REVIEW ARTICLE

PROBLEMS IN GREEK POPULAR MORALITY*

Do moral philosophers affect the values of nonphilosophers, or is popular moral-
ity a phenomenon which exists and persists autonomously, unaffected by any con-
temporary or earlier intellectual discussions which may occur? What tools and
methods are appropriate for a satisfactory study of popular values? A recent dis-
cussion of popular morality in classical Athens furnishes an opportunity for con-
sidering these and other matters.

K. J. Dover's work discusses popular morality—sharply distinguished from moral
philosophy—during a period at one point (p. 4) precisely defined as lying between
the birth of Plato and the death of Aristotle (i.e., 428–322 B.C.). Dover, however,
includes in his discussion not only passages of Aeschylus, but verse inscriptions
which may be as late as the second century. He is evidently justified in so doing:
there is no reason why significant changes in popular morality should coincide
with the birth or death of any moral philosopher. On the other hand, he never
seriously considers the possibility of significant developments in popular morality
between the earlier fifth century and the later fourth century. If we remember the
political vicissitudes of Athens (and Athens furnishes virtually all the material,
as Dover observes) during this period, or during the shorter period 428–322, it
must appear remarkable if there were no repercussions in popular morality. If
Dover believes that there were none, it would have been desirable to have the
question argued.

The work consists of six chapters: "Interpretation of the Sources," "The Moral
Vocabulary," "Determinants of Moral Capacity," "Oneself and Others," "Sanc-
tions," and "Priorities." Each chapter is divided into sections, and these again into
subsections.

A number of questions suggest themselves in discussing a work on this topic: Is
there a subject matter as defined, implicitly or explicitly? Can we gain access to
it by using the surviving documents? Are the problems of method clearly charac-
terized, and are the methods appropriate in principle? How is the program carried
out in practice?

First, the subject matter and the sources. Dover devotes much of his first chapter
to a discussion of the sources from which our knowledge of popular morality may
be derived. He treats with caution (p. 7) philosophers' statements about what
"most people" say and think. He regards the philosophers' portrayal of ordinary
men as more useful (p. 7), though he rarely uses it. He regards Thucydides "with
suspicion," since "the language of the Thucydidean speeches is so idiosyncratic
and their intellectual concentration so formidable that we are not in a position to
recover in sufficient detail for our present purpose the sentiments and arguments

actually uttered" (pp. 7–8). Similar caution is expressed over comedy, for different reasons; and tragedy (like comedy) "consists of the utterances of fictitious persons in fictitious situations," which is "the chief obstacle to the identification of elements of popular morality in drama of any kind" (p. 14). However, "when we take adequate account of the fact that the majority of characters in tragedy possess depth and complexity, we realize that all the moral sentiments which they utter deserve to be taken seriously as sentiments which some Athenians could accept in some circumstances" (pp. 16–17). Tragedy, however, may contain both archaism and cultural anachronism (pp. 17–18), so that Dover's view would seem to require the qualification "some Athenians could at some time have accepted" in the previous sentence. Dover's favored sources are political oratory and forensic oratory: the political speaker who wished to prosper politically "was unlikely to risk an argument seriously in conflict with the moral values accepted by a substantial part of his audience." Forensic oratory is preferable, however, since "a speaker in a law-court stood to lose money, property, his political rights, even on occasion his life ... it was of the utmost importance that the speaker should adopt a *persona* which would convey a good impression. He could not afford to express or imply beliefs or principles which were likely to be offensive to the jury; at the same time, it was important that he should impose a discreditable *persona* upon his adversary. For this reason forensic oratory should be treated as our main source of data on popular morality" (pp. 5–6).

These words express caution, but does the caution go far enough? In the first place, what is meant by popular morality thus—implicitly—defined? Dover leaves open the question whether "this morality turns out to embody principles and attitudes which resemble any Platonic or Aristotelian axioms, assumptions, hypotheses or findings" (p. 2). Since he is not writing about Platonic or Aristotelian philosophy as such, the question of the extent to which those philosophies take their rise from popular morality is undeniably irrelevant. But the possibility of influence in the opposite direction is surely not irrelevant. I do not mean solely the influence of Plato and Aristotle, but of all those, sophists, rhetoricians, or moral philosophers, who had been thinking, constructively or destructively, about moral values at least since the appearance of the first sophists. In Athens, a small city whose inhabitants had at least the reputation for garrulity, ideas must have traveled rapidly, at symposia, public festivals, and other gatherings; sophists and rhetoricians lived by attracting pupils and by disseminating ideas. Some teachers were expensive, but others besides Socrates must have attended one-drachma lectures. If nowhere else, the average Athenian could encounter novel ideas, attitudes, and values in the theater. If Euripides was aware of the intellectual developments of his day (and no one, so far as I am aware, asserts that he was not), he was transmitting in his plays (which are of course the evidence for his awareness) ideas, attitudes, and values which were not "popular," but must surely sometimes have influenced his audiences. Dover might merely reply that as soon as John Doe adopts an ethical attitude, that attitude becomes part of "popular morality." He might; but in that case, (*a*) there is likely to be a distinction in the period under discussion between traditional morality and popular morality, which Dover does not draw, and (*b*) his observations on popular morality (pp. 1 ff.) should be quali-

fied, since we cannot know a priori the size of the component drawn from more reflective, philosophical morality at any time. (I shall have more to say of this below.) In fact, Dover seems not to wish to treat value judgments and attitudes derived from philosophers as part of popular morality: he quotes (pp. 10–11) a few disparaging references to philosophers and sophists made in public speeches, apparently to argue that philosophers and sophists could have had no influence on orators or their audiences. But if we extend the list from philosophers and sophists and include rhetoricians, the implausibility becomes apparent; and is anyone willing to argue that there was *no* interchange of ideas among philosophers, sophists, and rhetoricians? It may have been expedient to make jokes at the expense of philosophers and other intellectuals when speaking to a popular audience; but it would be dangerous to infer from such jokes a complete absence of influence. (Even philosophers may attempt to conceal how much they have learned from others: Epicurus is a well-known example.)

