Zeus' son who strikes from afar, Apollo.[466]

Chryses is a priest of Apollo. If the Achaians 'honour' the god by respecting the wishes of his priest, Apollo, by implication, will support them in their quest to sack Troy and sail home safely. 'All the rest of the Achaians' accept this offer gladly and cry out 'in favour that the priest be respected and the shining ransom be taken'.[467] But this proposal of divine assistance, since it entails the loss of his apportioned γέρας, fails to please 'the heart of Atreus' son Agamemnon' (*Il.* 1.24): he disregards the united will of 'all the rest of the Achaians' and rejects Chryses' appeal.

Instead of honouring his responsibilities as commander of the Greek army and furthering the progress of the Achaians in their war against Troy, Agamemnon's imprudent concern with personal τιμή places the success of their communal enterprise in serious jeopardy. When Chryses prays to Apollo for help ('let your arrows make the Danaans pay for my tears shed'), the god willingly complies and sends a 'foul pestilence' against the whole body of the Achaians:

δεινὴ δὲ κλαγγὴ γένετ' ἀργυρέοιο βιοῖο·
οὐρῆας μὲν πρῶτον ἐπῴχετο καὶ κύνας ἀργούς,
αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' αὐτοῖσι βέλος ἐχεπευκὲς ἐφιεὶς
βάλλ'· αἰεὶ δὲ πυραὶ νεκύων καίοντο θαμειαί.

> Terrible was the clash that rose from the bow of silver. First he went after the mules and the circling hounds, then let go a tearing arrow against the men themselves and struck them. The corpse fires burned everywhere and did not stop burning.[468]

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[466] Hom. *Il.* 1.17-21; Lattimore [trans.].
[467] ibid. 1.22-23.
[468] ibid. 1.42, 1.10, 1.49-52.

It is Agamemnon, says the seer Kalchas, who is undeniably to blame:

> ἀλλ' ἕνεκ' ἀρητῆρος ὃν ἠτίμησ' Ἀγαμέμνων,
> οὐδ' ἀπέλυσε θύγατρα καὶ οὐκ ἀπεδέξατ' ἄποινα,
> τοὔνεκ' ἄρ' ἄλγε' ἔδωκεν ἑκηβόλος…

> … but for the sake of his priest whom Agamemnon dishonoured [ἀτιμάζειν] and would not give him back his daughter nor accept the ransom. Therefore the archer sent griefs [ἄλγεα] against us…[469]

Instead of honouring Apollo, winning his favour, and thus benefiting his λαοί, Agamemnon provokes Apollo's wrath, μῆνις, and subjects his λαοί to suffering, ἄλγεα, and death.[470] Agamemnon – for the sake of his own τιμή – damages the common good.

He denies all responsibility and attacks Kalchas' authority as a seer: he calls him a 'seer of evil' and says that he has never 'said' or 'accomplished' anything ἐσθλόν for the Achaians.[471] He then proceeds to illustrate how fine a leader he actually is. The girl Chryseis, he says, is an excellent prize: she is superior in 'build', 'stature', 'wit' and 'accomplishment', and he 'wish[es] greatly to have her in [his] own house'.[472] Nevertheless, he is 'willing to give her back', if that is what will prove 'best', ἀμείνων, for the Achaians:

> βούλομ' ἐγὼ λαὸν σῶν ἔμμεναι ἢ ἀπολέσθαι·

> I myself desire that my people be safe, not perish.[473]

His main concern, he says, is for the safety of his λαός. We are not even given a chance to ponder the extent of his sincerity. His very next words are:

> αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γέρας αὐτίχ' ἑτοιμάσατ' ὄφρα μὴ οἶος
> Ἀργείων ἀγέραστος ἔω, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ἔοικε·
> λεύσσετε γὰρ τό γε πάντες ὅ μοι γέρας ἔρχεται ἄλλῃ.

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[469] Hom. *Il.* 1.94-96; Lattimore [trans.].
[470] ibid. 1.75, 1.96, 1.10.
[471] ibid. 1.106-108.
[472] ibid. 1.112-115.
[473] ibid. 1.116, 1.117.

> Find me then some prize that shall be my own, lest I only among the Argives go without, since that were unfitting; you are all witnesses to this thing, that my prize goes elsewhere.[474]

Far from displaying any concern for his λαοί, Agamemnon reveals a complete lack of respect for them by flouting the conventions of Homeric society and demanding that the Achaians relinquish their own fairly-apportioned share of the booty. If they refuse to submit to this demand willingly, he will exercise his authority as supreme commander of the army and seize it by force:

> ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν δώσουσι γέρας μεγάθυμοι Ἀχαιοὶ
> ἄρσαντες κατὰ θυμὸν ὅπως ἀντάξιον ἔσται·
> εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώωσιν ἐγὼ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἕλωμαι
> ἢ τεὸν ἢ Αἴαντος ἰὼν γέρας, ἢ Ὀδυσῆος
> ἄξω ἑλών· ὃ δέ κεν κεχολώσεται ὅν κεν ἵκωμαι.

> Either the great-hearted Achaians shall give me a new prize chosen according to my desire to atone for the girl lost, or else if they will not give me one I myself shall take her, your own prize, or that of Aias, or that of Odysseus, going myself in person; and he whom I visit will be bitter.[475]

If this "overinsistence on being paid due honour" is an attempt to assert his own identity as commander of the army and thus promote social cohesion by further obliging him to his followers, it fails miserably. His excessive self-assertion only serves to "disaffect" an essential member of his group:[476] Achilleus – the very man 'who stands as a great bulwark, μέγα ἕρκος, of battle over all the Achaians' – condemns Agamemnon's behaviour as both 'unbecoming' and 'outrageous' and withdraws from the war.[477]

When Agamemnon sends his two heralds, Talthybios and Eurybates, to go and fetch 'Briseis of the fair cheeks' from Achilleus' shelter, Achilleus assures them that Agamemnon's behaviour will have ruinous consequences for the Achaian λαοί:

> τὼ δ' αὐτὼ μάρτυροι ἔστων
> πρός τε θεῶν μακάρων πρός τε θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων

[474] Hom. *Il*. 1.118-120; Lattimore [trans.].
[475] ibid. 1.135-139.
[476] Zanker (1994) 57.
[477] Hom. *Il*. 1.283-284, 1.126, 1.203; Lattimore [trans.].

> καὶ πρὸς τοῦ βασιλῆος ἀπηνέος εἴ ποτε δ' αὖτε
> χρειὼ ἐμεῖο γένηται ἀεικέα λοιγὸν ἀμῦναι
> τοῖς ἄλλοις· ἦ γὰρ ὅ γ' ὀλοιῇσι φρεσὶ θύει,
> οὐδέ τι οἶδε νοῆσαι ἅμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω,
> ὅππως οἱ παρὰ νηυσὶ σόοι μαχέοιντο Ἀχαιοί.

> Yet let them be witnesses in the sight of the blessed gods, in the sight of mortal men, and of this cruel king, if ever hereafter there shall be need of me to beat back [ἀμύνειν] the shameful destruction [ἀεικής λοιγός] from the rest. For surely in ruinous heart he makes sacrifice and has not wit enough to look behind and before him that the Achaians' fighting beside their ships shall not perish.[478]

In his obsession with τιμή, "Agamemnon clearly lacks the foresight essential to a leader in his position":[479] he lacks the 'wit… to look behind and before him' and so ensure the well-being of his λαοί. His first mistake ended in the 'shameful plague', as a result of which many of his λαοί 'perished' (*Il*. 1.97, 1.10); his second now promises to lead all the rest of his λαοί to even greater suffering and disaster. That Agamemnon's seizure of Briseis was highly irresponsible in terms of his obligations as a 'shepherd of the people' is beyond doubt. When the Achaians are hard-pressed by the Trojans in Book 13, Poseidon, in the guise of Kalchas, urges the discouraged Achaians not 'to go slack from the sorrowful fighting', even though it is 'utterly true' that the Trojans' present success in battle is due to 'the weakness, κακότης μεθημοσύνη, of [their] leader… the son of Atreus the hero wide-powerful Agamemnon', who 'is guilty, αἴτιος, because he did dishonour, ἀπατιμᾶν, to the swift-footed son of Peleus'.[480] Indeed, Agamemnon himself admits that he is to blame for destroying "the co-operation that would have achieved more immediate results in the war" when he describes his quarrel with Achilleus over τιμή as ἄπρακτος ἔρις, the type of strife "which take[s] away the fulfillment of one's purpose," and says that he 'was the first to be angry', χαλεπαίνειν, in their 'violent encounter' (*Il*. 2.376-378).[481]

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[478] Hom. *Il*. 1.338-344; Lattimore [trans.].
[479] Latacz (1996) 102.
[480] Hom. *Il*. 13.97, 13.108, 13.111-113; Lattimore [trans.].
[481] Zanker (1994) 59.

As part of his plan to honour Achilleus, Zeus decides to send Agamemnon a deceptive dream:

> βάσκ' ἴθι οὖλε ὄνειρε θοὰς ἐπὶ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν·
> ἐλθὼν ἐς κλισίην Ἀγαμέμνονος Ἀτρεΐδαο
> πάντα μάλ' ἀτρεκέως ἀγορευέμεν ὡς ἐπιτέλλω·
> θωρῆξαί ἑ κέλευε κάρη κομόωντας Ἀχαιοὺς
> πανσυδίῃ· νῦν γάρ κεν ἕλοι πόλιν εὐρυάγυιαν
> Τρώων·

> Go forth, evil Dream, beside the swift ships of the Achaians. Make your way to the shelter of Atreus' son Agamemnon; speak to him in words exactly as I command you. Bid him arm the flowing-haired Achaians for battle in all haste; since now he might take the wide-wayed city of the Trojans.[482]

The dream comes to Agamemnon in the guise of Nestor. Before it even carries out Zeus' 'command' to deliver the message, however, it rebukes Agamemnon for failing to live up to his obligations as a leader:

> εὕδεις Ἀτρέος υἱὲ δαΐφρονος ἱπποδάμοιο·
> οὐ χρὴ παννύχιον εὕδειν βουληφόρον ἄνδρα
> ᾧ λαοί τ' ἐπιτετράφαται καὶ τόσσα μέμηλε·

> Son of wise Atreus breaker of horses, are you sleeping? He should not sleep night long who is a man burdened with counsels and responsibility for a people and cares so numerous.[483]

Agamemnon's social standing as πολλὸν ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν is based on his position as Argive king, organiser of the expedition against Troy, and leader of 'the most λαοί'.[484] While this position brings τιμή and κλέος it also, as the dreams points out, entails a great 'responsibility' toward the λαοί. Agamemnon's attitude toward this responsibility is made clear: he sleeps all 'night long'. Having cast doubt on Agamemnon's sense of responsibility concerning the 'burden[s]' and 'cares' of a leader, it delivers the message.

In response to the dream, Agamemnon summons the assembly to muster the army, deciding that the 'right way' to go about things is to first 'make trial' of his troops: he

[482] Hom. *Il*. 2.8-13; Lattimore [trans.].
[483] ibid. 2.23-25.
[484] ibid. 1.91, 2.580.

tells the army that Zeus has deceived him, that the Achaians will no longer be able ‘to sack the well-founded stronghold of Ilion’, and that they should ‘flee in their benched vessels’.[485] This test of loyalty is yet another ploy to win more honour; but his plan “backfires”. Instead of uniting his λαοί and “developing [a common] interest in the capture of Troy,”[486] Agamemnon causes disruption and dissolution:

> Ὣς φάτο, τοῖσι δὲ θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ὄρινε
> πᾶσι μετὰ πληθὺν ὅσοι οὐ βουλῆς ἐπάκουσαν·
> κινήθη δ' ἀγορὴ φὴ κύματα μακρὰ θαλάσσης…
>
> … ὣς τῶν πᾶσ' ἀγορὴ κινήθη· τοὶ δ' ἀλαλητῷ
> νῆας ἔπ' ἐσσεύοντο, ποδῶν δ' ὑπένερθε κονίη
> ἵστατ' ἀειρομένη· τοὶ δ' ἀλλήλοισι κέλευον
> ἅπτεσθαι νηῶν ἠδ' ἑλκέμεν εἰς ἅλα δῖαν...
>
> So he spoke, and stirred up the passion in the breast of all those who were within that multitude and listened to his counsel. And the assembly was shaken as on the sea the big waves… so all of that assembly was shaken, and the men in tumult swept to the ships, and underneath their feet the dust lifted and rose high, and the men were all shouting to one another to lay hold on the ships and drag them down to the bright sea.[487]

Having caused this chaos through his insistence on a public display of honour, Agamemnon is powerless to set things right again. He stands by helplessly as Odysseus, with the help of Athena, ‘marshal[s] the army’ and ‘enjoin[s] the λαός to silence’.[488]

Agamemnon is finally forced to admit his ‘madness’ at the end of the first day of fighting. Contrary to the Zeus’ promise, the Greeks have not been able to ‘take Priam’s city’; instead, the Trojans have gained the upper hand, driven the Greeks back to their ships and set up an encampment on the plain, certain that they will be able to ‘swe[ep]’ the Greeks ‘into destruction’ ‘at dawn’ the next day (*Il*. 9.115, 2.37, 8.525-527). Agamemnon bursts into tears:

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[485] Hom. *Il*. 2.73, 2.133, 2.74; Lattimore [trans.].
[486] Haubold (2000) 58, 59.
[487] Hom. *Il*. 2.142-144, 2.149-152; Lattimore [trans.].
[488] ibid. 2.207, 2.278-280.

