FIGHTING WORDS: HOW HEROES ARGUE

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I. FORCE AND PERSUASION

According to the French philosopher Simone Weil, "The true hero, the true subject, the center of the *Iliad* is force" (Weil 1956.3). Weil defines force as "that *x* that turns anybody who is subject to it into a *thing*" (Weil 1956.3, emphasis in original). This force manifests itself in three ways. First, there is the force that kills, the force that turns someone into a corpse. Second, there is the force that turns a person into a thing even while that person is still alive.[1] And third is the force that intoxicates, that keeps the possessor of force from reflection, justice, and prudence.[2]

I think that Weil sees something true about the *Iliad*, but it is not the whole truth. I would not claim that the hero and the subject of the *Iliad* is persuasion, but I would say that persuasion—its function, its meaning, its

1 "A man stands disarmed and naked with a weapon pointing at him; this person becomes a corpse before anybody or anything touches him" (Weil 1956.5). "He is alive; he has a soul; and yet—he is a thing. An extraordinary entity this—a thing which has a soul. And as for the soul, what an extraordinary house it finds itself in! Who can say what it costs it, moment by moment, to accommodate itself to this residence, how much writhing and bending, folding and pleating are required of it? It was not made to live inside a thing; if it does so, under pressure of necessity, there is not a single element of its nature to which violence is not done" (Weil 1956.4–5).

2 "Force is as pitiless to the man who possesses it, or thinks he does, as it is to its victims" (Weil 1956.11). "The man who is the possessor of force seems to walk through a non-resistant element; in the human substance that surrounds him nothing has the power to interpose, between the impulse and the act, the tiny interval that is reflection. Where there is no room for reflection, there is none either for justice or prudence. Hence we see men in arms behaving harshly and madly" (Weil 1956.12–13).

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successes and its failures—is an important element of the story. In a way, the *Iliad* is a meditation on persuasion or, better, on the relationship between force and persuasion. The narrative shows what happens when persuasion fails, and then what happens when force fails.

The contrast between force and persuasion is linked to a continuing theme in the *Iliad*, the contrast between words and deeds, most famously expressed by Phoenix in Book 9. In his attempt to persuade Achilles to return to battle, he says that Peleus sent him along with Achilles so that Phoenix could teach Achilles to be a speaker of words and a doer of deeds (*Il*. 9.438–43):[3]

> σοὶ δέ μ᾽ ἔπεμπε γέρων ἱππηλάτα Πηλεὺς
> ἤματι τῷ ὅτε σ᾽ ἐκ Φθίης ᾽Αγαμέμνονι πέμπε
> νήπιον, οὔ πω εἰδόθ᾽ ὁμοιΐου πολέμοιο,
> οὐδ᾽ ἀγορέων, ἵνα τ᾽ ἄνδρες ἀριπρεπέες τελέθουσι.
> τοὔνεκά με προέηκε διδασκέμεναι τάδε πάντα,
> μύθων τε ῥητῆρ᾽ ἔμεναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων.
>
> Peleus the aged horseman sent me forth with you
> on that day when he sent you from Phthia to
> Agamemnon—
> a mere child, who knew nothing yet of the joining of
> battle
> nor of debate where men are made pre-eminent.
> Therefore
> he sent me along with you to teach you of all these
> matters,
> to make you a speaker of words and one who
> accomplished in action.

This passage is only one of many in the *Iliad* that links or contrasts words and deeds.[4] Because the linkage of words and deeds, persuasion and force, pervades the *Iliad*, they can be understood only in terms of each other.

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3 All translations are those of Richmond Lattimore 1961, unless otherwise noted.

4 For example, early in Book 1, Kalchas asks Achilles to protect him with his words and his hands: σὺ δὲ σύνθεο καί μοι ὄμοσσον, / ἢ μέν μοι πρόφρων ἔπεσιν καὶ χερσὶν ἀρήξειν (*Il*. 1.76–77: "Yet make me a promise and swear before me / readily by word and work of your hands to defend me"). For discussion of this theme, see Barck 1976.

Moreover, in order to understand persuasion in the *Iliad*, we have to understand the failure of persuasion—especially since the failure of persuasion is fundamental to the whole story: the Achaeans were unable to persuade the Trojans to give Helen back. If they had been successful, there would have been no need to fight.