Let me take one instance. Aeschines in 3. 6–8 (discussed by Dover on p. 59) begins a new rhetorical paragraph thus: εὖ γὰρ ἴστε, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶ πολιτεῖαι παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις, τυραννὶς καὶ ὀλιγαρχία καὶ δημοκρατία. In a very similar passage (1. 4), he again acknowledges that his audience will have heard what he is going to say from others. He does not say "from other forensic orators," and 3. 6–8 sounds like part of a declamation or lecture. In fact, it resembles Isocrates *Panathenaicus* 131 f., where Isocrates is *arguing* that there are only three kinds of constitution. (I do not claim that Aeschines is necessarily drawing on Isocrates, though the resemblance is very close, and R. B. Richardson in his commentary [Boston, 1889], says *ad* 3. 6, "It is a virtual quotation from Isocr. xii. 132.") Argument on such a subject, even if intended for a large audience, is, I take it, not "popular" in the sense of "uninfluenced by the intellectual," and it indicates that the classification of constitutions rests not on simple observation but on political theory; Sparta, to go no further, does not fit at all satisfactorily. The threefold scheme, together with arguments about the relative merits of the constitutions, reaches back to Herodotus 3. 80, a passage which is termed by W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford, 1912), ad loc., "the beginning of Greek political philosophy." Without arguments, a similar threefold classification occurs in Pindar *Pyth.* 2. 86 ff.

Aeschines, then, is taking a stand on a matter that can be debated both by an Isocrates (an intellectual if not a philosopher, in our terminology; but both "sophist" and "philosopher" are appropriate terms with which to refer to him in fourth-century Greek) before a large audience, and also by philosophers (e.g., Plato *Resp.* 544C ff.; Aristotle *Pol.* 1278b6 ff.). And it is in a real sense one argument: Isocrates was certainly not unaware of Plato, and Athenian orators cannot have been in general unaware of Isocrates, whether or not Aeschines is quoting Isocrates here.[1] Aeschines' paragraph concludes with the reflection that just as it would be shameful to abandon one's post in war, so it would be shameful for the jury to abandon the station which they have been allotted by the laws as guardians of democracy; which strongly resembles Socrates' argument in *Apology* 28E, where he strikingly

1. We need not accept Plato's evaluation of Isocrates. Isocrates was an intellectual; he enjoyed high esteem; he tried to inculcate moral values; and he and his many pupils must have given wide currency to any novelties, whether of evaluation or of argument in support of an evaluation.

compares abandoning one's post (as a philosopher) with abandoning one's post in war. The argument in both cases is designed to render the behavior more evidently αἰσχρόν than it otherwise would be. Had Aeschines read Plato's *Apology?*

I am arguing for caution. I do not claim that the influence of Isocrates and Plato is undeniably present in the paragraph of Aeschines, merely that the question of intellectual influences may validly be raised about any page of extant oratory. Even if *inventio* was not so neatly conceptualized as in later periods, and courses of reading not so carefully designed as in Quintilian 10. 1, the need of the orator for material and for novelty must always have been pressing. In his discussion of "narration" Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1416b15 ff.) refers to Herodotus, Homer, Phayllus, the Socratic dialogues, Sophocles, and Aeschines as illustrations, or sources of material. Are we to suppose that no other fifth- or fourth-century teacher of rhetoric gave advice similar to Aristotle's? That no practicing or would-be orator ever attended Aristotle's classes on rhetoric? That no student ever consulted the writers he recommended (and he singles out the Socratic dialogues specifically for their portrayal of character and moral purpose)? Unless we make these assumptions, and assume further that philosophers and their pupils never consorted at all with rhetoricians and theirs, we must acknowledge a possible flow of nonpopular ideas into speeches.

In fact, in order to distinguish popular morality from morality influenced by philosophy, one should surely *compare* philosophical with nonphilosophical writers, carefully observing what values they have in common and what arguments they use to support those values, and endeavor to discover what results from shared assumptions, what results from philosophic thought, what is taken up by non-philosophers, and so on. An attitude is not philosophical solely because a philosopher holds it, nor unphilosophical because it is held by a nonphilosopher: in many cases it may be the same attitude. Let us suppose Prodicus gives a lecture on ethics which is attended by two people, Socrates and Euripides. In the course of the lecture Prodicus produces an idiosyncratic value judgment and supports it by an unusual argument. Both Socrates and Euripides are impressed, and borrow the judgment and argument from Prodicus. Are we to say that Euripides is not a philosopher, so that when he or one of his characters employs the judgment or the argument, the result is popular morality; but that when Socrates, who is (I take it) a philosopher, borrows the same material, the result is not popular morality? Surely not; and if we replace Euripides by Lysias, Demosthenes, or Aeschines, the situation is unchanged.

Again, forensic and political orators are not solely concerned with presenting a *persona.* They present arguments too; and there is well-known evidence to suggest that cleverness and ingenuity were admired, and that an argument which in some way did *not* correspond with popular (or traditional) morality could carry the day. Otherwise, of what are the Acharnians complaining (Ar. *Ach.* 676 ff.)? What does Strepsiades hope to learn (*Nub.* 94 ff., etc.)? And what do Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles hope to achieve with their rhetoric (Pl. *Grg.,* passim)? It is difficult to engage in forensic or political rhetoric without using value terms. The results complained of in Aristophanes and gloried in by the rhetoricians might be achieved, presumably, either by using popular (or traditional) moral evaluations and drawing

unusual conclusions as to the appropriate course to pursue, or by employing nove
uses of value terms, possibly in "persuasive definitions."[2] Drama will furnish clear
examples. In *Hecuba* 299 ff., the arguments rest on traditional values, but I think
it unlikely that in Euripides' day those values were commonly invoked to justify
human sacrifice. It might, however, have been a little difficult for an ordinary
Athenian to furnish arguments against them. At Euripides *Electra* 367 ff., on the
other hand, there seems to be a redefinition, a "persuasive definition," of *euandria*.
Persuasive definition is a not uncommon rhetorical device; and the student of
popular values should be on the watch for it, since it is an attempt to change the
accepted usage of value terms.