ὦ φίλοι Ἀργείων ἡγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες
Ζεύς με μέγα Κρονίδης ἄτῃ ἐνέδησε βαρείῃ
σχέτλιος, ὃς τότε μέν μοι ὑπέσχετο καὶ κατένευσεν
Ἴλιον ἐκπέρσαντ' εὐτείχεον ἀπονέεσθαι,
νῦν δὲ κακὴν ἀπάτην βουλεύσατο, καί με κελεύει
δυσκλέα Ἄργος ἱκέσθαι, ἐπεὶ πολὺν ὤλεσα λαόν.

> Friends, who are leaders of the Argives and keep their counsel: Zeus son of Kronos has caught me badly in bitter futility. He is hard: who before this time promised me and consented that I might sack strong-walled Ilion and sail homeward. Now he has devised a vile deception and bids me go back to Argos in dishonour [δυσκλεής] having lost [ὀλλύναι] many of my people.[489]

In his concern for his own τιμή, Agamemnon insulted the very man who would have enabled him to 'sack strong-walled Ilion and sail homeward'. Zeus has now recognised Achilleus' plea for revenge and 'smote strongly the host of the Achaians'.[490] So instead of protecting his λαός, Agamemnon has destroyed them. But this is not the reason why he is 'stricken at heart with great sorrow'.[491] Agamemnon is mortified, not because he has 'lost many people', but because he will incur 'dishonour', or infamy, δυσκλεής, for having done so. In a desperate attempt to prevent this from happening, he agrees to make amends with Achilleus and to make restitution in the form of 'gifts in abundance'.[492] He then goes on to make a condition:

καί μοι ὑποστήτω ὅσσον βασιλεύτερός εἰμι
ἠδ' ὅσσον γενεῇ προγενέστερος εὔχομαι εἶναι.

> And let him yield place to me, inasmuch as I am the kinglier [βασιλεύτερός] and inasmuch as I can call myself born the elder.[493]

If Achilleus 'changes from his χόλος' and reunites with Agamemnon, the λαοί will be safe from the 'strength of manslaughtering Hektor' and the Achaians will go on to accomplish their objective and win the war.[494] This is not enough for Agamemnon: he insists that Achilleus must 'yield' and admit that *he* is the greater and more powerful,

[489] Hom. *Il*. 9.17-22; Lattimore [trans.].
[490] ibid. 16.237.
[491] ibid. 9.9.
[492] ibid. 9.120.
[493] ibid. 9.160-161.
[494] ibid. 9.157, 9.351.

βασιλεύτερός, hero. It seems that Agamemnon cannot help but allow his need as πολλὸν ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν to demand τιμή 'beyond all' to take precedence over his responsibility as a ποιμένα λαῶν to do what is best for his flock.[495]

Achilleus

Achilleus' status as a pre-eminent hero is guaranteed by his position as the greatest Achaian warrior. Although he does not bear the same burden as Agamemnon, he is still under a certain amount of responsibility toward the Achaian λαοί: he is, after all, the only hero who is capable of warding off, ἀμύνειν, shameful destruction, ἀεικής λοιγός, from the Achaians.[496] But when his τιμή is insulted and his γέρας is stripped away, Achilleus asserts his identity as the hero 'who stands as a great bulwark of battle over all the Achaians' not to protect the λαοί, but to avenge himself on Agamemnon:

> ὃ δέ τοι μέγας ἔσσεται ὅρκος·
> ἦ ποτ' Ἀχιλλῆος ποθὴ ἵξεται υἷας Ἀχαιῶν
> σύμπαντας· τότε δ' οὔ τι δυνήσεαι ἀχνύμενός περ
> χραισμεῖν, εὖτ' ἂν πολλοὶ ὑφ' Ἕκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο
> θνήσκοντες πίπτωσι· σὺ δ' ἔνδοθι θυμὸν ἀμύξεις
> χωόμενος ὅ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισας.

> And this shall be a great oath before you: some day longing for Achilleus will come to the sons of the Achaians, all of them. Then stricken at heart though you be, you will be able to do nothing, when in their numbers before man-slaughtering Hektor they drop and die. And then you will eat out the heart within you in sorrow, that you did no honour to the best of the Achaians.[497]

Agamemnon will be forced to admit just how worthy of the title ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν Achilleus actually is when, without Achilleus on the battlefield, thousands of the Achaian λαοί 'drop and die' 'before man-slaughtering Hektor' and Agamemnon can 'do nothing' to prevent it.

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[495] Hom. *Il*. 1.91, 9.38, 2.243; Lattimore [trans.].
[496] ibid. 1.341-342, 9.251, 16.32, 18.450.
[497] ibid. 1.283-284, 1.239-244.

Whereas “the anger of heroes… in the world of epic poetry… is normally directed against the enemy and spurs the heroes to mementous deeds,” Achilleus’ anger is “accursed”: “it reveals itself not as a positive, praiseworthy thing but as a negative force”. The normal “vector of action is thus reversed”;[498] Achilleus, as is announced in the very first lines of the *Iliad*, directs his anger toward his own λαοί:

> Μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος
> οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρί' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,
> πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν
> ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἑλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν
> οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή,
> ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε
> Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

> Sing, goddess, the anger [μῆνις] of Peleus’ son Achilleus and its devastation, which put pains [ἄλγεα] thousandfold upon the Achaians, hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls of heroes, but gave their bodies to be the delicate feasting of dogs, of all birds, and the will of Zeus was accomplished since that time when first there stood in division of conflict Atreus’ son the lord of men and brilliant Achilleus.[499]

Just as Apollo’s μῆνις resulted in great suffering, ἄλγεα, for the Achaians in the form of a plague (*Il*. 1.75, 1.96), so too does Achilleus, in his μῆνις, inflict ‘ἄλγεα thousandfold’ on his own λαοί.

When Agamemnon seizes Briseis, Achilleus implores his divine mother, Thetis, to ‘protect [her] own son’ in his hour of need by exercising her influence over Zeus:

> τῶν νῦν μιν μνήσασα παρέζεο καὶ λαβὲ γούνων
> αἴ κέν πως ἐθέλῃσιν ἐπὶ Τρώεσσιν ἀρῆξαι,
> τοὺς δὲ κατὰ πρύμνας τε καὶ ἀμφ' ἅλα ἔλσαι Ἀχαιοὺς
> κτεινομένους, ἵνα πάντες ἐπαύρωνται βασιλῆος,
> γνῷ δὲ καὶ Ἀτρεΐδης εὐρὺ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
> ἣν ἄτην ὅ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισεν.

> Sit beside him and take his knees and remind him of these things now, if perhaps he might be willing to help the Trojans, and pin the Achaians back

[498] Latacz (1996) 78.
[499] Hom. *Il*. 1.1-7; Lattimore [trans.].

> against the ships and the water, dying, so that thus they may all have profit
> of their own king, that Atreus' son wide-ruling Agamemnon may recognise
> his madness [ἄτη], that he did no honour to the best of the Achaians.[500]

Humiliated and dishonoured, 'the best of the Achaians' resorts to treason: he asks that Zeus 'help' his enemy, the Trojans, while the Greeks, his own comrades, lie 'dying' beside 'the ships and the water'. Agamemnon's insult cuts so deeply into the conception Achilleus has of his own identity and worth that he feels compelled to reassert his status as ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν by 'hurl[ing]' uncounted hosts of his own comrades to death – 'to be the delicate feasting of dogs, of all birds' – so that Agamemnon will finally be forced to 'recognise' how necessary Achilleus has been to his good fortune and what 'madness', ἄτη, it was to insult him in front of the Achaian army.[501] In the quest to assert his own identity and redress what he perceives as the great injury done to his τιμή, Achilleus uses his influence with the gods and his position as the paramount warrior – not to act as a 'light of safety' to the Achaian λαοί – but to ensure their destruction.[502] This "seems to be recapitulated" in his very name, as Leonard Palmer suggests "that Akhil(l)eús is a shortened form of Akhí-lāúos, meaning 'whose *lāós* (host of fighting men) has *ákhos* (grief)'".[503]

Thetis' petition for Zeus to 'give honour' to Achilleus 'beyond all other mortals' (*Il.* 1.505-506) results in "the ever-worsening plight of the whole Achaian army".[504] The Achaians, 'stricken with grief that passes endurance', realise that they cannot survive without Achilleus and send out an embassy to 'persuade him with words of supplication and with the gifts of friendship' to rejoin the war effort.[505] The ambassadors make their way to Achilleus' shelter and relate the dire circumstances facing the Achaians: Odysseus tells Achilleus that the Trojans, along 'with their far-renowned companions', have now 'set up an encampment close by the ships and the rampart' and 'think no longer of being held but rather to drive in upon the black ships'; that Hektor, 'in the huge pride of his strength', 'rages irresistibly' and 'threatens to shear the uttermost horns from the ship-

[500] Hom. *Il.* 1.393, 1.407-412; Lattimore [trans.].
[501] ibid. 1.3-5.
[502] ibid. 18.102.
[503] Nagy (1979) 69.
[504] Latacz (1996) 101.
[505] Hom. *Il.* 9.3, 9.112-113; Lattimore [trans.].

sterns, to light the ships themselves with ravening fire, and to cut down the Achaians themselves as they stir from the smoke beside them'; and that, unless Achilleus 'put[s] on [his] war strength, ἀλκή' and 'rescue[s] the afflicted sons of the Achaians from the Trojan onslaught', the army will be 'destin[ed], αἴσιμος, to die in Troy, far away from horse-pasturing Argos'.[506] In his μῆνις over the injury to his τιμή, however, Achilleus can spare no thought for the suffering of the λαοί 'who are afflicted along the host'; he rejects their appeal for 'pity' and says that he will not be persuaded to rejoin the battle:

> ἀλλ' ὑμεῖς μὲν ἰόντες ἀριστήεσσιν Ἀχαιῶν
> ἀγγελίην ἀπόφασθε· τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ γερόντων·
> ὄφρ' ἄλλην φράζωνται ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μῆτιν ἀμείνω,
> ἥ κέ σφιν νῆάς τε σαῷ καὶ λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν
> νηυσὶν ἔπι γλαφυρῇς, ἐπεὶ οὔ σφισιν ἥδέ γ' ἑτοίμη
> ἣν νῦν ἐφράσσαντο ἐμεῦ ἀπομηνίσαντος·

> Do you go back therefore to the great men of the Achaians, and take them this message, since such is the privilege of the princes: that they think out in their minds some other scheme [μῆτις] that is better [ἀμείνων], which might rescue their ships, and the people of the Achaians who man the hollow ships, since this plan will not work for them which they thought of by reason of my anger.[507]

The situation of the Achaian λαός, dismal as it may be, is not his problem; the 'great men of the Achaians' will have to find 'some other' way to save the army.