An attempt to persuade is not in itself an argument, but argument derives from failed persuasion. If persuasion succeeds immediately, there will be no argument. If persuasion fails, an argument may ensue or it may not. When Chryses tries to persuade Agamemnon to return Chryseis, Agamemnon does not argue the point; he simply refuses and sends Chryses on his way. Nor does Chryses argue; he is afraid, and he leaves without a word.[5]

Chryses does not remain to argue because he knows that he does not have as much power as does Agamemnon (at least on the mortal plane of action). In general, an argument occurs only when the power of each party is roughly equal. Then an attempt to persuade may turn into an argument. This is the situation in Book 1, when Achilles and Agamemnon argue. In short, an attempt to persuade does not imply an argument, but an argument may develop from an attempt to persuade. The added element is dialogue, conversation, exchange of speech among near equals. Persuasion is a speech act performed by one person in order to influence another person; argument is a speech between two people, each attempting to influence the other. As Egbert Bakker notes (1997a.76–77): "Shared seeing is the aim of any discourse that mediates between two consciousnesses, and very few utterances are made for their own sake or just as statements of certainty, belief, or opinion. The actual use of language transcends the abstraction of it offered by the philosophers or logicians. Most speech is necessarily directed to someone, a consciousness other than the speaker's, and response from this other consciousness, even if it remains implicit in the form of cooperation assumed in the mind of the speaker, is essential for the presentation of discourse and its continuation. Speech must be at least implicitly dialogic, even when no one is required or expected to give an explicit answer." Shared seeing is extremely important in the *Iliad*; the importance of supplication in the epic is indicative.[6] But shared seeing is not the whole story.

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5 Of course Chryses then has recourse to a higher power as he appeals for help to Apollo. This new step, as crucial as it is for the plot of the *Iliad* as a whole, is not part of the argument here. For discussion, see Clark forthcoming.

6 For discussion of supplication, see Crotty 1994 and Clark 1998.

II. TWO MODELS OF CONVERSATION

We may find a dialogic model of conversation, or the beginning of such a model, in the account of conversational protocols presented by the American philosopher Paul Grice. Grice was not primarily interested in the intersubjectivity of conversation—he was interested primarily in questions of meaning and implication—but his remarks have proved to be of general value to many scholars who are interested in language but who are not philosophers. Grice's model has some limitations, as I will suggest, but I think it can be useful in understanding how an argument works.

According to Grice, "Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction" (Grice 1989.26). Consequently, the participants in a conversation will ordinarily observe what Grice calls the cooperative principle: "Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice 1989.26). He then further specifies this cooperative principle with a set of submaxims under four different categories: quantity, quality, relation, and manner.[7]

It would be unfair to Grice to suggest that this summary is a complete account of his view of conversation. On the one hand, he does suggest that this model accounts for the normal way of carrying on a conversation; he says that "talkers will in general (*ceteris paribus* and in the absence of indications to the contrary) proceed in the manner that these principles prescribe" (Grice 1989.28–29). On the other hand, he does admit exceptions. He lists various ways in which these principles may be violated (Grice 1989.30), and he explains certain facts of conversation through these

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7 The conversational protocols, adapted from Grice 1989.26–28. Cooperative principle: make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. Quantity: make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). Do not make your contribution more informative than is required. Quality: try to make your contribution one that is true. Do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. Relation: be relevant. Manner: be perspicuous. Avoid obscurity of expression. Avoid ambiguity. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity). Be orderly. Additional maxims: be polite. Etc.

violations; irony and metaphor, for example, are to be understood as a violation of the first maxim of quality. Grice does not explain, however, why someone might want to violate the conversational protocols; he does not explain why one might want to speak ironically or metaphorically. Moreover, his maxims all depend on the purpose of the conversation, but he does not explain how the analyst determines this purpose: what seems from one position to be a violation of the purpose may, from another position, precisely define the purpose. As Grice specifically grants, a conversation may not follow the cooperative principle just in case it is not a cooperative conversation—if, in fact, it is a quarrel.

Nor does Grice explain the status of the conversational protocols. Are they to be understood as a norm? Are they to be understood as an ideal? If an ideal, are they the sort of ideal we should strive to achieve? Or is this ideal an abstract model, merely useful for analysis? In my opinion, the protocols do not describe a norm, except perhaps among professors of philosophy; nor are they an ideal we should strive to achieve: too much of what is valuable in conversation according to these protocols becomes excess and superfluous. But Grice's conversational protocols can be useful as an analytical model, and that is the way I will use them in analyzing the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles.