In short, forensic and political oratory furnishes a valuable source of material
for the study of values and attitudes; and Dover has assembled, in quotations and
citations, a large quantity of such material in his book. However, unless one defines
popular morality as "the set of values and attitudes expressed in a culture by those
who are not practicing moral philosophers, irrespective of the sources of these
values, or of their degree of general acceptability," it is surely permissible to doubt
whether all the morality observable in oratory is "popular" in the sense in which
Dover seems to wish to apply the term.

Anyone who discusses the behavior of value terms in any language must hold
some view of the manner in which such terms function. One needs a modicum of
philosophy in order to discuss even nonphilosophical uses of moral terminology.
Dover is naturally not unaware of this fact, and expresses views on the uses of
moral language. His second chapter is devoted to "The Moral Vocabulary," and
it is unfortunately neither the clearest nor the most convincing chapter of his book.
Furthermore, its doctrines appear to conflict with at least part of what is said and
done elsewhere in the work.

On pages 46–47 Dover writes: "It should not be supposed that either the Greek
moral vocabulary or the English expresses the rational articulation of a moral sys-
tem. Even if it were true that some degree of reasoning is implicit in morality [and
the subjunctive implies that Dover rejects even this rather modest claim], it would
be contrary to observation to argue that the morality of any given culture at any
given time is the product of rational design. And although some kinds of uncon-
scious reasoning are implicit in a child's acquisition of his mother-tongue, we all
acquire and use a good range of moral words before we subject our use of them to
rational scrutiny." In reading this book, I frequently found myself uncertain pre-
cisely what was being claimed. This passage furnishes an example. How much
does the first sentence of the quotation deny? If merely that popular moral judg-
ments may be equated with reflective moral philosophy, few would be likely to
disagree. But the protasis of the second sentence seems much more radical (and as
we shall see, Dover makes similar radical claims elsewhere). Of the apodosis of the
second sentence one may surely observe (*a*) that since the time of Leucippus and
Democritus it has been possible to hold that a functional structure may exist in
the absence of rational design, and (*b*), to speak purely of human affairs, that
grammars, kinship systems, and, it would appear, systems of mythology may

2. For "persuasive definition," a term with a more restricted usage than "persuasion," see C. L.
Stevenson, *Ethics and Language* (New Haven, 1944), chaps. 6 and 9.

exhibit coherent structures in the absence of grammarians, anthropologists, and mythologists to design them. Whether or not and to what extent the morality of a culture (or the moralities of groups within a culture) is a similar phenomenon is a topic requiring empirical study. Dover employs the slide from "is a product of rational design" to "possesses any structure" in order to justify the assumption that the morality of a culture possesses no coherent structure, and he uses that assumption as a presupposition in his work. To deny it is not to equate popular morality with moral philosophy, any more than the denial of a parallel assumption about language would equate a grammatically written book with a grammar book. But if it is possible to write descriptive grammars of languages existing at periods and in places where contemporary native grammarians did not exist, then one may fairly raise the possibility that there may be analogous phenomena in the field of morals. The analogy should not be pressed too far: the nature of the moral structure and the reasons for its existence, if it exists, are evidently quite different. However, it is apparent that one is more likely to experience practical consequences from one's associates' moral attitudes and values than from their grammar, and hence more likely to notice them and reflect upon them. I do not understand Dover's third sentence at all. By a similar argument one might reason that because children in beginning to talk make mistakes of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax, subsequent scrutiny cannot set the matter to rights. Unless one argues in this manner, it is difficult to see why the subsequent scrutiny of moral language could not correct incoherencies in moral values and attitudes. Dover himself on pages 218–20 argues that the Athenians set great store by consistency in moral attitudes and behavior: without detailed study, how is it possible to know to what extent they were capable of attaining coherence as between one moral attitude or judgment and another?

On page 50 a similarly curious argument or slide occurs. Having said that, when the members of a group share general rules or axioms, words such as "honest" or "selfish" are just as descriptive as "legal" and "illegal" in legal contexts, Dover remarks that in popular literature by contrast "evaluative words hardly ever have a purely descriptive role." Even where there is complete agreement on the use of moral terms, evaluative words are likely to retain a powerful evaluative role. If A says to B, with whom he is in complete agreement on moral matters, that C, whom B has not met, is qualified for the highest term of praise in the moral vocabulary of A and B, A is certainly not *merely* describing C to B.

Dover observes on the same page that in drama an important use of evaluative terms is "the relaxation of the speaker's tensions. Most of us are familiar with the experience of 'feeling better' when we have found the 'right words' for conversion of our feelings into an articulated sequence of sounds . . ." When a speaker addresses evaluative words to another person, "the expressive aspect of the utterance *diminishes* [my emphasis] in importance by comparison with the relational aspect. To use a moral term is to perform an act of love or hate, affecting the relationship between speaker and hearer. The speaker offers or withdraws affection and respect, and implies the probability of similar offer or withdrawal on the part of others. . . . If an action of mine is called 'shameful' by someone whom I love and whose judgment I respect, the possibility of impairing an affectionate relationship, combined with the possibility that others may turn against me, has a strong deterrent effect.

On the other hand, the same reproach from a person I despise may be almost re-
assuring, especially if he seems agitated."

Once again I am puzzled. The existence of "right words" suggests the existence
of criteria, as does the statement that the expressive (which I take to be the
descriptive) aspect merely "diminishes." But the rest of the words I have quoted
imply that moral terms, at least in sentences of address or apostrophe, have no
"descriptive meaning" (to use Hare's term),[3] and that one's response to them
depends solely on one's attitude to the speaker, not on any characteristics which
the action may possess. Even apart from that difficulty, the sentences seem con-
fused: must those whom one likes, those whose judgment one respects, and those
who are capable of influencing the attitude of others toward oneself always be the
same set of persons? To raise still another problem, would Dover never himself
attempt to adduce reasons why an act pronounced to be wrong or shameful by a
friend was in fact justified (or expect the friend to give reasons for his judgment)?
Dover seems to confuse simple expletive with the judgmental use of moral lan-
guage, which occurs in the second person as in any other. It is true that ὦ μιαρὲ
καὶ κατάρατε σύ is unlikely to be accompanied by reasons, and that the reply is more
likely to be, not "No I'm not, for . . . ," but "And you're another." But it is not
immediately apparent that the meaning of "vicious and depraved" in the assertion
"X is vicious and depraved" differs from the meaning in "X, you are vicious and
depraved," and one can argue for or against either proposition in essentially the
same way.