But there is no 'other scheme' capable of acting as a substitute for Achilleus, and his absence from the battlefield is keenly felt by both sides: in Book 14 Poseidon tries to encourage the disheartened Achaians by admitting that the Trojans' present 'glory', κῦδος, is based on the fact that Achilleus 'in the anger of his heart stays still among the hollow ships', but says that 'there will not be too much longing for him' if the rest of the Achaians can manage to 'stir' themselves 'to stand by', ἀμύνειν, one another (*Il*. 14.365-369); and in Book 13 Poulydamas warns Hektor that their current 'power', κράτος, on the battlefield is only due to the fact that Achilleus, 'a man insatiate of fighting', is not present and that his return would allow the Achaians to 'wreak… requital', χρέος, on the

[506] Hom. *Il*. 9.230-248; Lattimore [trans.].
[507] ibid. 9.301-302, 9.421-426.

Trojan army (*Il*. 13.743-747). One by one, all the great Achaian leaders are wounded: Agamemnon, Diomedes, Odysseus, as well as Eurypylos and Machaon.[508] This "would be the point [for Achilleus] to… step in once more; but he does not."[509] He says that he will only agree to save the Achaians when they come crawling back to beg his forgiveness:

> δῖε Μενοιτιάδη τῷ ἐμῷ κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ
> νῦν ὀΐω περὶ γούνατ' ἐμὰ στήσεσθαι Ἀχαιοὺς
> λισσομένους· χρειὼ γὰρ ἱκάνεται οὐκέτ' ἀνεκτός.

> Son of Menoitios, you who delight my heart, o great one, now I think the Achaians will come to my knees and stay there in supplication, for a need past endurance has come to them.[510]

Though Agamemnon is generally believed to be responsible for Achilleus' withdrawal from the army, "it is equally felt that [Achilleus] is behaving wrongly" by refusing to rejoin the war and defend the Achaian λαοί.[511] Poseidon, 'in the likeness of an old man', tells Agamemnon that Achilleus' 'baleful heart', ὀλοός κῆρ, 'must be happy as he stares at the slaughter of the Achaians and their defeat', since 'there is no heart in him, not even a little'.[512] Nestor tells Patroklos that though Achilleus is 'brave', ἐσθλός, he fails to honour the responsibilities and demands that accompany this virtue, since he 'cares nothing for the Danaans nor pities them'.[513] And Patroklos weeps for the 'grief' that 'has fallen upon the Achaians', cursing Achilleus for his αἰναρέτης, "dreaded ἀρετή, because later generations will not derive any benefit" from Achilleus' prowess if he refuses to 'beat aside', ἀμύνειν, 'shameful destruction', ἀεικής λοιγός, from the Achaian λαοί (*Il*. 16.22, 16.31-32). Patroklos feels that "Achilleus has insisted on the potency of his ἀρετή to the point at which it has become a negative thing, driven by 'anger', χόλος, so that he has become inhumanly 'pitiless' (*Il*. 16.30, 16.33-35)".[514]

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[508] Hom. *Il*. 11.655-663; Lattimore [trans.].
[509] Haubold (2000) 69.
[510] Hom. *Il*. 11.608-610; Lattimore [trans.].
[511] Zanker (1994) 93.
[512] Hom. *Il*. 14.136-141; Lattimore [trans.].
[513] ibid. 11.664-665.
[514] Zanker (1994) 94.

Similarly, when Nestor tells Patroklos about the 'quarrel' between the Pylians and the Epeians (*Il*. 11.671), this "idealised vision of social action among the λαός is held up against Achilleus' own highly problematic one". "References to the λαός appear at [the] beginning and end" of Nestor's war, "providing the frame of reference within which martial activity is envisaged" (*Il*. 11.715-716, 11.758): "no-one steps out of line" when the 'host' is 'assembled' to arm for battle (*Il*. 11.716-717); when "Neleus wrongly tries to prevent his son from joining" 'the work of warfare', "Nestor… knows better" and ignores his advice (*Il*. 16.719); "indeed, Nestor is in harmony with… the people from the beginning to the end of the raid… he arms with everyone else, and stops [fighting] as soon as Athena stops the λαός."[515] For fighting alongside his λαοί and helping to secure their victory, Nestor was rewarded with godlike τιμή and κλέος – 'and all glorified Zeus among the gods, but among men Nestor' (*Il*. 11.761); for obstinately refusing to save his own λαοί in their time of need, Achilleus will suffer the reverse:

> αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς
> οἶος τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀπονήσεται· ἦ τέ μιν οἴω
> πολλὰ μετακλαύσεσθαι ἐπεί κ' ἀπὸ λαὸς ὄληται.

> But Achilleus will enjoy his own valour [ἀρετή] in loneliness, though I think he will weep much, too late, when his people are perished from him.[516]

The implication is clear: Achilleus, whose father urged him 'to be always best, ἀριστεύειν, and pre-eminent beyond all others' (*Il*. 11.783-784), "will pay for making his point".[517]

With most of their leaders wounded, the Achaians are no longer able to defend themselves. Homer compares their destruction at the hands of the Trojans to that of 'a herd of cattle or big flock of sheep… when no herdsman is by':

> οἳ δ' ὥς τ' ἠὲ βοῶν ἀγέλην ἢ πῶϋ μέγ' οἰῶν
> θῆρε δύω κλονέωσι μελαίνης νυκτὸς ἀμολγῷ
> ἐλθόντ' ἐξαπίνης σημάντορος οὐ παρεόντος,
> ὣς ἐφόβηθεν Ἀχαιοὶ ἀνάλκιδες· ἐν γὰρ Ἀπόλλων

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[515] Haubold (2000) 69-70.
[516] Hom. *Il*. 11.762-764; Lattimore [trans.].
[517] Haubold (2000) 72.

ἧκε φόβον, Τρωσὶν δὲ καὶ Ἕκτορι κῦδος ὄπαζεν.

> And they, as when in the dim of the black night two wild beasts stampede a herd of cattle or big flock of sheep, falling suddenly upon them, when no herdsman [σημάντωρ] is by, the Achaians fled so in their weakness and terror, since Apollo drove terror upon them, and gave the glory to the Trojans and Hektor.[518]

The Achaians, as Eurypylos points out to Patroklos, are in desperate need of a new 'shepherd'.[519] Still, Achilleus refuses; even though he admits that his τιμή has in fact been adequately "restored through the damage that has been done to the people":[520]

… τίμησας μὲν ἐμέ, μέγα δ' ἴψαο λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν…

You did me honour and smote strongly the host of the Achaians.[521]

He agrees to send Patroklos in his stead:

ἀλλὰ καὶ ὧς Πάτροκλε νεῶν ἄπο λοιγὸν ἀμύνων
ἔμπεσ' ἐπικρατέως, μὴ δὴ πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο
νῆας ἐνιπρήσωσι, φίλον δ' ἀπὸ νόστον ἕλωνται.

> But even so, Patroklos, beat [ἀμύνειν] the bane [λοιγός] aside from our ships; fall upon them with all your strength; let them not with fire's blazing inflame our ships, and take away our desired homecoming.[522]

Concern for the safety of the Achaian λαοί, however, is by no means the only motivation behind this concession. Achilleus regards Patroklos' mission primarily as a means of achieving yet more τιμή for himself:

πείθεο δ' ὥς τοι ἐγὼ μύθου τέλος ἐν φρεσὶ θείω,
ὡς ἄν μοι τιμὴν μεγάλην καὶ κῦδος ἄρηαι
πρὸς πάντων Δαναῶν, ἀτὰρ οἳ περικαλλέα κούρην
ἂψ ἀπονάσσωσιν, ποτὶ δ' ἀγλαὰ δῶρα πόρωσιν.

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[518] Hom. *Il*. 15.323-327; Lattimore [trans.].
[519] ibid. 11.823-827.
[520] Haubold (2000) 77.
[521] Hom. *Il*. 16.237; Lattimore [trans.].
[522] ibid. 16.80-82.

> But obey to the end this word I put upon your attention so that you can win, for me, great honour [τιμή] and glory [κῦδος] in the sight of the Danaans, so they will bring back to me the lovely girl, and give me shining gifts [ἀγλαὰ δῶρα] in addition.[523]

What is more, Patroklos is to limit his activity to driving the Trojans back 'from the ships' and must by no means 'set [his] mind on fighting the Trojans' by leading the Myrmidons 'against Ilion', because this would only serve to 'diminish [Achilleus'] honour', ἀτιμότερον (*Il*. 16.87-96), "by which Achilleus seems to imply that the Achaians will no longer see such a pressing need to honour him if Patroklos can save the day alone" (*Il*. 16.87-96).[524]

When news of Patroklos' death reaches Achilleus, he is overcome with a 'black cloud of sorrow'.[525] It seems that "Nestor was right": "After destroying the people, Achilleus suffers in turn."[526] He summons an assembly and reconciles with Agamemnon:

> ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν προτετύχθαι ἐάσομεν ἀχνύμενοί περ
> θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλον δαμάσαντες ἀνάγκῃ·
> νῦν δ' ἤτοι μὲν ἐγὼ παύω χόλον…
>
> … Ὣς ἔφαθ', οἳ δ' ἐχάρησαν ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοὶ
> μῆνιν ἀπειπόντος μεγαθύμου Πηλεΐωνος.
>
> 'Still, we will let all this be a thing of the past, though it hurts us, and beat down by constraint the anger that rises inside us. Now I am making an end of my anger [χόλος] …'
> He spoke, and the strong-greaved Achaians were pleasured to hear him and how the great-hearted son of Peleus unsaid his anger [μῆνις].[527]

Their quarrel over τιμή, says Achilleus, was not 'the better way', ἀρείων, since it resulted in the needless deaths of 'too many' Achaian λαοί.[528]

Having 'unsaid his μῆνις', Achilleus finally reunites with the λαοί, goes into battle as the new ποιμένα λαῶν, and drives the Trojans back to the city walls.[529] The Achaians are

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[523] Hom. *Il*. 16.83-86; Lattimore [trans.].
[524] Zanker (1994) 95.
[525] Hom. *Il*. 18.22; Lattimore [trans.].
[526] Haubold (2000) 78.
[527] Hom. *Il*. 19.65-67, 19.74-75; Lattimore [trans.].
[528] ibid. 19.56-62.

overjoyed. But in the course of battle the overwhelming need to win τιμή soon begins to assert itself:

> λαοῖσιν δ' ἀνένευε καρήατι δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς,
> οὐδ' ἔα ἱέμεναι ἐπὶ Ἕκτορι πικρὰ βέλεμνα,
> μή τις κῦδος ἄροιτο βαλών, ὃ δὲ δεύτερος ἔλθοι.

> But brilliant Achilleus kept shaking his head at his own people and would not let them throw their bitter projectiles at Hektor for fear the thrower might win the glory [κῦδος], and himself come second [δεύτερος].[530]

In this determination to be the only hero to kill Hektor, Achilleus once again places the safety of 'his own λαοί' at risk. Achilleus' 'fear' of coming 'second', of not being able to prove that he is indeed worthy of the title ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν, still overrides all concern for the well-being of his flock.

Hektor

The conflict between social responsibility and personal glory is seen most clearly in the person of Hektor, the one man standing between Troy and its destruction. As the foremost ποιμένα λαῶν on the Trojan side,[531] his entry in the *Catalogue of the Trojans* "reads like an abbreviated version of Agamemnon's entry in the *Catalogue of Ships*":[532]

> Τρωσὶ μὲν ἡγεμόνευε μέγας κορυθαίολος Ἕκτωρ
> Πριαμίδης· ἅμα τῷ γε πολὺ πλεῖστοι καὶ ἄριστοι
> λαοὶ θωρήσσοντο μεμαότες ἐγχείῃσι.

> Tall Hektor of the shining helm was leader of the Trojans, Priam's son; and with him far the best and the bravest fighting men were armed and eager to fight with the spear's edge.[533]

His status as the pre-eminent Trojan hero is guaranteed by his role as 'guardian' of Troy, 'defender' of 'the city, and the grave wives, and the innocent children' (*Il*. 24.495-501,

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[529] Hom. *Il*. 19.386; Lattimore [trans.].
[530] ibid. 22.205-207.
[531] ibid. 10.406, 14.423, 15.262, 20.110, 22.277.
[532] Haubold (2000) 85.
[533] Hom. *Il*. 2.816-818; Lattimore [trans.].

24.725-730). His obligation toward the city or ἄστυ is in fact reflected in the name of his only son:

… Ἀστυάνακτ'· οἶος γὰρ ἐρύετο Ἴλιον Ἕκτωρ.