Three aspects of Grice's model are fundamental: (1) it assumes that conversation is dialogic; (2) it assumes that conversation is cooperative; and (3) it assumes that conversation is rational. Nor is Grice alone. The model of discourse presented by Jurgen Habermas shares these assumptions,[8] and these same assumptions seem also to be implied in the passage from Bakker quoted above.

Of course everyone knows that some conversations fail to be completely dialogic, cooperative, and rational. Grice certainly admits that quarrels happen, but he does not establish the protocols of quarreling. Even so, the conversational protocols may be useful in the analysis of arguments, since arguments, to some extent, consist of violations of the conversational

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8 "I shall develop the thesis that anyone acting communicatively must, in performing any speech action, raise universal validity claims and suppose that they can be vindicated. Insofar as he wants to participate in a process of reaching understanding, he cannot avoid raising the following—and indeed precisely the following—validity claims. He claims to be (a) Uttering something understandably; (b) Giving [the hearer] something to understand; (c) Making himself thereby understandable; and (d) Coming to an understanding with another person" (Habermas 1979.2).

protocols. But once we have identified a violation of the protocols, we must go further and consider why such a violation has occurred. For this question, we need another model.

The second model that I offer is not designed as a model of conversation but a model of errors in thinking for use in the therapeutic practice known as cognitive therapy. These errors of thinking are often manifested in conversation and often lead to quarrels. According to Aaron Beck, many emotional difficulties derive from the following logical errors: (1) all-or-nothing thinking, (2) catastrophizing, (3) discounting the positive, (4) emotional reasoning, (5) labeling, (6) magnifying and minimizing, (7) selective abstraction, (8) mind reading, (9) overgeneralization, (10) personalization, (11) imperatives, and (12) tunnel vision.[9]

This model is, in effect, the shadow-side of Grice's cooperative principle, since violations of the conversational protocols may derive from these errors of thinking. Certainly this model is persuasive, but it is not an end in itself, since it raises a further question: why should these errors of thinking occur? I think that these errors of thinking may, in turn, derive from errors of feeling, errors of emotion.

These, then, are two models of conversation, and both can be useful in analyzing the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles. We should not, however, simply take either model at face value. These models do help us understand the poem, and an understanding of the poem may force us to recognize certain limitations in the models, which must then be revised in the light of the poem.

III. THE ARGUMENT

The argument between Agamemnon and Achilles is really the fundamental cause of the whole plot of the epic, since it leads to Agamemnon's

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9 This model is adapted from Beck 1995.119. These twelve errors can be further characterized, again adapting Beck 1995.119: (1) viewing the situation in only two categories instead of on a continuum; (2) predicting the future negatively without considering other likely outcomes; (3) discounting positive experiences, deeds, or qualities; (4) counting something as true because of a desire that it be true, while discounting evidence to the contrary; (5) the use of fixed or global labels; (6) magnifying the negative and minimizing the positive; (7) paying undue attention to one negative detail; (8) ascribing thoughts and beliefs to others without adequate evidence; (9) making sweeping negative conclusions; (10) assuming that another's negative behavior is due to or directed at oneself; (11) fixed ideas about how others should behave; and (12) seeing only the negative aspects of a situation.

seizure of Briseis, Achilles' withdrawal from the fighting, the defeat of the Achaeans, and the death of Patroklos.[10] Where precisely does this argument begin? There is no clear moment, I think, where we can say: "Before this Agamemnon and Achilles were just having a discussion, but now they are having an argument." There is a gradual change in the tone of the discourse and, even within this gradual change, there is ebb and flow.

At the beginning of the episode, around line 53 of Book 1, when Achilles calls the assembly to discuss the plague that is afflicting the Achaeans, we would probably not want to say that the quarrel has begun. Agamemnon does not even stand to speak until line 101 so it would be difficult to claim that he is engaging in an argument. And yet his very silence for these fifty lines may prepare for later tensions; as many scholars have noted, it must mean something that Achilles rather than Agamemnon calls the assembly.

Achilles' speech is, in fact, addressed to Agamemnon, presumably because Agamemnon, as the leader of the expedition, presides. As Kirk (1985 ad loc.) notes, Achilles' words are "perfectly unprovocative" as he suggests that some *mantis* may be able to tell them why Apollo is angry. At this point, Achilles seems innocent.