The observation, "if an action of mine is called 'shameful' by someone whom I
love . . . , [that] has a strong deterrent effect. . . . the same reproach from a person
I despise may be almost reassuring, especially if he seems agitated," is expressed
in the first person, and, if it is to be taken as autobiographical, only Dover can
vouch for its truth or falsity. But it is neither a moral attitude nor the attitude of
popular morality, ancient or modern. When in Aristophanes *Clouds* 910 and 1330
the Weaker (or Unjust) Argument and Pheidippides reply to accusations of de-
pravity with the dismissive ῥόδα μ' εἴρηκας and πάττε πολλοῖς τοῖς ῥόδοις, the response
is evidently unusual. Dover may be concerned only with his friends' opinions, but
the ancient Greek was not. Fear that one's enemies may scoff or laugh because
one has behaved like a κακός or has performed αἰσχρά acts is endemic from Homer
onward (*Il.* 8. 147 ff.; *Theog.* 1033; Soph. *Aj.* 367, *El.* 1152 f., *Ant.* 647; Eur. *HF*
281 ff., etc.).

In fact, John Doe and his ancient Greek equivalent assume that evaluations
have descriptive meaning; and they are prepared to argue for their applications of
value terms, which are not unpredictable: one can set out to win their approval,
as does the speaker in Lysias 25. 13. They do not suppose that the use of a com-
mendatory term is merely equivalent to "I like you (or him)." In both English
and ancient Greek it is certainly comprehensible to say, "I hate you, but in this
matter justice demands that you receive this reward. Take it, go, and never let me
see you again." In Greek, Odysseus argues for the burial of Ajax thus at Sophocles
Ajax 1355: ὅδ' ἐχθρὸς ἀνήρ, ἀλλὰ γενναῖός ποτ' ἦν, and at 1357: νικᾷ γὰρ ἀρετή με τῆς
ἐχθρας πολύ. Whether one acts on the hatred or on the favorable evaluation will vary

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3. See R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford, 1952).

from case to case: the well-known Athenian did not deny that Aristides was just, but he wanted him ostracized nonetheless.

The ordinary man, then, assumes that his value terms carry some descriptive content, and he is prepared to argue about the appropriateness of their applicability in a particular set of circumstances. That being the case, the question how far his criteria form a coherent set is an empirical question to be decided by appropriate methods for particular cultures at particular periods ("cultures," of course, includes "subcultures."). The likelihood is that the degree of coherence will vary from culture to culture, and from period to period within the same culture. One cannot rule out the question on a priori grounds. Dover, however, never makes it clear what answers, if any, he regards as possible to the question, "Why does X (an individual) hold value judgment p (e.g., that such-and-such an action, or class of actions, is unjust)?" or "Why does group Y hold value judgment p?" or "Why does X or Y hold the set of value judgments p_1, p_2, p_3, . . . p_n?" Since X and Y are wont to give reasons, X and Y evidently regard giving reasons as possible.

In each of the foregoing examples, Dover seems to be holding an extreme view, though his language is not entirely clear. It would be open to him to reply that he actually favors a more moderate view: that popular morality has *some* coherence, that, even in the second person singular, moral terms have *some* descriptive meaning, that one's response to others is affected also by the characteristics of the act being reprehended. But it is the more extreme view that serves as justification for the program carried out in the book, in which some questions which the more moderate view renders relevant are not adequately discussed, and some are not discussed at all.

I turn now to other questions concerned with moral language. On pages 62 and following, Dover discusses "synonymy." He does not define the term "synonym," and what he intends by it is not altogether clear. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives two relevant definitions: "Strictly, a word having the same sense as another (in the same language); but more usually, either or any of two or more words (in the same language) having the same general sense, but possessing each of them meanings which are not shared by the other or others, or having different shades of meaning or implications appropriate to different contexts: e.g. *serpent, snake; ship, vessel* . . . ; *glad, happy* . . . ; *to kill, slay, slaughter.*" When Dover writes, "In poetry *esthlos* . . . can replace *agathos* and *khrestos* in . . . any of their denotations" (p. 63), and "Synonymy in Greek is most easily demonstrated in closely reasoned argument (e.g. Plato's), where to deny it would be to reduce the argument to a *non sequitur*" (p. 62), he seems to be employing the stronger usage. (Some evidence for synonymy drawn from Plato and Aristotle would have been welcome here.) But despite the introduction of "hyponymy" on page 64, Dover regards "*khrestos* and just" as "tautology," though *khrestos* (a synonym for *agathos* in the strong sense of synonymy) certainly has a much wider range than *dikaios* if the full denotation of each word is taken into account. Page 71 introduces "synonymy of a special kind" in saying that "*kalos* and *aiskhros* undoubtedly tended towards synonymy with other common terms of praise and blame. . . . The speaker may look at the same thing in different ways, and in a great many contexts it does not actually matter which way he chooses. . . . Clearly we can qualify an act either by an epithet suggesting how one reacts to it or by an epithet denoting the attribute by virtue

of which one has that reaction." Dover lists pairs such as *aiskhros/anisos, kallistos/ sophotatos, kalos/agathos.* It is difficult to see what purpose is served by speaking of synonymy here. In the first place, the Greek in the street, like the Englishman in the street, did not suppose that aesthetic or moral terms (αἰσχρόν, καλόν) merely suggest how one reacts to an act: "ugly" is commonly regarded as being as objective as "red." That αἰσχρά are so merely νόμῳ is surely not popular morality in Dover's sense, and it is certainly not popular orthodoxy. Secondly, the proposal is to apply "synonymy" to terms whose range of usage is not the same (not all *aischra* actions are *anisa*). And, even if the range were exactly the same, synonymy in even the weakest sense is not established: even if the set of colored things is co-extensive with the set of extended things, "colored" is in no sense synonymous with "extended." Thirdly, Dover writes as though words such as σοφός and ἄνισος had no emotive charge, an interpretation which, as the passages he himself quotes indicate, is not correct.