… Astyanax – lord of the city; since Hektor alone saved Ilion.[534]

"What is more," Nagy points out, "the name of *Héktōr* himself is an agent noun derived from the verb *ékhō* in the sense of 'protect'."[535]

Hektor is all too aware of his social responsibilities. As he puts it to the Trojan allies:

> κέκλυτε μυρία φῦλα περικτιόνων ἐπικούρων·
> οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ πληθὺν διζήμενος οὐδὲ χατίζων
> ἐνθάδ' ἀφ' ὑμετέρων πολίων ἤγειρα ἕκαστον,
> ἀλλ' ἵνα μοι Τρώων ἀλόχους καὶ νήπια τέκνα
> προφρονέως ῥύοισθε φιλοπτολέμων ὑπ' Ἀχαιῶν.

> Hear me, you numberless hordes of companions who live at our border. It was not for any desire nor need of a multitude that man by man I gathered you to come here from your cities, but so that you might have good will to defend the innocent children of the Trojans, and their wives, from the fighting Achaians.[536]

And to the dying Patroklos:

> Πάτροκλ' ἦ που ἔφησθα πόλιν κεραϊξέμεν ἁμήν,
> Τρωϊάδας δὲ γυναῖκας ἐλεύθερον ἦμαρ ἀπούρας
> ἄξειν ἐν νήεσσι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν
> νήπιε· τάων δὲ πρόσθ' Ἕκτορος ὠκέες ἵπποι
> ποσσὶν ὀρωρέχαται πολεμίζειν· ἔγχεϊ δ' αὐτὸς
> Τρωσὶ φιλοπτολέμοισι μεταπρέπω, ὅ σφιν ἀμύνω
> ἦμαρ ἀναγκαῖον·

> Patroklos, you thought perhaps of devastating our city, of stripping from the Trojan women the day of their liberty and dragging them off in ships to the beloved land of your fathers. Fool! When in front of them the running horses of Hektor strained with their swift feet into the fighting, and I with

[534] Hom. *Il*. 6.403; Lattimore [trans.].
[535] Nagy (1979) 146.
[536] Hom. *Il*. 17.220-224; Lattimore [trans.].

my own spear am conspicuous among the fighting Trojans, I who beat from them the day of necessity.[537]

It is Hektor's duty to ensure the safety of the Trojan λαοί. The exemplary concern which he displays for the well-being of the Trojan community is contrasted with that of his brother who, in Hektor's opinion, only serves to inflict shame and suffering on his own λαοί:

Δύσπαρι εἶδος ἄριστε γυναιμανὲς ἠπεροπευτὰ
αἴθ' ὄφελες ἄγονός τ' ἔμεναι ἄγαμός τ' ἀπολέσθαι·
καί κε τὸ βουλοίμην, καί κεν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν
ἢ οὕτω λώβην τ' ἔμεναι καὶ ὑπόψιον ἄλλων.
ἦ που καγχαλόωσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοὶ
φάντες ἀριστῆα πρόμον ἔμμεναι, οὕνεκα καλὸν
εἶδος ἔπ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστι βίη φρεσὶν οὐδέ τις ἀλκή.
ἦ τοιόσδε ἐὼν ἐν ποντοπόροισι νέεσσι
πόντον ἐπιπλώσας, ἑτάρους ἐρίηρας ἀγείρας,
μιχθεὶς ἀλλοδαποῖσι γυναῖκ' εὐειδέ' ἀνῆγες
ἐξ ἀπίης γαίης νυὸν ἀνδρῶν αἰχμητάων
πατρί τε σῷ μέγα πῆμα πόληΐ τε παντί τε δήμῳ,
δυσμενέσιν μὲν χάρμα, κατηφείην δὲ σοὶ αὐτῷ;

Evil Paris, beautiful, woman-crazy, cajoling, better you had never been born, or killed unwedded. Truly I could have wished it so; it would be far better [κερδίων] than to have you with us to our shame [λώβη], for others to sneer at. Surely now the flowing-haired Achaians laugh at us, thinking you are our bravest champion [ἀριστεύς], only because your looks are handsome, but there is no strength [βία] in your heart, no courage [ἀλκή]. Were you like this that time when in sea-wandering vessels assembling oarsmen to help you you sailed over the water, and mixed with the outlanders, and carried away a fair woman from a remote land, whose lord's kin were spearmen and fighters, to your father a big sorrow [μέγα πῆμα], and your city, and all your people, to yourself a thing shameful [κατήφεια] but bringing joy to the enemy?[538]

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[537] Hom. *Il*. 16.830-836; Lattimore [trans.].
[538] ibid. 3.39-51.

While Alexandros “unites the people on both sides in a communal curse” against him (*Il*. 3.318-323),[539] Hektor is ‘adored’ ‘as if [he] were a god’ by the Trojans: ‘by day and in the night’ he is the ‘glory’ of Troy, ‘a blessing throughout their city’.[540]

At first sight it would seem that Hektor is far different from the likes of Agamemnon and Achilleus in his capacity as ποιμένα λαῶν: “[he] is a more ordinary man, remote from divine ancestry, driven less by the conviction of his own worth than by his practical duty towards city and family.”[541] When Poulydamas interprets ‘a bird sign’ to mean that the Trojans should ‘not go on and fight the Danaans by their ships’, Hektor rebukes him for being ‘afraid of war and hostility’: ‘One bird sign is best [ἄριστος]: to fight in defence of our country’.[542] While this may sound like a noble ideal, the “whole course of Hektor’s behaviour [gives] the lie to [this] retort”.[543] The truth is that Hektor is as bound by the need for social approbation and prestige, by the need to assert his own worth and identity, as are Agamemnon and Achilleus. Hektor himself says that he wishes he were ‘immortal’ and ‘held in honour’ like Athena and Apollo:

> εἰ γὰρ ἐγὼν ὣς
> εἴην ἀθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρως ἤματα πάντα,
> τιοίμην δ' ὡς τίετ' Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἀπόλλων,
> ὡς νῦν ἡμέρη ἥδε κακὸν φέρει Ἀργείοισιν.

> Oh, if I only could be as this in all my days immortal and ageless and be held in honour as Athene and Apollo are honoured as surely as this oncoming day brings evil to the Argives.[544]

Poseidon, in the guise of Kalchas, charges him with claiming, εὔχεσθαι, to be the ‘son of Zeus’:

> τῇ δὲ δὴ αἰνότατον περιδείδια μή τι πάθωμεν,
> ᾗ ῥ' ὅ γ' ὁ λυσσώδης φλογὶ εἴκελος ἡγεμονεύει
> Ἕκτωρ, ὃς Διὸς εὔχετ' ἐρισθενέος πάϊς εἶναι.

[539] Haubold (2000) 86.
[540] Hom. *Il*. 22.432-435; Lattimore [trans.].
[541] Clarke (2004) 84.
[542] Hom. *Il*. 12.200, 216, 243-244; Lattimore [trans.].
[543] Finley (1982) 118.
[544] Hom. *Il*. 8.538-541; Lattimore [trans.].

> But I fear most terribly disaster to us in the one place where that berserk flamelike leads them against us, Hektor, who claims he must be son of Zeus of the high strength.[545]

And Hektor himself admits that this is, in fact, his most ardent desire:

> εἰ γὰρ ἐγὼν οὕτω γε Διὸς πάϊς αἰγιόχοιο
> εἴην ἤματα πάντα, τέκοι δέ με πότνια Ἥρη,
> τιοίμην δ' ὡς τίετ' Ἀθηναίη καὶ Ἀπόλλων,
> ὡς νῦν ἡμέρη ἥδε κακὸν φέρει Ἀργείοισι…

> If I could only be called son to Zeus of the aegis all the days of my life, and the lady Hera my mother, and I be honoured, as Apollo and Athene are honoured, so surely as this is a day that brings evil to the Argives…[546]

In Book 6 Hektor leaves the battlefield and returns to Troy. When he encounters Andromache on the city walls, she "sums up [one of] the fundamental problems of the heroic condition":[547] 'Dearest, your own great strength [μένος] will be your death' (*Il*. 6.407). Μένος and ἀγήνωρ, as we have seen, are characterised as the "extreme level of male energy" which allows the heroes to perform such extraordinary feats; "by the same token, however, the energy that underlies such excellence is liable to push the hero to dangerous extremes of anger, passion and recklessness".[548] Andromache is afraid that Hektor's own reckless bravado will get him killed; a fear that is proven to be well-founded when Hektor, urging the Trojans 'to cross over the ditch' to set the Achaian ships alight, is compared to 'a wild boar or lion' that is killed by its 'own courage', ἀγηνορίη:

> αὐτὰρ ὅ γ' ὡς τὸ πρόσθεν ἐμάρνατο ἶσος ἀέλλῃ·
> ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἔν τε κύνεσσι καὶ ἀνδράσι θηρευτῇσι
> κάπριος ἠὲ λέων στρέφεται σθένεϊ βλεμεαίνων·
> οἳ δέ τε πυργηδὸν σφέας αὐτοὺς ἀρτύναντες
> ἀντίον ἵστανται καὶ ἀκοντίζουσι θαμειὰς
> αἰχμὰς ἐκ χειρῶν· τοῦ δ' οὔ ποτε κυδάλιμον κῆρ
> ταρβεῖ οὐδὲ φοβεῖται, ἀγηνορίη δέ μιν ἔκτα…

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[545] Hom. *Il*. 13.52-54; Lattimore [trans.].
[546] ibid. 13.825-828.
[547] Clarke (2004) 84-85.
[548] ibid. 80.

… ὣς Ἕκτωρ ἀν' ὅμιλον ἰὼν ἐλλίσσεθ' ἑταίρους
τάφρον ἐποτρύνων διαβαινέμεν·

> But Hektor, as he had before, fought on like a whirlwind. As when among a pack of hounds and huntsmen assembled a wild boar or lion turns at bay in the strength of his fury, and the men, closing themselves into a wall about him, stand up to face him, and cast at him with the volleying spears thrown from their hands, and in spite of this the proud heart feels not terror, nor turns to run, and it is his own courage [ἀγηνορίη] that kills him… such was Hektor as he went through the battle and rallied his companions and drove them to cross over the ditch.[549]

The simple fact is that Hektor cannot afford to be reckless and overconfident: the city and his λαοί depend upon him for their very survival; if he falls, so do they.

Andromache begs Hektor to be more cautious:

Ἕκτορ ἀτὰρ σύ μοί ἐσσι πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
ἠδὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης·
ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν ἐλέαιρε καὶ αὐτοῦ μίμν' ἐπὶ πύργῳ,
μὴ παῖδ' ὀρφανικὸν θήῃς χήρην τε γυναῖκα·
λαὸν δὲ στῆσον παρ' ἐρινεόν, ἔνθα μάλιστα
ἀμβατός ἐστι πόλις καὶ ἐπίδρομον ἔπλετο τεῖχος.

> Hektor, thus you are father to me, and my honoured mother, you are my brother, and you it is who are my young husband. Please take pity upon me then, stay here on the rampart, that you may not leave your child an orphan, your wife a widow, but draw your people up by the fig tree, there where the city is openest to attack, and where the wall may be mounted.[550]

"As a representative of city life,"[551] Andromache reminds Hektor of what is at stake – the welfare of Trojan women and children – and implores him not to take the unnecessary risk of going out to face the Achaians but only to concern himself with that which is of the utmost importance: defending the city. Hektor admits that Andromache's concerns are valid, but says that he is unable to do as she suggests:

ἦ καὶ ἐμοὶ τάδε πάντα μέλει γύναι· ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἰνῶς
αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρῳάδας ἑλκεσιπέπλους,

[549] Hom. *Il.* 12.40-46, 12.49-50; Lattimore [trans.].
[550] ibid. 6.429-434.
[551] Haubold (2000) 89.

αἴ κε κακὸς ὣς νόσφιν ἀλυσκάζω πολέμοιο·
οὐδέ με θυμὸς ἄνωγεν, ἐπεὶ μάθον ἔμμεναι ἐσθλὸς
αἰεὶ καὶ πρώτοισι μετὰ Τρώεσσι μάχεσθαι
ἀρνύμενος πατρός τε μέγα κλέος ἠδ' ἐμὸν αὐτοῦ.