Kalchas's reply, however, complicates the situation. He asks for Achilles' protection because he fears that his reply will anger someone (*Il.* 1.78–79):

> ἦ γὰρ ὀΐομαι ἄνδρα χολωσέμεν, ὃς μέγα πάντων
> ᾽Αργείων κρατέει καί οἱ πείθονται ᾽Αχαιοί.
>
> Since I believe I shall make a man angry who holds
> great kingship
> over the men of Argos, and all the Achaians obey him.

Kalchas's description applies to just one person. It is true that there are many kings among the Argives, but there is only one who could claim to rule all the Argives, only one whom all the Achaeans obey. This is Agamemnon. If

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10 Such an important moment in the story has, of course, received considerable critical attention. I have found Whitman 1965 [1958], Edwards 1987, and Taplin 1992 particularly helpful, though I do not agree with them in all points, nor do they always agree with each other. I have also used Kirk 1985, which is useful because it comments on nearly every line.

so, this identification must color Achilles' reply, as he agrees to protect Kalchas (*Il.* 1.88–91):

> 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 to be far the greatest of the Achaians.

According to Kirk (1985 ad loc.), this passage is "a gratuitous addition" and "mildly insulting." He also notes that this remark is "the beginning of trouble. The comprehensiveness of Achilles' guarantee was plain enough without mentioning the king again." But if I am right that Kalchas has indicated Agamemnon as the source of his fear, though without naming him, then Achilles' addition is not gratuitous. Kalchas does not need a comprehensive guarantee; he needs a guarantee that Achilles will protect him against Agamemnon, and this is the guarantee which Achilles provides.

Although Agamemnon has not yet spoken, these passages gradually bring him on stage, gradually bring him into the consciousness of the audience. First, he is present as an absence, as the one who should have called the assembly, but did not. Second, he is the president of the assembly, addressed but not yet speaking. Third, he is the referent of a hinting description. Fourth, he is named, if only in a hypothetical clause. But Kalchas's answer is not hypothetical; he names Agamemnon directly as the source of the problem (*Il.* 1.93–95):

> οὔτ' ἄρ' ὅ γ' εὐχωλῆς ἐπιμέμφεται οὔθ' ἑκατόμβης,
> ἀλλ' ἕνεκ' ἀρητῆρος, ὃν ἠτίμησ' Ἀγαμέμνων
> οὐδ' ἀπέλυσε θύγατρα καὶ οὐκ ἀπεδέξατ' ἄποινα,
>
> No, it is not for the sake of some vow or hecatomb he blames us,

but for the sake of his priest whom Agamemnon
dishonoured
and would not give him back his daughter nor accept
the ransom.

Agamemnon now stands to answer this charge. This speech is then the climax of a carefully graduated process of bringing Agamemnon on stage, and it is also the beginning of a new process, as Agamemnon responds to the charge that he is responsible for the plague.

The overall sense of Agamemnon's speech is not complex. If he had followed Grice's conversational protocols, he could have said quite simply: "I see your point. Yes, I will give Chryseis back to her father, in return, however, I ask for compensation." But Agamemnon flagrantly violates the protocols for two reasons: first, because he is angry and, second, because he is, to a great extent, talking to himself.

Certainly the speech begins as a direct address to Kalchas (*Il*. 1.106–08):

μάντι κακῶν, οὐ πώ ποτέ μοι τὸ κρήγυον εἶπας·
αἰεί τοι τὰ κάκ' ἐστι φίλα φρεσὶ μαντεύεσθαι,
ἐσθλὸν δ' οὔτε τί πω εἶπας ἔπος οὔτ' ἐτέλεσσας·

Seer of evil: never yet have you told me a good thing.
Always the evil things are dear to your heart to
prophesy,
but nothing excellent have you said nor ever
accomplished.

But this speech does not really make sense as part of a dialogue with Kalchas or, for that matter, as an address to the Achaean host. This ad hominem attack really has no point except as an expression of anger. That is, Agamemnon does not use this charge as a basis for rejecting Kalchas's interpretation; he does not say: "You always like to prophesy evil things, therefore you cannot be trusted." On the contrary, he eventually accepts Kalchas's interpretation (*Il*. 1.109–12):

καὶ νῦν ἐν Δαναοῖσι θεοπροπέων ἀγορεύεις
ὡς δὴ τοῦδ' ἕνεκά σθιν ἑκηβόλος ἄλγεα τεύχει,
οὕνεκ' ἐγὼ κούρης Χρυσηΐδος ἀγλά' ἄποινα
οὐκ ἔθελον δέξασθαι,

> Now once more making divination to the Danaans, you argue
> forth your reason why he who strikes from afar afflicts them,
> because I for the sake of the girl Chryseis would not take
> the shining ransom.