On page 164 Dover has observations relevant to the manner in which moral terms convey their meaning. Once again I shall quote at some length, for I am puzzled by the terminology and the implied philosophy of language. Quoting Aeschylus *Septem* 610, σώφρων δίκαιος ἀγαθὸς εὐσεβὴς ἀνήρ, he comments, "the word *agathos* must in this instance have a specific denotation, which we can identify." He also writes, "Such a specific application of *agathos* and *arete* continued throughout the classical period in commendation of men killed in battle. In particular, the exhortation 'Now be good men!' *means* 'You must fight bravely'. . . . This special use of 'good man' should not . . . obscure the fact that in the majority of cases the same words *are applied by virtue of* political loyalty . . . justice . . . filial dutifulness . . . piety . . . generosity . . . and gratitude. . . . The abstract noun *andragathia* . . . and the verb *andragathizesthai* do not *refer to* physical courage but to the possession or exhibition of qualities which attract respect and admiration. . . . Hdt. i 136.1, on the subject of *andragathia* among the Persian nobility—i.e. the characteristics by virtue of which a Persian is admired—says that next to the brave in battle the *agathos* is the man who has the most sons" (my emphasis throughout).

In the last sentence, does Dover mean—reasonably enough—that a value term such as *andragathia* should not be spoken of as "referring to" and therefore "meaning" physical courage or any other particular quality, but as being used to commend or decry a range of phenomena from which its descriptive meaning is derived? In the preceding sentence, are loyalty, justice, and so on, *collectively* the set (or part of the set) of qualities *a, b, c . . . n* which an Athenian commended by *agathos* and *arete*, and not simply a random collection of phenomena? If so—and this interpretation seems both to correspond to Dover's intention, and to be an acceptable account of the words' behavior—it seems difficult to exclude the connotations (a word hardly used by Dover) derived from the full range of usage of a word like *agathos* from its usage in a particular commendatory situation. *Agathos* does not *mean* "loyal" when applied to someone who has displayed loyalty; even in such a context, it is not synonymous (as p. 62 seems to suggest) with εὔνους τῇ πόλει, which has a different range of usage and (probably) a different emotive charge. Now if value terms behave in this manner, the connotation will surely exert some control over the usage of the term (which is merely another way of saying that the user has a fairly clear notion of what personal qualities *agathos*, for example, is usually

employed to commend), and the usage of value terms will be less random than Dover elsewhere seems to suggest. He may hold qua philosopher that "almost any moral judgment and its contrary are equally defensible" (p. 4); but John Doe and his Greek cousin characteristically do not. Dover himself on page 218 says that "within the same society, especially within a small society undergoing a comparatively slow rate of change, most people's evaluations agree much of the time." Furthermore, it is difficult to understand why he says that *agathos* in his earlier examples means "brave." Certainly the usage of this word at *Septem* 610 does not overlap with the other value terms in the line: how often are *sophrosune, dikaiosune,* and *eusebeia* included within *arete* in or before Aeschylus' day? Dover quotes no examples. On the other hand, Amphiaraus possessed many qualities in addition to his bravery which were admired and traditionally commended by *arete,* and which may serve to give added richness and commendatory power to the line. In the other examples where Dover renders *agathos* as "brave," connotation or flavor seems to me to have much to contribute. He cites the formula "having become (an) *agathos*," but this surely does not mean merely "having shown himself to be brave," but, to paraphrase, "having lived up to the highest standards of the Athenians," rhetorically a much more powerful sentiment, which the word *andreios* would not have conveyed.

If one is to study moral language, the finest shades of nuance, whether of denotation, connotation, or emotive power, are important; and the undoubted fact that such nuances are difficult to detect in a dead language does not absolve the student of Greek morality from the task of trying. The adoption of analytical tools which blur observable differences is to be regretted.

To take a particular example of nuance, on page 165 Dover speaks of the application of *agathos* by virtue of filial dutifulness in the story of Cleobis and Bito (Hdt. 1. 31. 4). If we look at the words used, we find that the Argive men ἐμακάριζον τῶν νεηνιέων τὴν ῥώμην, the women τὴν μητέρα αὐτῶν, οἵων τέκνων ἐκύρησε. So far only strength has been explicitly mentioned. The mother prays for the young men οἵ μιν ἐτίμησαν μεγάλως. τιμᾶν may mean "bestow honor upon" or "honor" (i.e., "reverence"), and μιν is referred either to the mother or to the goddess. But even if we render "honored, reverenced (the mother)," we have no grounds for interpreting ὡς ἀνδρῶν ἀρίστων γενομένων solely of filial dutifulness. The act is an act in which outstanding physical strength (undeniably a mark of *arete*) is employed in the service of filial dutifulness. In a culture not our own, we are not entitled to assume that an act of filial dutifulness is evaluated in the same way, or regarded as the same kind of act, as an act of filial dutifulness requiring physical strength. This passage by itself (and it is the only one cited by Dover on p. 165) does not demonstrate that *arete* was used to commend filial dutifulness per se. I have discussed the question of *arete* and gratitude, also raised on page 165, elsewhere.[4]

On page 48 Dover makes the point that " 'he's very good' may be said by officers discussing a soldier, lecturers discussing a student, critics discussing a composer, or parents boasting that their baby does not cry at night," and concludes that the criteria for the application of "good" differ. True; and in these cases one might rephrase the sentence as "he's a very good soldier (student, composer, baby, etc.)."

4. "Merit, Responsibility and Thucydides," *CR,* n.s. 25 (1975): 217–18.