> All these things are in my mind also, lady; yet I would feel deep shame [αἰδεῖσθαι] before the Trojans, and the Trojan women with trailing garments, if like a coward [κακός] I were to shrink aside from the fighting; and the spirit will not let me, since I have learned to be valiant [ἐσθλός] and to fight always among the foremost ranks of the Trojans, winning for my own self great glory [μέγα κλέος], and for my father.[552]

When he predicts the inevitable fall of Troy, Hektor says that he is not as troubled by the thought of the 'pain to come' for the Trojan λαοί, his father, his mother or his brothers, as he is at the thought of what Andromache will have to endure 'when some bronze-armoured Achaian leads [her] off, taking away [her] day of liberty, in tears'.[553] Although Hektor clearly loves his wife, he bases his decision to return to the battlefield on the 'deep shame' he 'would feel… before the Trojans' if, like a κακός, he was not able to live up to the responsibilities and expectations of an ἐσθλός: 'to fight always among the foremost ranks' and so win μέγα κλέος both for oneself and one's family. Hektor rejects Andromache's proposal and returns to battle.

'Careful Poulydamas', 'who alone of them looked before and behind him' (*Il*. 18.249-250), is presented as the "counterpart of and alternative to Hektor":[554]

Ἕκτορι δ' ἦεν ἑταῖρος, ἰῇ δ' ἐν νυκτὶ γένοντο,
ἀλλ' ὃ μὲν ἂρ μύθοισιν, ὃ δ' ἔγχεϊ πολλὸν ἐνίκα·

> He was companion to Hektor, and born on the same night with him, but he was better in words, the other with the spear far better.[555]

In contrast to Hektor's heroic bravado, Poulydamas advocates a 'counsel of safety'.[556] He repeatedly implores Hektor 'to listen to reason' and to consider what is 'best', ἄριστα, for

[552] Hom. *Il*. 6.441-446; Lattimore [trans.].
[553] ibid. 6.447-455.
[554] Nagy (1979) 147.
[555] Hom. *Il*. 18.249-250, 18.251-252; Lattimore [trans.].
[556] ibid. 12.80, 13.748.

the Trojan λαοί instead of merely 'upholding [his] own cause'.[557] When Achilleus makes his first reappearance among the Achaian forces after the death of Patroklos, the Trojans are seized with 'endless terror': 'the heart was shaken in all, and the very floating-maned horses turned their chariots about, since their hearts saw the coming afflictions.'[558] They summon an assembly to decide on the best course of action – to remain encamped on the plain or to retreat into the city.[559] Poulydamas 'urge[s them] to go back into the city':

> ἀμφὶ μάλα φράζεσθε φίλοι· κέλομαι γὰρ ἔγωγε
> ἄστυδε νῦν ἰέναι, μὴ μίμνειν ἠῶ δῖαν
> ἐν πεδίῳ παρὰ νηυσίν· ἑκὰς δ' ἀπὸ τείχεός εἰμεν.
> ὄφρα μὲν οὗτος ἀνὴρ Ἀγαμέμνονι μήνιε δίῳ
> τόφρα δὲ ῥηΐτεροι πολεμίζειν ἦσαν Ἀχαιοί·
> χαίρεσκον γὰρ ἔγωγε θοῇς ἐπὶ νηυσὶν ἰαύων
> ἐλπόμενος νῆας αἱρησέμεν ἀμφιελίσσας.
> νῦν δ' αἰνῶς δείδοικα ποδώκεα Πηλεΐωνα·
> οἷος κείνου θυμὸς ὑπέρβιος, οὐκ ἐθελήσει
> μίμνειν ἐν πεδίῳ, ὅθι περ Τρῶες καὶ Ἀχαιοὶ
> ἐν μέσῳ ἀμφότεροι μένος Ἄρηος δατέονται,
> ἀλλὰ περὶ πτόλιός τε μαχήσεται ἠδὲ γυναικῶν.
> ἀλλ' ἴομεν προτὶ ἄστυ, πίθεσθέ μοι· ὧδε γὰρ ἔσται·

> Now take careful thought, dear friends; for I myself urge you to go back into the city and not wait for the divine dawn in the plain beside the ships. We are too far from the wall now. While this man was still angry with great Agamemnon, for all that time the Achaians were easier men to fight with. For I also used then to be one who was glad to sleep out near their ships, and I hoped to capture the oarswept vessels. But now I terribly dread the swift-footed son of Peleus. So violent is the valour in him, he will not be willing to stay here in the plain, where now the Achaians and Trojans from either side sunder between them the wrath of the war god. With him, the fight will be for the sake of our city and women. Let us go into the town; believe me; thus it will happen.[560]

With Achilleus back on the field, Poulydamas argues, it is no longer just the Trojan army that is at risk, but the city and its λαοί. If the Trojans draw back into the city, 'though it hurts [them] to do it', they 'will hold [their] strength in the market place, and the great

[557] Hom. *Il*. 13.726, 12.215, 13.735, 12.214; Lattimore [trans.].
[558] ibid. 18.218, 18.223-224.
[559] ibid. 18.243-314.
[560] ibid. 18.254-266.

walls and the gateways, and the long, smooth-planed, close-joined gate timbers' and so be able to 'defend [their] city'. Achilleus' 'valour will not give him leave to burst in upon [them] nor sack [their] town. Sooner the circling dogs will feed on him.'[561]

"This [is] the prudent road to success," but "Hektor [is] utterly impatient with it"[562] and demands that the Trojan forces continue fighting beside the Achaian ships:

> Πουλυδάμα σὺ μὲν οὐκέτ' ἐμοὶ φίλα ταῦτ' ἀγορεύεις,
> ὃς κέλεαι κατὰ ἄστυ ἀλήμεναι αὖτις ἰόντας.
> ἦ οὔ πω κεκόρησθε ἐελμένοι ἔνδοθι πύργων;…
>
> … νῦν δ' ὅτε πέρ μοι ἔδωκε Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω
> κῦδος ἀρέσθ' ἐπὶ νηυσί, θαλάσσῃ τ' ἔλσαι Ἀχαιούς,
> νήπιε μηκέτι ταῦτα νοήματα φαῖν' ἐνὶ δήμῳ·
> οὐ γάρ τις Τρώων ἐπιπείσεται· οὐ γὰρ ἐάσω.
> ἀλλ' ἄγεθ' ὡς ἂν ἐγὼ εἴπω, πειθώμεθα πάντες…
>
> … πρῶϊ δ' ὑπηοῖοι σὺν τεύχεσι θωρηχθέντες
> νηυσὶν ἔπι γλαφυρῇσιν ἐγείρομεν ὀξὺν Ἄρηα.
> εἰ δ' ἐτεὸν παρὰ ναῦφιν ἀνέστη δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς,
> ἄλγιον αἴ κ' ἐθέλῃσι τῷ ἔσσεται· οὔ μιν ἔγωγε
> φεύξομαι ἐκ πολέμοιο δυσηχέος, ἀλλὰ μάλ' ἄντην
> στήσομαι, ἤ κε φέρῃσι μέγα κράτος, ἦ κε φεροίμην.

> Poulydamas, these things that you argue please me no longer when you tell us to go back again and be cooped in our city. Have you not all had your glut of being fenced in our outworks?... But now, when the son of devious-devising Kronos has given me the winning of glory [κῦδος] by the ships, to pin the Achaians on the sea, why, fool, no longer show these thoughts to our people. Not one of the Trojans will obey you. I shall not allow it. Come, then, do as I say and let us all be persuaded… In the morning, under dawn, we shall arm ourselves in our war gear and waken the bitter god of war by the hollow vessels. If it is true that brilliant Achilleus is risen beside their ships, then the worse for him if he tries it, since I for my part will not run from him out of the sorrowful battle, but rather stand fast, to see if he wins the great glory [μέγα κράτος], or if I can win it.[563]

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[561] Hom. *Il*. 18.273-276, 18.282-283; Lattimore [trans.].
[562] Finley (1982) 118.
[563] Hom. *Il*. 18.285-287, 18.293-297, 18.303-308; Lattimore [trans.].

No doubt "a major factor" behind Hektor's "desire to bring matters to a head" by going out to face 'brilliant Achilleus' is "his frustration" both in having "had enough of being cooped up inside the city's towers" and in the painful knowledge that Troy, which previously held the reputation 'as a place with much gold and much bronze', has now lost her 'lovely treasures' (*Il*. 18.288-292) and "been reduced to such dismally inglorious straits… It is equally legitimate to conclude that [Hektor] is to some extent compensating for his frustration over the faded glory of his city by pursuing individual glory and honour for himself."[564] But whatever his motivation, the fact remains that his decision to 'stand fast' places the safety of his city in serious jeopardy; Hektor – formidable as he is – can in no way compete with Achilleus' superior skill as a warrior: Hektor admits his own inferiority when he says that he is 'far weaker', πολύ χείρων, than the 'great', ἐσθλός, Achilleus (*Il*. 20.434); Priam tells Hektor that he cannot possibly hope to defeat Achilleus, since he is 'far stronger', πολύ φέρτερος, than he is (*Il*. 22.40); while Achilleus, of course, in is no doubt as to which hero is the 'greater', μέγα ἀμείνων, of the two (*Il*. 22.333). Instead of honouring his obligation as a ποιμένα λαῶν by placing the well-being of the Trojan λαοί above all other considerations, "Hektor goes against the pattern of action that is marked out even by his name. He advocates an *offensive* strategy in response to the impending onslaught of Achilleus, whereas his counterpart Poulydamas is advocating a *defensive* strategy."[565] Hektor will later describe this decision to try and 'win' κῦδος and μέγα κράτος as 'recklessness', ἀτασθαλίαι, and admit that it would have been 'far better', πολύ κέρδιον, for the Trojan λαός had he listened to Poulydamas' advice and led 'the Trojans inside the city'.[566]

On the next day Achilleus calls an assembly and declares the end of his quarrel with Agamemnon and his return to battle. When the two armies encounter, Achilleus leads the attack and wreaks utter havoc upon the Trojan forces:

> Ὡς δ' ἀναμαιμάει βαθέ' ἄγκεα θεσπιδαὲς πῦρ
> οὔρεος ἀζαλέοιο, βαθεῖα δὲ καίεται ὕλη,
> πάντῃ τε κλονέων ἄνεμος φλόγα εἰλυφάζει,

[564] Zanker (1994) 54.
[565] Nagy (1979) 147.
[566] Hom. *Il*. 22.100-104; Lattimore [trans.].

ὣς ὅ γε πάντῃ θῦνε σὺν ἔγχεϊ δαίμονι ἶσος
κτεινομένους ἐφέπων· ῥέε δ' αἵματι γαῖα μέλαινα.

> As inhuman fire sweeps on in fury through the deep angles of a drywood mountain and sets ablaze the depth of the timber and the blustering wind lashes the flame along, so Achilleus swept everywhere with his spear like something more than a mortal [δαίμονι ἶσος] harrying them as they died, and the black earth ran blood.[567]

The Trojans 'stampede in terror before him', and it is only with the divine aid of Apollo that they manage to escape 'gladly into the town'.[568] But Hektor, 'who there still in front of the gateway stood fast in determined fury to fight with Achilleus', refuses to take refuge.[569] Priam begs him to reconsider:

Ἕκτορ μή μοι μίμνε φίλον τέκος ἀνέρα τοῦτον
οἶος ἄνευθ' ἄλλων, ἵνα μὴ τάχα πότμον ἐπίσπῃς
Πηλεΐωνι δαμείς, ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺ φέρτερός ἐστι…

… ὅς μ' υἱῶν πολλῶν τε καὶ ἐσθλῶν εὖνιν ἔθηκε…

… εἰ δ' ἤδη τεθνᾶσι καὶ εἰν Ἀΐδαο δόμοισιν,
ἄλγος ἐμῷ θυμῷ καὶ μητέρι τοὶ τεκόμεσθα·
λαοῖσιν δ' ἄλλοισι μινυνθαδιώτερον ἄλγος
ἔσσεται, ἢν μὴ καὶ σὺ θάνῃς Ἀχιλῆϊ δαμασθείς.
ἀλλ' εἰσέρχεο τεῖχος ἐμὸν τέκος, ὄφρα σαώσῃς
Τρῶας καὶ Τρῳάς, μὴ δὲ μέγα κῦδος ὀρέξῃς
Πηλεΐδῃ, αὐτὸς δὲ φίλης αἰῶνος ἀμερθῇς.