It is precisely because Agamemnon accepts this interpretation that he is so angry.

If this speech were simply part of a dialogue with Kalchas or with the rest of the Achaean host, Agamemnon says much that need not be said and should not have been said, but if it is partly an internal struggle, the speech as a whole makes sense. Agamemnon is arguing himself into agreement, against his desires. His desire is to keep the girl for himself, that is why he did not accept the ransom (*Il*. 1.112–15):

> ἐπεὶ πολὺ βούλομαι αὐτὴν
> οἴκοι ἔχειν· καὶ γάρ ῥα Κλυταιμνήστρης προβέβουλα
> κουριδίης ἀλόχου, ἐπεὶ οὔ ἑθέν ἐστι χερείων,
> οὐ δέμας οὐδὲ φυήν, οὔτ᾽ ἄρ φρένας οὔτέ τι ἔργα.
>
> And indeed I wish greatly to have her
> in my own house; since I like her better than Klytaimnestra
> my own wife, for in truth she is in no way inferior,
> neither in build nor stature nor wit, not in accomplishment.

But this strong desire to keep Chryseis is overcome by a stronger desire: his desire that the army not be destroyed (*Il*. 1.116–17):

> ἀλλὰ καὶ ὧς ἐθέλω δόμεναι πάλιν, εἰ τό γ᾽ ἄμεινον·
> βούλομ᾽ ἐγὼ λαὸν σῶν ἔμμεναι ἢ ἀπολέσθαι·
>
> Still I am willing to give her back, if such is the best way.
> I myself desire that my people be safe, not perish.

Agamemnon's desire to keep Chryseis is not simply sexual desire. He made a public show of his power to keep her, and, now that he must give her up, he must also make a public show that he has been bested. This demonstration cannot be easy, and I think it is no wonder that he needs some compensation, not only material compensation but compensation for his feelings (*Il.* 1.118–20):

> αὐτὰρ ἐμοὶ γέρας αὐτιχ᾽ ἑτοιμάσατ᾽, ὄφρα μὴ οἶος
> ᾽Αργείων ἀγέραστος ἔω, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ἔοικε·
> λεύσσετε γὰρ τὸ 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.

It is this conflict between desires that causes the anger that he directs against Kalchas. The passage characterizes Agamemnon in two ways: first, many of his faults are displayed (these are what most interpreters have seen in the passage), but, in addition, Agamemnon struggles against his anger—perhaps only because he knows he has no alternative—and finds what he thinks is a solution. What we hear in this speech is the externalization of an interior debate as Agamemnon resolves his conflicting feelings.

Achilles is the first of many interpreters who consider Agamemnon's demand for immediate compensation unreasonable. But if we grant the fundamental social importance of the system of honor prizes, as does Achilles later on, then it is difficult to call Agamemnon's demand for compensation unreasonable in itself. What makes it unreasonable is the demand that the compensation be immediate.

Agamemnon has made two points: first, that he will return Chryseis and, second, that he wants compensation. When Achilles answers, he speaks mostly to the second point. Here Achilles may fall into the seventh of Beck's cognitive errors, as he pays attention to one detail rather than seeing the whole of Agamemnon's proposal. Still, his reply does attempt to deal with the situation. There is no ready supply of prizes lying around, Achilles says, but when the Achaeans capture Troy, Agamemnon will be repaid threefold and fourfold. He thus seems to grant Agamemnon's desire for compensation, but later and under conditions.

Agamemnon does not trust Achilles (*Il.* 1.131–34):

μὴ δὴ οὕτως, ἀγαθός περ ἐών, θεοείκελ᾽ Ἀχιλλεῦ,
κλέπτε νόῳ, ἐπεὶ οὐ παρελεύσεαι οὐδέ με πείσεις.
ἦ ἐθέλεις, ὄφρ᾽ αὐτὸς ἔχῃς γέρας, αὐτὰρ ἔμ᾽ αὖτως
ἧσθαι δευόμενον, κέλεαι δέ με τήνδ᾽ ἀποδοῦναι;

Not that way, good fighter 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?