"Good" in such sentences is not really used absolutely, but of a good specimen of the class denoted by the noun. However, such usages do not abolish the possibility that there exists a usage of "good" where the class is no narrower than "human being" or, in Greek, a usage of ἀγαθός with ἀνήρ no further defined. The existence or absence of such a usage can only be determined empirically. When in *Odyssey* 15. 324 Odysseus claims to be adept at wood-chopping and serving at table, οἷά τε τοῖς ἀγαθοῖσι παραδρώωσι χέρηες, it is evident that ἀγαθοῖσι and χέρηες do not commend and decry being good and bad at performing menial tasks, or the line becomes nonsense. There are many other examples in Greek; and it is by determining the criteria by which ἀγαθός is applied in such usages, and by seeing how far the criteria vary, that one obtains a clue to the degree of structure present in the moral pre-suppositions and verbal usage of the Greeks.

On page 47 Dover expresses doubt about the "lexical" approach to the study of morality. What he means is a little unclear. Sometimes "lexical" seems to mean "based on the use of word indexes." One can only agree in deprecating that ap-proach, since reading a complete work is the only feasible method of comprehending the value judgments therein contained; and, to discover which are the important value terms at any period, nothing less than a thorough reading of all the extant material from that period will suffice. Sometimes, however, "lexical" seems to mean "based on the study of words," as when Dover contrasts the study of words with "passages [in] which what is *not* said is the most interesting and significant aspect." Yet this book is almost entirely concerned with Greek words, and how could it be otherwise? Words, documents written in words, supply all our evidence; even the discovery of what is not said depends on reading what is said. In fact, Dover rarely considers what is not said. Page 49 offers a curious additional observa-tion. As I have indicated, Dover expresses doubts about inferences based on the behavior of ethical terms, but here we find: "If I have on occasion argued from the usage of individual words in a manner which seems to take insufficient account of the reservations formulated above, this is because I do not think that the reserva-tions justify a total and resolute refusal to draw sociological conclusions from linguistic usage in all circumstances." But he offers no criteria or arguments by which we may determine when such conclusions are justified, and without criteria or arguments, the procedure seems arbitrary, enabling one to employ methods oneself which are denied to others. One should of course always be circumspect and look for evidence. For my own part, I should be reluctant to suppose that the Greek use of κλείς for keys and collarbones in any significant degree blurred the Greek notion of keys or collarbones, since there exist physical objects to which reference may be made.[5] On the other hand, where physical objects are not denoted (as with words like ἀρετή, ἀγαθός, θυμός, ψυχή), it seems reasonable to entertain the hypothesis that the range of usage may be significant, even sociologically significant. The important task is to try to eliminate the arbitrary; and one means is to seek coherence between linguistic data and other observable data which do not rest solely on verbal behavior. Dover, however, does not explain how he decides when linguistic evidence is relevant.

I turn to matters of greater detail, taking a few passages as examples. On pages

5. Of course the connotation of κλείς is different, and certain puns would be possible in Greek, impossible in English.

66–67, though the argument is not neatly set out, there appears to be an argument: in one passage of Greek there is given a set of five virtues; in another there is a set of four, where however the absence of the fifth can be readily explained; and in other passages there is a still shorter list, which is also explicable in the light of a fourth-century tendency to equate piety with virtue. All passages are treated as being in other respects similar. The five-item list is drawn from Xenophon's *Agesilaus*, that with four items from Agathon's "highly formalized and sophistic encomium" of Eros in Plato's *Symposium*. Piety is absent from the second list. Dover argues—probably correctly—that piety is irrelevant because Eros is himself a god. At all events, in both cases the form of the discussion readily permits the inclusion of as many items as the writer deems appropriate, and there is point in his making the list comprehensive. But Dover then cites Demosthenes 18. 215, where courage, δικαιοσύνη, and σωφροσύνη appear, and he ascribes the absence of piety to the fourth-century tendency aforementioned. But σοφία too is absent. If it is absent because irrelevant, possibly Demosthenes saw no relevance in piety here either. But more can be said: a list of three in rhetoric suggests the common device of tricolon, and the sentence in fact ends ἐν μὲν ἀνδρείας, ἕτερον δὲ δικαιοσύνης, τρίτον δὲ σωφροσύνης, just as a sentence in 216 ends τῷ κόσμῳ, ταῖς παρασκευαῖς, τῇ προθυμίᾳ. In the Demosthenic passage, stylistic considerations seem to have played a part, and Dover's other examples are similar. In Aristophanes *Plutus* 89 we find ὡς τοὺς δικαίους καὶ σοφοὺς καὶ κοσμίους / μόνους βαδίοιμην, and in 386–88 ἀλλὰ τοὺς χρηστοὺς μόνους / ἔγωγε καὶ τοὺς δεξιοὺς καὶ σώφρονας / ἀπαρτὶ πλουτῆσαι ποιήσω. I invite my readers to try to extend the list in these speeches to four (or five) items in a manner which is aesthetically and dramatically satisfactory. Other factors are at work more important than a desire for discursive comprehensiveness. Isocrates 16. 28 furnishes a list of three superlatives (καὶ σωφρονέστατον καὶ δικαιότατον καὶ σοφώτατον), again suggesting tricolon effect, which it would be difficult to extend in an aesthetically pleasing manner: a consideration not irrelevant to Isocrates. Xenophon *Hellenica* 2. 40 f. is particularly interesting. Dover quotes as a set of three, "justice ... courage ... intelligence." In fact, Xenophon continues (42): ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦτο πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις καλοῖς ἐπιδείξαι, ὅτι καὶ εὔορκοι καὶ ὅσιοί ἐστε. Thrasybulus apparently, despite his argument, concedes that his audience possesses justice, courage, and intelligence and asks them to show piety too. We have here a set of four rather than a set of three, and also the evident assumption that one might be just, courageous, and intelligent without being pious. Yet the example is cited in a paragraph whose general tenor is to argue for a fourth-century tendency to equate virtue with piety. It is surely prudent to consider questions of genre, style, aesthetics, purpose, and context in evaluating individual passages containing value terms.