> Hektor, beloved child, do not wait the attack of this man alone, away from the others. You might encounter your destiny beaten down by Peleion, since he is far stronger [πολύ φέρτερος] than you are… He has made me desolate of my sons, who were brave and many… But if they are dead already and gone down to the house of Hades, it is sorrow to our hearts, who bore them, myself and their mother, but to the rest of the people a sorrow that will be fleeting beside their sorrow for you, if you go down before Achilleus. Come then inside the wall, my child, so that you can rescue the Trojans and the women of Troy, neither win the high glory [μέγα κῦδος] for Peleus' son, and yourself be robbed of your very life.[570]

[567] Hom. *Il*. 20.490-494; Lattimore[trans.].
[568] ibid. 21.554, 21.607.
[569] ibid. 22.35-36.
[570] ibid. 22.38-40, 22.44, 22.52-58.

If Hektor chooses to 'wait the attack of [Achilleus] alone, away from the others', the outcome is certain: he will die and Troy will fall. Priam implores Hektor to 'take pity' on the lives and families that depend on him for their very survival and to spare the Trojan λαοί from the 'evils' that are bound to follow if he 'go[es] down before Achilleus': the men will be 'destroyed', the wives and daughters 'dragged away captive… by the accursed hands of the Achaians', 'the chambers of marriage wrecked', and 'the innocent children taken and dashed to the ground in the hatefulness of war'.[571] "Hekabe is even more direct" in her appeal when "she holds out her breast in…. desperation" and pleads with Hektor not to 'go out as champion' against Achilleus (*Il*. 22.85).[572]

'Deeply troubled', Hektor speaks to 'his own great-hearted spirit':

> ὤ μοι ἐγών, εἰ μέν κε πύλας καὶ τείχεα δύω,
> Πουλυδάμας μοι πρῶτος ἐλεγχείην ἀναθήσει,
> ὅς μ' ἐκέλευε Τρωσὶ ποτὶ πτόλιν ἡγήσασθαι
> νύχθ' ὕπο τήνδ' ὀλοὴν ὅτε τ' ὤρετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
> ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην· ἦ τ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν.
> νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ὤλεσα λαὸν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἐμῇσιν,
> αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρῳάδας ἑλκεσιπέπλους,
> μή ποτέ τις εἴπῃσι κακώτερος ἄλλος ἐμεῖο·
> Ἕκτωρ ἧφι βίηφι πιθήσας ὤλεσε λαόν.
> ὣς ἐρέουσιν· ἐμοὶ δὲ τότ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον εἴη
> ἄντην ἢ Ἀχιλῆα κατακτείναντα νέεσθαι,
> ἠέ κεν αὐτῷ ὀλέσθαι ἐϋκλειῶς πρὸ πόληος…
>
> … βέλτερον αὖτ' ἔριδι ξυνελαυνέμεν ὅττι τάχιστα·
> εἴδομεν ὁπποτέρῳ κεν Ὀλύμπιος εὖχος ὀρέξῃ.

> Ah me! If I go now inside the wall and the gateway, Poulydamas will be first to put a reproach [ἐλεγχείη] upon me, since he tried to make me lead the Trojans inside the city on that accursed night when brilliant Achilleus rose up, and I would not obey him, but that would have been far better [πολύ κέρδιον]. Now, since by my own recklessness [ἀτασθαλίαι] I have ruined [ὀλλύναι] my people, I feel shame [αἰδεῖσθαι] before the Trojans and the Trojan women with trailing robes, that someone who is less of a man [κακώτερος] than I will say of me: 'Hektor believed in his own strength and ruined his people [ὀλλύναι λαός].' Thus they will speak; and as for me, it

[571] Hom. *Il*. 22.59-65; Lattimore [trans.].
[572] Zanker (1994) 56.

> would be much better [πολὺ κέρδιον] at that time, to go against Achilleus, and slay him, and come back, or else be killed by him in glory [ἐϋκλειῶς] in front of the city… Better [βέλτερον] to bring on the fight with him as soon as it may be. We shall see to which one the Olympian grants the glory.[573]

Hektor has to choose: if he honours his responsibility as a ποιμένα λαῶν, retreats into the city, and saves the populace of Troy, he will have to live with the painful knowledge that he has incurred 'shame' and 'reproach', even among the more κακώτεροι members of his community, but if he asserts his identity as an ἐσθλός, goes out 'against Achilleus', and dies gloriously, ἐϋκλειῶς, Troy will be destroyed. The fear of 'shame' and the desire for 'glory' prove stronger than the well-being of the community: Hektor decides to go out and face Achilleus. The implications of this decision are made devastatingly clear when Hektor's death is compared to the fall of Troy itself:

> Ὣς τοῦ μὲν κεκόνιτο κάρη ἅπαν· ἣ δέ νυ μήτηρ
> τίλλε κόμην, ἀπὸ δὲ λιπαρὴν ἔρριψε καλύπτρην
> τηλόσε, κώκυσεν δὲ μάλα μέγα παῖδ' ἐσιδοῦσα·
> ᾤμωξεν δ' ἐλεεινὰ πατὴρ φίλος, ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ
> κωκυτῷ τ' εἴχοντο καὶ οἰμωγῇ κατὰ ἄστυ.
> τῷ δὲ μάλιστ' ἄρ' ἔην ἐναλίγκιον ὡς εἰ ἅπασα
> Ἴλιος ὀφρυόεσσα πυρὶ σμύχοιτο κατ' ἄκρης.

> So all his head was dragged in the dust; and now his mother tore out her hair, and threw the shining veil far from her and raised a great wail as she looked upon her son; and his father beloved groaned pitifully, and all his people about him were taken with wailing and lamentation through the city. It was most like what would have happened, if all lowering Ilion had been burning top to bottom in fire.[574]

The Failed Ideal

Since Homeric society depends on the heroes and on the competitive excellences they display for its very survival, the competitive excellences – high-birth, wealth, courage, strength, military prowess, skill in counsel and strategy – are far more highly valued than the co-operative ones. The heroes are rewarded for their display of the competitive

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[573] Hom. *Il*. 22.98, 22.99-110, 22.129-130; Lattimore [trans.].
[574] ibid. 22.405-411.

excellences with τιμή and κλέος; an incentive which, in theory, is supposed to further the interests of society by encouraging social cohesion, promoting the safety and well-being of the social group, and securing the success of any communal ventures. The problem, however, is that in the obsessiveness with which the heroes are prepared to assert themselves in the pursuit of τιμή and κλέος, these ultimate motives are swept aside. In *Iliad* 6, for example, Nestor is forced to point out to the Achaian warriors that their desire 'to take all the spoil [they] can gather' is actually interfering with their main objective – to 'kill' the Trojans and win the war:

> ὦ φίλοι ἥρωες Δαναοὶ θεράποντες Ἄρηος
> μή τις νῦν ἐνάρων ἐπιβαλλόμενος μετόπισθε
> μιμνέτω ὥς κε πλεῖστα φέρων ἐπὶ νῆας ἵκηται,
> ἀλλ' ἄνδρας κτείνωμεν· ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τὰ ἕκηλοι
> νεκροὺς ἂμ πεδίον συλήσετε τεθνηῶτας.

> O beloved Danaan fighters, henchmen of Ares, let no man any more hang back with his eye on the plunder designing to take all the spoil he can gather back to the vessels; let us kill the men now, and afterwards at your leisure all along the plain you can plunder the perished corpses.[575]

In "their imprudent concern with the pursuit of personal honour… individual warriors are jeopardising the corporate endeavour of the army".[576]

Human beings are social animals, and the stability and success of their social world depends on collaboration and solidarity among men. The heroes are frequently reminded of their place in the social structure and of the obligations which result from that place:

> ὦ φίλοι ἀνέρες ἔστε καὶ ἄλκιμον ἦτορ ἕλεσθε,
> ἀλλήλους τ' αἰδεῖσθε κατὰ κρατερὰς ὑσμίνας·
> αἰδομένων ἀνδρῶν πλέονες σόοι ἠὲ πέφανται·
> φευγόντων δ' οὔτ' ἂρ κλέος ὄρνυται οὔτε τις ἀλκή.

> Be men now, dear friends, and take up the heart of courage, and have consideration for each other [ἀλλήλους αἰδεῖσθαι] in the strong encounters, since more come through alive when men consider each other [αἰδομένοι],

[575] Hom. *Il*. 6.67-71; Lattimore [trans.].
[576] Zanker (1994) 49.

> and there is no glory [κλέος] when they give way, nor warcraft [ἀλκή] either.[577]

> ὦ φίλοι ἀνέρες ἔστε καὶ αἰδῶ θέσθ' ἐνὶ θυμῷ
> ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων, ἐπὶ δὲ μνήσασθε ἕκαστος
> παίδων ἠδ' ἀλόχων καὶ κτήσιος ἠδὲ τοκήων,
> ἠμὲν ὅτεῳ ζώουσι καὶ ᾧ κατατεθνήκασι·
> τῶν ὕπερ ἐνθάδ' ἐγὼ γουνάζομαι οὐ παρεόντων
> ἑστάμεναι κρατερῶς, μὴ δὲ τρωπᾶσθε φόβον δέ.

> Dear friends, be men; let shame [αἰδώς] be in your hearts and discipline in the sight of other men, and each one of you remember his children and his wife, his property and his parents, whether a man's father and mother live or have died. Here now I supplicate your knees for the sake of those who are absent to stand strongly [κρατερῶς] and not be turned to the terror of panic.[578]

'Men' are required to have 'consideration', αἰδεῖσθαι, for the needs of others. The problem, of course, is that "it is inevitable, given the Homeric alignment of values," that the heroes should seek to "pursue [their] own interest[s] at the expense of others, particularly since [they are able to] do so without forfeiting [their] claim[s]" to social approbation and prestige.[579] Agamemnon, Achilleus, Hektor and the Suitors – the true products of a society that values the pursuit of competitive ἀρετή over collective collaboration – all feel compelled to exert every means at their disposal to further their own interests, regardless of whether or not their actions prove detrimental to their fellow members of society.

Far from being cohesive, Homeric society is fiercely competitive, as each hero strives to "acquire and defend" his individual τιμή "in a perennial zero-sum game: what one man gains is lost by his opponent."[580] The poems are fraught with the discord, ἔρις, and anger, χόλος, to which such competition inevitably leads. Conflict can, in theory, be resolved peacefully. When Hephaistos fashions new armour for Achilleus, he decorates the shield

[577] Hom. *Il.* 5.529-532, 15.561-564; Lattimore [trans.].
[578] ibid. 15.661-666, 15.486-499.
[579] Adkins (1960) 61-62.
[580] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 96.

with a series of scenes which portray the different aspects of human life. One such scene depicts a lawsuit:

> λαοὶ δ' εἰν ἀγορῇ ἔσαν ἀθρόοι· ἔνθα δὲ νεῖκος
> ὠρώρει, δύο δ' ἄνδρες ἐνείκεον εἵνεκα ποινῆς
> ἀνδρὸς ἀποφθιμένου· ὃ μὲν εὔχετο πάντ' ἀποδοῦναι
> δήμῳ πιφαύσκων, ὃ δ' ἀναίνετο μηδὲν ἑλέσθαι·
> ἄμφω δ' ἱέσθην ἐπὶ ἴστορι πεῖραρ ἑλέσθαι.
> λαοὶ δ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ἐπήπυον ἀμφὶς ἀρωγοί·
> κήρυκες δ' ἄρα λαὸν ἐρήτυον· οἳ δὲ γέροντες
> εἵατ' ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοις ἱερῷ ἐνὶ κύκλῳ,
> σκῆπτρα δὲ κηρύκων ἐν χέρσ' ἔχον ἠεροφώνων·
> τοῖσιν ἔπειτ' ἤϊσσον, ἀμοιβηδὶς δὲ δίκαζον.
> κεῖτο δ' ἄρ' ἐν μέσσοισι δύω χρυσοῖο τάλαντα,
> τῷ δόμεν ὃς μετὰ τοῖσι δίκην ἰθύντατα εἴποι.