Agamemnon sees only the negative side of Achilles' reply; he can only think: "Either I have a prize or I don't," rather than: "I don't have a prize now, but I will." Here he falls into the first of Beck's cognitive errors, all-or-nothing thinking. Moreover, he personalizes, as he regards Achilles' promise as an attack rather than an attempt to solve a problem. Perhaps, as Graham Zanker (1994.76) says, there is some specific tension between Agamemnon and Achilles, near equals who are in conflict over status. Each claims to be the best of the Achaeans, but the claim of each is threatened by the claim of the other. Oliver Taplin (1992.63–66) suggests that there is a "backlog of resentment" between the two. In any case, Agamemnon repeats his demand, but now he begins to become more specific: if he does not get compensation, he will take it from Achilles, from Aias, or from Odysseus (*Il.* 1.135–39):

ἀλλ᾽ εἰ μὲν δώσουσι γέρας μεγάθυμοι Ἀχαιοί,
ἄρσαντες κατὰ θυμόν, ὅπως ἀντάξιον ἔσται·
εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώωσιν, ἐγὼ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἕλωμαι
ἢ τεὸν ἢ Αἴαντος ἰὸν γέρας, ἢ Ὀδυσῆος
ἄξω ἑλών· ὁ 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.

But having raised the stakes, he now seems to qualify his demand that compensation be immediate (*Il.* 1.140):

> ἀλλ᾽ ἤτοι μὲν ταῦτα μεταφρασόμεσθα καὶ αὖτις,
>
> Still, these are things we shall deliberate again hereafter.

Agamemnon then orders preparations for the return of Chryseis, and he suggests that Aias or Idomeneus or Odysseus or Achilles be the leader of the expedition. According to Kirk (1985 ad loc.), Agamemnon insults Achilles by adding him to the end of the list of potential leaders as an afterthought (*Il.* 1.144–46):

> εἷς δέ τις ἀρχὸς ἀνὴρ βουληφόρος ἔστω,
> ἢ Αἴας ἢ Ἰδομενεὺς ἢ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
> ἠὲ σύ, Πηλεΐδη, πάντων ἐκπαγλότατ᾽ ἀνδρῶν,
>
> And let there be one responsible man in charge of her,
> either Aias or Idomeneus or brilliant Odysseus
> or you yourself, son of Peleus, most terrifying of all
> men.

It is true that Achilles is mentioned in a run over, adding enjambment, but it is not clear that this position must indicate an afterthought. Here the structure of the verse could be emphatic, especially in performance.

Although Agamemnon has threatened Aias and Odysseus as well as Achilles, it is only Achilles who responds. He does not accept Agamemnon's offer to defer the question of compensation, instead he extends the discussion to more general points of disagreement. By this time the quarrel has certainly begun, if not somewhere in Agamemnon's preceding speech. Achilles' language is now unambiguously vituperative. He continues with a string of abuse, no longer about the point in contention but about general questions: why should any of the Achaeans continue to obey Agamemnon?

Why did Achilles come to Troy at all? No Trojan ever did him any harm. Achilles does all the work, but Agamemnon gets all the prizes. This outburst goes far beyond the subject at hand; the introduction of these other issues seems neither cooperative nor reasonable.

As the argument continues, Achilles threatens to go home, and Agamemnon tells him to leave since he is always quarrelsome. At line 184, Agamemnon says that he will take Briseis from Achilles—whereas before the threat was more general and could have applied to Aias or to Odysseus, now it is directed specifically and solely against Achilles. And Agamemnon explains that he will take this prize not simply as compensation but in order to put Achilles in his place (*Il.* 1.184–87):

> ἐγὼ δέ κ᾽ ἄγω Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρῃον
> αὐτὸς ἰὼν κλισίηνδε, τὸ σὸν γέρας, ὄφρ᾽ ἐῢ εἰδῇς
> ὅσσον φέρετερός 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 I am than you, and another man may
> shrink back
> from likening himself to me and contending against me.

At this point, Achilles abandons dialogue. He moves from words to deeds as he prepares to draw his sword. Evidently, for Achilles, words and deeds belong to a continuum; violence is dialogue carried on by other means. Athena, however, does not agree with this analysis. She restrains Achilles and tells him to argue with words rather than weapons (*Il.* 1.210–11):

> ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε λῆγ᾽ ἔριδος, μηδὲ ξίφος ἕλκεο χειρί·
> ἀλλ᾽ ἤτοι ἔπεσιν μὲν ὀνείδισον ὡς ἔσεταί περ·
>
> Come then, do not take your sword in your hand, keep
> clear of fighting,
> though indeed with words you may abuse him.