Dover sometimes employs terms in an idiosyncratic manner. An argument that appears to be substantive may then in fact be merely terminological. For example, on pages 41 and following he discusses the expression *kalos kagathos*, and argues that it is not what he terms a "class label." From his remark that "there are ... certain passages which suggest at first sight that *kalos kagathos* may also [i.e., in addition to its moral usages] have been used as a 'class label' " (p. 43), I infer that "class label" means "denoting (and commending or decrying?) a social class and having no further function." On the same page, Dover adds, "No word or expression can *properly* [my emphasis] be called a class label unless it is sincerely repudi-

ated by some members of the community, and no one ever says seriously 'I am not *kalos kagathos.*' "

Dover denies that the Sausage-seller in Arisophanes *Knights* 185 ff. is being serious when he says that he is not ἐκ καλῶν κἀγαθῶν; and the general tenor of argument suggests that Dover supposes the Sausage-seller to be—humorously—disclaiming birth from *virtuous* parents. But on page 44 he accurately observes that the contrast in 735–38 is with "lamp-sellers and cobblers and shoemakers and leather-merchants." The manner in which the scene unfolds is significant. Line 179 makes it clear that it is the Sausage-seller's status as an ἀλλαντοπώλης that gives him pause; nothing has yet been said about his virtues. Two lines later the man confesses to being ἐκ πονηρῶν, and, as R. S. Neil observes ad loc., πονηρός is here used "in the social and political sense which it regularly has in the 5th century B.C." I see no reason in the text for supposing that the Sausage-seller's doubts are not sincerely expressed and do not resemble those of any citizen of low social status who was tentatively considering entry into Athenian politics. The joke lies in the later suggestion of Demos that low social status is a positive advantage in Athenian politics; but from the scene as a whole it is possible to infer that low social status was *not* an advantage to political aspirants in Athens.

The scene from the *Knights* indicates that social status may—to say the least—be in the foreground when *kalos kagathos* is used, and that it is possible in all seriousness to acknowledge that one is not *kalos kagathos. Pace* Dover, whether one "admits with shame" or "proclaims with pride" one's lower-class status does not render "lower-class" any more or any less a class label. In fact, Dover is offering the reader a persuasive definition of "class label": note his qualification "*properly called,*" a sure mark of the persuasive definition. Should the reader be persuaded? Curious results follow if he is. It is not quite clear what kind of condition is represented by "unless [the label] is sincerely repudiated by some members of the community." If sufficient but not necessary, then a word or expression not fulfilling it might be a class label nonetheless; if necessary but not sufficient, a word or expression that did fulfill it might nevertheless *not* be a class label, which renders the condition inadequate for identifying class labels. Dover's argument against the sincerity and seriousness of *Knights* 185 f. suggests that he must consider that, if he accepted the lines as seriously spoken, *kalos kagathos* would be shown to be a class label: in other words, that the condition is both necessary and sufficient. Observe the result: if in any community no one sincerely repudiates "well-educated," "honorable," or "upper-class" (and whether they do or not is a contingent fact about human behavior), then these words will not be class labels, while "badly-educated," "dishonorable," and "lower-class," which (though the matter is of course equally contingent) will presumably be sincerely repudiated by someone, will be class labels.

In fact I agree with Dover (p. 45) that those who were not *agathoi* or *kaloi kagathoi* in Athens would have preferred to be so rather than *kakoi:* one of the great advantages of *agathos* and *arete* to the Greek moralist, philosopher or no, is their attractiveness as terms, which is derived, of course, from what they traditionally denoted and commended. But if the terms were ever employed in such a manner that wealth and social position were a necessary, even if not a sufficient, condition of their applicability—if, that is to say, to be wealthy, well born, cour-

ageous, and just is to be *kalos kagathos*, while to be poor, of obscure status, cour-
ageous, and just is not to be *kalos kagathos*—then there seems little point in denying
that they were class labels when so used. Dover's counter-definition, as we have
seen, leads to logically strange results.

Dover's note on *kalos kagathos* on page 45 (apropos of Dinarchus 3. 12) also
seems unsatisfactory: "Certainly the cavalry were all of a high social class; but if
Deinarkhos was trying to arouse the jury's indignation against Philokles, how did
it help his case to say that Philokles was unworthy to command men of inherited
wealth and expensive education?" There is no reason to present as an alternative
that *kalos kagathos* in orators must always denote *either* courage, honesty, probity,
and magnanimity *or* inherited wealth and expensive traditional education. The
term may denote and commend a combination of the two sets of qualities. Even
had it strictly denoted only the latter, deference might well have ensured that the
former was held to be implied: in any culture it is dangerously easy to assume that
one's social superiors are also one's superiors in honesty, probity, and magnanimity.
Teucer's shock (Soph. *Aj.* 1094 ff.) must answer to something in Athenian experi-
ence; and it reveals a deference from which Athenian jurors are unlikely to have
been entirely free. For the attitude of the *agathos* or *kalos kagathos* to ruling others
or being ruled by them, one might cite Alcibiades in Thucydides 6. 16, or the story
of Maeandrius in Herodotus 3. 142. Maeandrius on succeeding Polycrates wished
to display justice by giving up the tyranny; but a δόκιμος called Telesarchus said
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἄξιος εἶς σύ γε ἡμέων ἄρχειν, γεγονώς τε κακῶς καὶ ἐὼν ὄλεθρος. Maeandrius at all
events (γε) is not worthy to rule over them, since he is of low birth and a pest.
Greek values are more complicated than Dover seems willing to admit.[6]