> The people were assembled in the market place, where a quarrel [νεῖκος] had arisen, and two men were disputing over the blood price for a man who had been killed. One man promised full restitution in a public statement, but the other refused and would accept nothing. Both then made for an arbitrator [ἵστωρ], to have a decision; and people were speaking up on either side, to help both men. But the heralds kept the people in hand, as meanwhile the elders were in session on benches of polished stone in the sacred circle and held in their hands the staves of the heralds who lift their voices. The two men rushed before these, and took turns speaking their cases, and between them lay on the ground two talents of gold, to be given to that judge who in this case spoke the straightest opinion [δίκην ἰθύντατα].[581]

When a 'quarrel' arises between two members of the community, both parties – instead of resorting to "private vendetta" and "disruptive violence" – opt for a peaceful resolution in the form of "public litigation".[582] The 'people' are kept under control, the two parties take turns to plead their cases, and an 'arbitrator', ἵστωρ, is entrusted to make a fair decision, δίκην ἰθύντατα, based on the facts of the case. But this is an ideal. In practice, the intensity of the conflicts that arise between members of Homeric society – where the heroes "associate the impulse to assert τιμή so totally with the defense of [their] personal worth and dignity" – nullifies all "moral constraints to behave fairly," δικαίως, in their

[581] Hom. *Il*. 18.497-508; Lattimore [trans.].
[582] Luce (1978) 2.

relations with fellow members of society.[583] Social cohesion breaks down and, since any appeals or admonitions to adhere to the co-operative virtues carry so little weight, all the reasons for commending it become ineffectual. Both Achilleus and Odysseus are sufficiently angered by the damage done to their conception of self-worth to refuse peaceful arbitration, and there is simply no 'judge' powerful enough to restrain them in their choice to do so. Both heroes decide, instead, to redress this damage by embarking on a merciless quest for revenge, the consequences of which prove harmful to society: Achilleus withdraws from the war and allows uncounted hosts of his own comrades to die; Odysseus slaughters all of the Suitors despite the danger of unleashing a civil war.

"It is a mark of civilised society to have laws and assemblies"[584] that force men to show some regard, ἀλέγειν, for the needs and rights of their fellow men:

> Κυκλώπων δ' ἐς γαῖαν ὑπερφιάλων ἀθεμίστων
> ἱκόμεθ'…
>
> … τοῖσιν δ' οὔτ' ἀγοραὶ βουληφόροι οὔτε θέμιστες,
> ἀλλ' οἵ γ' ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων ναίουσι κάρηνα
> ἐν σπέεσι γλαφυροῖσι, θεμιστεύει δὲ ἕκαστος
> παίδων ἠδ' ἀλόχων, οὐδ' ἀλλήλων ἀλέγουσι.

> And we came to the land of the Cyclopes, a fierce, lawless [ἀθέμιστος] people… The Cyclopes have no assemblies [ἀγοραί] for the making of laws, nor any established legal codes [θέμιστες], but live in hollow caverns in the mountain heights, where each man is lawgiver [θεμιστεύειν] to his own children and women, and no one has the slightest interest [ἀλέγειν] in what his neighbours decide.[585]

Councils and assemblies feature prominently in both poems, discussing a variety of important topics, but they are "far from… democratic" in nature.[586] The only time that a commoner, a κακός, dares to voice his opinion in an assembly is when Thersites accuses Agamemnon of being a poor 'leader' for inflicting κάκη on 'the sons of the Achaians' in

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[583] Zanker (1994) 59, 58.
[584] Osborne (2004) 212.
[585] Hom. *Od*. 9.106-107, 9.112-115; Rieu [trans.].
[586] Luce (1978) 10.

his selfish pursuit to acquire ever greater ‘prizes of honour’.[587] Thersites’ only reward for voicing a concern for the well-being of the Achaian army is a savage beating at the hands of Odysseus. It is simply not acceptable for a κακός ‘to argue with βασιλῆες’, regardless of whether or not his objections are valid (*Il*. 2.250); “so much for freedom of speech in the Homeric Assembly”.[588]

The fact is that the heroes dominate the assemblies just as they dominate every other aspect of Homeric society. They summon the assemblies, they put forth all the proposals, and they choose which course of action to follow, typically to the detriment of the entire community:

> ὡς δ' ὑπὸ λαίλαπι πᾶσα κελαινὴ βέβριθε χθὼν
> ἤματ' ὀπωρινῷ, ὅτε λαβρότατον χέει ὕδωρ
> Ζεύς, ὅτε δή ῥ' ἄνδρεσσι κοτεσσάμενος χαλεπήνῃ,
> οἳ βίῃ εἰν ἀγορῇ σκολιὰς κρίνωσι θέμιστας,
> ἐκ δὲ δίκην ἐλάσωσι θεῶν ὄπιν οὐκ ἀλέγοντες·

> As underneath the hurricane all the black earth is burdened on an autumn day, when Zeus sends down the most violent waters in a deep rage against mortals after they stir him to anger because in violent assembly [βία ἀγορά] they pass decrees that are crooked [σκολιαί θέμιστες], and drive righteousness [δίκη] from among them and care nothing for what the gods think [θεῶν ὄπις]...[589]

The assembly in Homeric society – instead of constraining the heroes to pay some regard, ἀλέγειν, to the needs of others – more often than not erupts into a ‘violent’ battleground as each hero, ‘car[ing] nothing’ for justice, δίκη, or divine retribution, θεῶν ὄπις, strives to assert his own authority and secure his own pre-eminence by passing whatever ‘crooked’ ‘decree’ most serves his own interests: when ‘all the rest of the Achaians’ agree that Chryseis should be returned, Agamemnon disregards their wishes, keeps his γέρας, and provokes the wrath of Apollo (*Il*. 1.22); when Poulydamas proposes a course of action that will prove more beneficial to the army than Hektor’s ‘own cause’ – which will ‘leave many Trojans behind… whom the Achaians will cut down with the bronze’ –

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[587] Hom. *Il*. 2.225-242; Lattimore [trans.].
[588] Luce (1978) 10.
[589] Hom. *Il*. 16.384-388; Lattimore [trans.].

Hektor threatens to kill him (*Il*. 12.214, 12.226-227, 12.250); and when Telemachus summons an assembly and pleads his case against the Suitors, they respond by boasting that they 'are afraid of no one at all', swearing that they will not give up 'their unwelcome suit' until they get what they want, threatening all those who attempt to restrain them with 'extremely unpleasant consequences', and demanding that the assembly be dismissed (*Od*. 2.199, 2.198-199, 2.192-193, 2.252).

The heroes are the leaders of society. Life in the Homeric world is perilous, fraught with violence and death, and the λαοί rely on their leaders for protection. Phoinix makes use of the story of Meleagros to remind Achilleus of this fact and persuade him to re-enter the war. Just like Achilleus, Meleagros was refusing to aid his fellow Aitolians in their war against the Kouretes. His father, mother, sisters and 'dearest' friends plead with him 'to come forth and defend them' (*Il*. 9.576), but all to no avail.

> καὶ τότε δὴ Μελέαγρον ἐΰζωνος παράκοιτις
> λίσσετ' ὀδυρομένη, καί οἱ κατέλεξεν ἅπαντα
> κήδε', ὅσ' ἀνθρώποισι πέλει τῶν ἄστυ ἁλώῃ·
> ἄνδρας μὲν κτείνουσι, πόλιν δέ τε πῦρ ἀμαθύνει,
> τέκνα δέ τ' ἄλλοι ἄγουσι βαθυζώνους τε γυναῖκας.
> τοῦ δ' ὠρίνετο θυμὸς ἀκούοντος κακὰ ἔργα,
> βῆ δ' ἰέναι, χροῒ δ' ἔντε' ἐδύσετο παμφανόωντα.

> And then at last his wife, the fair-girdled bride, supplicated Meleagros, in tears, and rehearsed in their numbers before him all the sorrows [κήδεα] that come to men when their city is taken: they kill the men, and the fire leaves the city in ashes, and strangers lead the children away and the deep-girdled women. And the heart, as he listened to all this evil [κακά], was stirred within him, and he rose, and went, and closed his body in shining armour.[590]

Meleagros is finally persuaded to relent from his χόλος θυμαλγής and to go out and defend his community – not as a result of supplication, or even the offer of a 'great gift', μέγα δῶρον – but by his wife's description of all the κήδεα and κακά that his λαοί would be forced to endure should he fail to protect the city.[591] As in the case of Meleagros, a leader's concern for the safety of his λαοί should always in the last resort override all other considerations, even the loss of his own life:

[590] Hom. *Il*. 9.590-596; Lattimore [trans.].
[591] ibid. 9.565, 9.576.

> ὡς δὲ γυνὴ κλαίῃσι φίλον πόσιν ἀμφιπεσοῦσα,
> ὅς τε ἑῆς πρόσθεν πόλιος λαῶν τε πέσῃσιν,
> ἄστεϊ καὶ τεκέεσσιν ἀμύνων νηλεὲς ἦμαρ·

> He wept as a woman weeps when she throws her arms round the body of her beloved husband, fallen in battle in defense of his city [πόλις] and his comrades [λαοί], fighting to save [ἀμύνειν] his city and his children from the evil day.[592]

When a leader honours his social responsibilities, the community thrives:

> ἦ γάρ σευ κλέος οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἱκάνει,
> ὥς τέ τευ ἦ βασιλῆος ἀμύμονος, ὅς τε θεουδὴς
> ἀνδράσιν ἐν πολλοῖσι καὶ ἰφθίμοισιν ἀνάσσων
> εὐδικίας ἀνέχῃσι, φέρῃσι δὲ γαῖα μέλαινα
> πυροὺς καὶ κριθάς, βρίθῃσι δὲ δένδρεα καρπῷ,
> τίκτῃ δ' ἔμπεδα μῆλα, θάλασσα δὲ παρέχῃ ἰχθῦς
> ἐξ εὐηγεσίης, ἀρετῶσι δὲ λαοὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.

> For your fame has reached broad heaven itself, like that of some illustrious king [βασιλεύς ἀμύμων] ruling a prosperous and mighty country with the fear of the gods in his heart, and upholding justice [εὐδικία]. As a result of his good leadership [εὐηγεσία] the dark soil yields its wheat and barley, the trees are laden with ripe fruit, the sheep never fail to bear their lambs, nor the sea to provide its fish; and his people prosper [ἀρετᾶν] under him.[593]

The problem, however, is that in a society where a man's worth is determined not by the extent to which he is able to co-operate with other members of society for the common good, but by the extent to which he is able to achieve as much individual success and prestige as possible, the need to promote the interests of the social group must always in the last resort be overpowered by the need to assert one's own τιμή. And in the obsessiveness with which they feel compelled to protect that conception of self-worth against all injury and slight, the leaders of Homeric society, the so-called 'shepherds of the people', far from furthering the interests of their λαοί, actually become a threat to their very existence: Hektor knows full well that the city of Troy and all his λαοί are doomed without him, but chooses to forsake them anyway; Agamemnon devastates the

[592] Hom. *Od*. 8.523-525; Rieu [trans.].
[593] ibid. 19.108-114.

Achaian army by first inciting the wrath of Apollo, and then the wrath of Achilleus; Achilleus takes revenge on Agamemnon by abusing his influence with the gods to ensure the destruction of the entire army; and Odysseus wreaks havoc on the community of Ithaca by slaughtering all the Suitors, 'the mainstay of [his] *polis*', and initiating a civil war (*Od*. 23.121).

Like all heroic poetry, the Homeric poems depict a vanished epoch of glory and splendour: the palaces are luxurious, the treasures magnificent, the women surpassingly lovely, the men strong, brave, and insurmountable. Unlike other heroic poetry, however, the poems also serve to "highlight the inherent weakness of the social world they describe". Indeed, Homer seems to go to a great deal of effort to "expos[e] to scrutiny… a model of social life [that] is fundamentally flawed".[594] The Homeric alignment of values – with its heavy reliance on the competitive excellences and comparative lack of regard for the co-operative ones – is, in theory, supposed to promote and ensure the stability of Homeric society. In practice, however, it consistently serves to undermine social cohesion to the extent that it becomes, as it does in Archaic and Classical Greek society, a serious threat to the well-being of the community.

[594] Haubold (2000) 32.