And so Achilles puts away his sword. But, in a sense, he does not put away the threat of violence; his withdrawal from the fighting simply allows the Trojans to do the work for him. Now the violence is directed not just at Agamemnon but at the whole Achaean army.

IV. FIGHTING WORDS

The title of this paper comes from the end of this episode, as the quarrel is coming to an close (*Il*. 1.304–05):

> ῾Ως τώ γ᾽ ἀντιβίοισι μαχεσσαμένω ἐπέεσσιν
> ἀνστήτην, λῦσαν δ᾽ ἀγορὴν παρὰ νηυσὶν ᾽Αχαιῶν·
>
> So these two after battling in words of contention
> stood up, and broke the assembly beside the ships of
> the Achaians.

The various contexts of the word ἀντίβιος deserve examination. In the *Iliad,* I have found three instances of this word applied to discourse: the passage just quoted and another from Book 2, where Agamemnon is referring to the same argument (*Il*. 2.377–78):

> καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ᾽Αχιλεύς τε μαχεσσάμεθ᾽ εἵνεκα κούρης
> ἀντιβίοις ἐπέεσσιν, ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἦρχον χαλεπαίνων·
>
> For I and Achilleus fought together for a girl's sake
> in words' violent encounter, and I was the first to be
> angry.

In addition, at *Iliad* 1.278, Nestor uses a form of the word to refer to this same argument. I have also found two instances of this usage from the *Odyssey* (*Od*. 18.414–15 = *Od*. 20.322–23):

> ῎Ω φίλοι, οὐκ ἂν δή τις ἐπὶ ῥηθέντι δικαίῳ
> ἀντιβίοις ἐπέεσσιν καθαπτόμενος χαλεπαίνοι·
>
> Dear friends, no man must be angry, nor yet with violent
> answers attack what has been spoken in justice.

In all of these passages, the context is either violence or the direct threat of violence. Indeed, in the two passages just quoted from the *Iliad,* the word is collocated with forms of μάχομαι. The other uses of the word and its various forms occur specifically in contexts of battle (*Il*. 7.49–51):[11]

> ἄλλους μὲν κάθισον Τρῶας καὶ πάντας Ἀχαιούς,
> αὐτὸς δὲ προκάλεσσαι Ἀχαιῶν ὅς τις ἄριστος
> ἀντίβιον μαχέσασθαι ἐν αἰνῇ δηϊοτῆτι·
>
> Make the rest of the Trojans sit down, and all the
> Achaians,
> and yourself call forth one of the Achaians, their bravest,
> to fight man to man against you in bitter combat.

These passages suggest to me that when this word is used to refer to speech, it implies that speech itself can become a form of fighting. Perhaps this is a general observation, but surely it is significant that, in the *Iliad,* the word applied to speech refers only to this dialogue between Agamemnon and Achilles. These passages at *Iliad* 1.278, 1.304–05, and 2.377–78 are paradigmatic. This dialogue, of all the many dialogues in the epic, is the model of speech turning to violence. This is the crucial dialogue, the dialogue that is essential to the story. The essential initiating event of the *Iliad* is speech turning into violence.

V. CONCLUSION

The problem that faced the assembled Achaean army was a problem that could have been solved if other issues had not intruded. Agamemnon agreed to give Chryseis back to her father, but he asked for immediate compensation. When Achilles pointed out that compensation would have to be deferred, Agamemnon took the worst interpretation of Achilles' words. He blustered and threatened, but he seemed willing to put the matter off for the time being. Achilles, in turn, took the worst interpretation of Agamemnon's words and began a contest of insult that nearly ended in violence but for the intervention of Athena. Even so, the argument is seen as a form of violence in words, and the result will be great harm to the Achaean army.

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11 Cf. *Il*. 3.20, 7.40, 3.435, 11.386, 5.220, 21.226.

The gradual development of the argument is depicted with great psychological subtlety. These are two people who do not want to agree, two people who may well have been looking for a fight. The cooperative principle does not apply to this conversation, since the participants do not share a goal, do not have a common purpose. Cooperation breaks down when people feel threatened; errors in thinking become tools of deliberate misinterpretation. In such situations, words become weapons. If we want an adequate model of conversation, a model that can account for the dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles, we must consider the potential violence of words. In addition to the cooperative principle, sadly, we must formulate conversational principles of non-cooperation.

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