Next, a point of social history. On page 34 and following, Dover discusses the
social and economic status of the Athenian juror. He expresses surprise at dis-
covering Demosthenes contrasting himself as a well-to-do man of leisure with
Aeschines as an unfortunate menial who had to earn a living (Dem. 18. 265); and
he uses this passage, with others, to suggest that the majority of jurors addressed
by the fourth-century orator were fairly prosperous. Had he begun his quotation
one sentence earlier, there would have been less cause for surprise and less justifica-
tion for his conclusion: "Now, Aeschines, compare and consider your life and mine
quietly and without bitterness; and then ask the jury individually whether they
would choose your fortune or mine." A jury of paupers might reasonably prefer a
more prosperous to a less prosperous existence. Dover lays emphasis on Lysias
28. 3, where the jury are said to be oppressed by special levies and formerly to have
owned large properties. He mentions, but discounts, the possibility that Lysias is
flattering them, though in the context there is a valid reason for so doing. An im-
poverished jury might be less worried about peculation from the public funds, to
which they contributed nothing in taxes; Lysias might hope to stir their sense of
public spirit by addressing them as "taxpayers." Dover does not quote Lysias
27. 1, apparently of similar date, where the speaker says that Athenian juries have

6. Dover likes modern parallels. If one replaces *kalos kagathos* in the Philocles passage by "officers
of the Brigade of Guards," the sentence remains entirely comprehensible in translation: is "officers
of the Brigade of Guards" a phrase of *moral* commendation? More generally, "gentleman" in English
seems to have behaved similarly to *kalos kagathos* in Greek, to judge from the entry in the *Oxford
English Dictionary*.

often been told that their pay depended on their condemning the accused: εἰ μὴ
καταψηφιεῖσθε ὧν αὐτοὶ κελεύουσιν, ἐπιλείψει ὑμᾶς ἡ μισθοφορά. Surely such an "often-
used" inducement could hope to persuade only those who were in direst poverty;
and there seems no motive for *feigning* that the jury were thus impoverished. Com-
pare Aristophanes *Knights* 135 ff., Lysias 30. 22, and, philosopher though he be,
Aristotle *Politics* 1305a4 ff. Since Aristotle was advising democrats in their own
interest not to condemn the wealthy in order to confiscate their property, he pre-
sumably believed it to be a not uncommon occurrence. Demosthenes 28. 193,
where "you" (the jury) are equated with "the majority," is not relevant here,
since both are opposed not to "the rich" but to "the politicians." It is certainly
important to remember, as Dover points out (pp. 34–35), that pay for jury service
did not increase from three obols—to secure which juries in the days of Lysias, it
would seem, were willing to condemn—during the century following its establish-
ment, while wages and earnings for manual work doubled during the same period.
But the attraction of three obols as pay is evidently related to the *availability* of
manual work at a higher rate, and (equally evidently to a Greek, even if less so
to others) to the Greeks' general dislike of working *regularly* for wages as an em-
ployee of another individual. Dover's last argument, that Philocleon in the *Wasps*
is "certainly not a poor man," seems irrelevant. D. M. MacDowell, *Aristophanes'*
"Wasps" (Oxford, 1971), page 10, disagrees about the poverty, and regards the
chorus as being typical jurors; but whichever view one takes, consistency is not
the most noteworthy characteristic of Aristophanic comedy. Or perhaps the notion
of a juror who is not impoverished is itself funny?

Dover concludes his argument cautiously (p. 35), but it seems appropriate to
observe that there is even less evidence for prosperous jurors in fifth- and fourth-
century Athens than he suggests.[7]

This work contains methodological and philosophical observations, an abun-
dance of material not collected in a readily available form elsewhere, and copious
running comments. Since it is written by a scholar of Dover's reputation, it de-
serves to be read with great care and evaluated paragraph by paragraph with the
utmost seriousness. It is concerned with matters of great difficulty and complexity,
on which each student of ancient Greece should form his own conclusions in the
light of the evidence. There is, however, the possibility that a work of this nature,
which appears to be making minimal methodological assumptions, may be con-
sulted as an authoritative work of reference. Such usage of Dover's book, as I
have tried to show in this review, would be unwarranted. It is not merely that
methodological and philosophical stances are in fact taken: the stances are both
confused and confusing. For, in general, this work gives the impression of having

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7. I take it that Dover finds unconvincing the arguments which A. H. M. Jones, *Athenian Democ-*
racy (Oxford, 1964), p. 37, based on Dem. 20. 18 and Din. *In Dem.* 42, since he himself does not use
the passages as evidence. I agree. *In Dem.* 42 is a rhetorical device: "Are any of the three hundred
in court? Tell your neighbors about the misdeeds of Demosthenes." These misdeeds Dinarchus then
obligingly details, so that no one else need do anything. The device is effective, adding vividness and
directness, whether or not any of the three hundred are or are likely to be present in court. And one
might even argue that a speaker who was convinced that some were present would not have couched
his sentence in the form of a question. Demosthenes in 20. 18 ff. is arguing primarily that Leptines'
law will not significantly increase the revenues, and at 26 he uses ὑμῖν of the beneficiaries of the
contributions.

been written by two authors not always in perfect harmony with one another. One decries the lexical approach; the other compiles page after page of material which could well have been derived from lexica. And, whereas the advice of the one would require that due attention be paid to context, to the structure of argument, to the goal at which the speaker is aiming, the other rarely takes such matters into account. Though it is possible to be quite certain on other grounds that Dover has read all of the relevant speeches many times, it would be difficult to draw the conclusion from many pages of his text; and, as I have shown, the ignoring of context and intention can seriously affect interpretation. Again, one author apparently holds extreme views on moral vocabulary, discourse, and presuppositions; the other is more moderate, but is apparently prevented by his more extreme partner from raising questions which appear relevant to the more moderate position. Finally, the one is willing to base arguments on the usage of words, while the other is not; but neither offers justification of his position. The danger is that the reader may accept all of Dover's claims, making use of different presuppositions on different pages; and logic forbids that all of them be accepted by the same person.

I noted a few misprints, of which those most likely to cause problems occur on page 45, line 3 ("and" for "an") and on page 254, line 10, where "asserts" should apparently be "rejects." The absence from the *index locorum* of passages which are referred to or cited as additional examples, but not quoted, will hamper those who wish to establish Dover's view on a particular passage; and a minor irritation results from his practice of cross-referring by chapter, section, and subsection, with no indication of page. Since the pages do not carry the necessary information, location of cross-references requires that the table of contents be consulted on each occasion.

A. W. H. ADKINS
University of Chicago