Conclusion

Why were the Homeric poems so popularly received? The Homeric poems belong to and establish the genre of heroic poetry, a type of poetry "which is represented… as the praise of the great deeds of a long-ago nobility"[595]; and yet there is so much more to them. While the poems look back to the highly centralised and bureaucratic society of the Mycenaean era, they also look forward, insistently so, to the new form of social organisation emerging in the eighth century – the *polis*. Homer reinterpreted and reinvented the inherited stories of adventure and warfare to compose poetry that expressed new "models of action and feeling for the age of the *polis*".[596] "By associating [the] old [heroic] themes with [the] new consciousness of urbanisation" that was beginning to take form in the eighth century,[597] Homer was able to develop in his audiences a new conception and understanding of human existence for the altered conditions of the *polis* and to "broaden their awareness to include the new modes of social and political activity which the new needs and goals" of their social world "demanded".[598] Through his composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Homer contributed to the development of new ideas on the manner in which the Greeks could live together in the new sociopolitical conditions of the *polis*. Herein lies the key to Homer's continued popularity, for his poetry became the expression of the very issues that were to plague the Greeks for centuries: the pursuit of private interests at the expense of the community; the question of how best to determine a man's worth – by the extent to which he achieves individual success or by the extent to which he shows regard for his fellow men, respects the norms of human society and furthers the interests of his social group; the tension between individual autonomy and social obligation, between the motivation to maintain group harmony and the desire to assert one's own pre-eminence, between the organs of the community and the power drives of ambitious individuals; the need for social cohesion (ὁμόνοια), institutional continuity and a more collaborative system of values;

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[595] Latacz (1996) 15-16.
[596] Seaford (1994) 177.
[597] Scully (1990) 97.
[598] Gentili [tr. Cole] (1988) 55.

and the manner in which a man can best come to terms with the conditions that bind his existence in a human community.

The Homeric poems portray "a social world without effective social structures,"[599] in which the behaviour of individuals is governed not by their understanding that, as members of a human society, they have a duty to care for one another and promote the interests of the social group, but by their aspiration as descendants of the gods to exert every means within their power to achieve as much individual success and prestige as possible. So while the heroes might represent an "exalted version of human nature" who inspire "wonder because of their strength, their fierceness [and] their superhuman force,"[600] they also display a pervasive tendency to "undermine social cohesion and the well-being of the larger community".[601] The emergence of the notion of 'community' as represented in the slow development of the *polis* occasioned the need for "a new measure of man, more suited to the changed" social, political and economic "conditions of Greek society"[602] – men who, unlike the Homeric heroes, understand that the success of any communal venture depends on their ability to work together; who recognise and accept that the interests of the social group must always in the last resort take precedence over the interests of the individual; and who "prove themselves" not by individual success and achievement, but "by respecting their fellow men and enabling human society, taken as it is, to live in harmony".[603]

This new 'community-oriented' conception of man is embodied in the poetry of Simonides (*c*. 509-500). 'To be truly good', ἀγαθός ἀληθῶς (whether in terms of one's physical and mental prowess, one's successes and achievements, or even one's social standing), says Simonides, is not merely a 'difficult' 'quest', but an 'impossible' one; indeed, this is a 'privilege' that is reserved only for the gods. Ordinary human beings 'cannot avoid being κακός', forced as they are to "deal with the constraints," ἀνάγκαι, and 'irresistible misfortune[s]' "imposed upon [them]" by the gods, "by social necessity

[599] Haubold (2000) 51.
[600] Clarke (2004) 80.
[601] Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 114.
[602] Gentili [tr. Cole] (1988) 64.
[603] Snell (1961) 101.

and [by their] own inner impulses".[604] And so, instead of 'throw[ing] away [his] span of life' on an 'empty, vain hope', a man should rather concern himself with trying to be the best that he can be, which is to do 'nothing shameful… of his own will' and to live a 'sound' life in accordance with 'the justice that helps his city', ὀνησίπολις δίκη:

> πάντας δ' ἐπαίνημι καὶ φιλέω,
> ἑκὼν ὅστις ἔρδηι
> μηδὲν αἰσχρόν· ἀνάγκαι
> δ' οὐδὲ θεοὶ μάχονται.
> …
> οὐκ εἰμὶ φιλόψογος, ἐπεὶ ἔμοιγε ἐξαρκεῖ
> ὃς ἂν μὴ κακὸς ἦι μηδ' ἄγαν ἀπάλαμνος εἰ-
> δώς γ' ὀνησίπολιν δίκαν,
> ὑγιὴς ἀνήρ· οὐ μὴν ἐγὼ
> μωμήσομαι· τῶν γὰρ ἠλιθίων
> ἀπείρων γενέθλα.
> πάντα τοι καλά, τοῖσίν
> τ' αἰσχρὰ μὴ μέμεικται.

> No, I commend and love any man who of his
> own will does nothing shameful [αἰσχρόν]; against
> necessity not even the gods fight.
> …
> I am not a fault-finder: I am satisfied with the
> man who is not bad [κακός] nor too shiftless,
> one who understands the justice that helps his
> city [ὀνησίπολις δίκη], a sound man.
> I shall not find fault with him;
> for the generation of fools is numberless.
> All things are fair [καλά] in which the base [αἰσχρά]
> is not mingled.[605]

"To the ethic of absolute values" – the values by which the men of Homeric society conduct their lives – Simonides "opposes the ethic of relative values, more human and less heroic, which moves from the lofty plane of aesthetic and agonistic striving to the broader one of ethical and social commitment in a community context. For [Homer's] 'heroic' man Simonides substitutes" a new 'civic' conception of man, "equally lofty" but

[604] Gentili [tr. Cole] (1988) 65.
[605] Simon. fr. 542; Campbell [trans.].

"more in tune with the new historical reality: the ideal of the democratic citizen living a just life in accordance with the interests of the city."[606]

In his *Politics* Aristotle defines man as a ζῷον πολιτικόν: "a being whose highest goal, whose τέλος (end), is by nature to live in a *polis*" (Arist. *Politics* 1252b9-1253a39). Finley believes that "most Greeks" would have shared this assessment,[607] as they would have shared the belief that "the good life was possible only in a *polis*";[608] that "the essential condition for a genuine political society, for a true *polis*… [was] 'Rule by laws, not by men'" (Pl. *Republic* 565e-566a, Arist. *Politics* 1295a19-1295a23);[609] and that "freedom was… equated" not "with anarchy… but with an ordered existence within a community which was governed by an established code respected by all".[610] The growth of the *polis* seems to have been accompanied by the necessary awareness of the need to develop new modes of social and political activity upon which the success of life in a *polis* depends: an increase in the level of political self-consciousness which ultimately led to the advent of democracy and the principles of ἰσονομία; the development and implementation of new laws and institutions designed to promote ὁμόνοια, institutional continuity and the notions of justice and equality; and the growing recognition of the importance of loyalty to the state, obedience to the laws and adherence to a more co-operative system of values. In reality, however, the 'heroic' outlook – the irrepressible need to always be 'the best', to assert one's own pre-eminence and prestige, to pursue individual ἀρετή at all costs – never quite gave way to Simonides' conception of 'civic' ἀρετή and the understanding that, as members of a human community, the need to work together for the common good is paramount.

The social crisis that first arose following the elimination of the kings of the Mycenaean world was never truly resolved. Instead, Theognis' fear that 'evil men' would 'commit ὕβρις' against the city and 'destroy' its 'tranquility', that they would 'corrupt the common people and give judgement in favour of the unjust for their own profit or power', and that they would 'bring evil to the people' in the form of 'civil strife, the

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[606] Gentili [tr. Cole] (1988) 65.
[607] Finley (1983) 24-25.
[608] ibid. 125.
[609] ibid. 135.
[610] Finley (1963) 41.

killing of kinfolk and dictatorships' (Theog. 1.39-52; Wender [trans.]), was not only realised but "became a permanent, and highly abrasive, feature of" *polis* life.[611] In Athens, "the paragon of Greek democracy,"[612] Solon's plea for εὐνομία went unheard, as the different classes and political factions continued to engage in 'social discord' and 'grievous strife' (Sol. 4.20-39; Freeman [trans.]), while ambitious individuals, 'through their following of unjust works and ways', frequently abused their wealth and authority to disregard 'the holy foundations of Justice' in the competition for individual power and prestige (Sol. 4.5-29; Freeman [trans.]).

Herodotus describes the 'Greek nation' as being bound up psychologically by a feeling of Hellenic self-consciousness – 'the community of blood and language, temples and ritual, and our common customs'[613] – and Solon describes his reforms as intended to 'accusto[m] the citizens as members of one body to feel and sympathise with one another's sufferings'.[614] But to what extent was this spirit of 'nationalism' – of a deep-rooted consciousness of belonging to a single community with a unified cultural identity; of a perception of being intrinsically rather than artificially bound together as a 'collective' – a reality rather than a desire or wishful projection? The Greek consciousness, rather than ascribing whole-heartedly to a belief of "their fundamental unity as a people",[615] seems instead to have been plagued by an underlying and ineradicable tension: between what is best for the individual and what is best for the community; between what is best for the individual state and what is best for the community of states known as 'the Greeks'; between the need to obey Zeus' 'law' to promote 'bonds of friendship and union' by behaving with αἰδώς and δίκη in one's relations with fellow men (Pl. *Protagoras* 322c2-322d5; Guthrie [trans.]) and the need to obey the 'general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can' (Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* V.105; Warner [trans.]); between the knowledge that 'a city is better off' when its citizens 'abide by' the νόμοι (Thuc. *The Peloponnesian War* III.37.3.1-5.3;

[611] Green (1973) 117.
[612] Finley (1970) 108.
[613] Hdt. *Histories* 8.144; De Sélincourt [trans.].
[614] Plut. *Solon* 18.6; Scott-Kilvert [trans.].
[615] Luce (1975) 179.

Warner [trans.]) and the desire to exert every means at one's disposal, just or no, 'to help [one's] φίλοι and injure [one's] ἐχθροί' (Pl. *Meno* 71e1-71e5; Guthrie [trans.]).

Far from ever resolving this tension, Diogenes reveals just how "meaningless" the concept of 'citizenship' – of membership to a distinctly 'Greek community' – "had become"[616] when he refers to himself as being a κοσμοπολίτης, 'a citizen of the universe' (Diog. Laert. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 6.63.3; Hicks [trans.]).[617] While the community of Ithaca is spared the 'horror and turmoil' of 'disastrous war', πόλεμος ἀργαλέος, when Athena and Zeus impose reconciliation, social cohesion, and friendship, φιλότης, at the end of the *Odyssey* (*Od*. 24.475, 24.531, 24.476), this "solution" was one that the Greeks "were never fortunate enough to experience".[618] And it was precisely this failure to realise 'their fundamental unity as a people' – to develop a shared belief among the members of society that they belong to a single and unique social group who share a unified cultural identity with common characteristics, values, goals and purpose; to muster the necessary level of social cohesion which needs to operate both within the city-state and between the various city-states; and to abandon competitive ἀρετή in favour of co-operation and co-existence – that ultimately led to their downfall: the fall of democracy, the decline of the *polis*, and their eventual subjection under first Macedonian and then Roman control.

In his book *Homer and his Critics*, Sir John Myres began by stating that "it is not easy to say anything new about Homer", to which J.V. Luce, in his own book *Homer and the Heroic Age*, responded: "It is also true that it is risky to say anything about Homer!"[619] Although Luce is here referring to the impossibility of ever proving one's "assumptions" beyond any reasonable doubt, I would argue that the real reason it is so 'risky to say anything about Homer' is essentially the same reason that accounts for the popularity of his poems not only in ancient Greece, but still to this day. Like all truly 'great' literature, Homeric poetry embodies attitudes to the fundamental questions of human life: the meaning or 'worth' of a man's life; the acceptance of death; the nature of man's relation

[616] Finley (1963) 113.
[617] Long's 1964 edition of Diogenes Laertius' *Vitae philosophorum*.
[618] Adkins (1960) 239.
[619] Luce (1975) 10.

to his fellow men; and, of course, the need to come to terms with the unchanging conditions, ἀνάγκαι, that both characterise and bind our existence as δειλοί βροτοί, 'wretched mortals'.[620] Charles Horton Cooley believed that "one of the most universal of all social behaviours" lay in man's unfailing predisposition to "spend both time and energy searching for [his] reflection".[621] Taken in this light, the Homeric poems became in a sense the 'mirror' in which all Greeks from the eighth century onwards could search for their reflection and so contemplate the reality of their own lives in the *polis*. This process is not specific only to the ancient Greeks, but is open to all men, for Homer's 'winged words' strike at the very heart of man's humanity.

[620] Hom. *Il*. 24.525; Lattimore [trans.].
[621] Worchel and Coutant (2004) 189.

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