GAGARIN AND THE "MORALITY" OF HOMER

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I AM OBLIGED to the editor of *Classical Philology,* and to Michael Gagarin, for furnishing me with so prompt an opportunity to reply to Gagarin's carefully argued paper. I am gratified by the fact that, if I read him correctly, he agrees with me more frequently than with Lloyd-Jones or Dover, and I not surprisingly find those parts of his paper most convincing. However, there is more to be said.

Gagarin and I have quite different goals and methods. I favor the study of the values of societies as wholes. Empirical survey—of texts, in the case of past societies—should be employed to establish the relevance and relative weighting of the terms used to express the values.[1] To avoid the confusions that may be caused by using "moral" simultaneously of two different cultures with different values, one should use terms that do not prejudge the issue. Having studied the relevant Greek material, I divided values into "competitive excellences" and "co-operative excellences." No matter what the motive for being just, self-controlled, or in other ways co-operative, to be found in any author or period, I treated the resulting just, self-controlled, or otherwise co-operative behavior as a manifestation of co-operative excellences. I also equated the system of values as a whole with the ethics (morality) of the society, believing that this method made it in principle possible to understand at least something of either the state of values at any particular moment or any developments that took place.[2]

Gagarin takes a different view. He terms "morality" behavior motivated solely by other-regarding motives and cites Bernard Williams as

1. To resort immediately to indexes, lexica and concordances, or—now—the *TLG* tapes, is simply insufficient for this purpose. One needs to study works as wholes first (as it is clear that Gagarin—whatever our other differences—has done). Whatever the quality of *Merit and Responsibility*—on which there are of course a number of opinions—the book is the product of a careful reading of extant Greek literature from Homer to Aristotle. I did not begin with any dogmatic presuppositions about the nature of the key terms of value in Greek. I had some impressions on the basis of earlier reading, and I confirmed some of these, rejected others, and added to the list as I proceeded. At this point, but not earlier, the special lexica to each author were of great use, to locate examples, in authors already read, of words and ideas whose importance became apparent later. (The distinction between competition and co-operation developed gradually, in the course of reading.)

2. There is of course no question of strict entailment, but it is possible to understand why the "preferred excellences" of Homer's Phaeacians differ (as Alcinous says, *Od.* 8. 236–53) from those of the storm-tossed unknown to whom he is speaking, and also (as we may add) from those of the Greeks and Trojans fighting around Homer's Troy, if one considers the circumstances in which each community lived.

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his authority for the contrast between "morality" and "ethics."[3] "Ethics" includes what I would term the entire value-system of the society. Gagarin freely grants that Homeric "morality," as he defines it, is concerned with a very limited set of relationships, and indeed that there is really almost nothing in Homer that fits his definition of "morality."

Thus far, one might expect Gagarin to favor a deontic ethic. He writes that "'pure morality' imposes obligations or rules for behavior that are separate from, and sometimes in conflict with, the apparent demands of self-interest."[4] But he freely admits that even disinterested concern, his second-best, is rare in Homer.[5] Later he borrows from Lloyd-Jones and others the claim that there are two "co-operative virtues" in the Homeric poems, loyalty and pity. Gagarin excludes loyalty, on the grounds that loyalty can lead to wrongful action. But so too can pity. If X pities Y because Y has been harmed, but not grievously, by Z, and if X then kills or grievously harms Z, then in most moral systems, and presumably according to Gagarin's "morality" as defined, X has wronged Z out of pity. On Gagarin's own criteria, pity too ceases to be a "co-operative virtue." It does so even if X's motive was entirely disinterested, and even if it involved X in danger. Gagarin wishes to retain "oughts," even moral "oughts." But one cannot derive an "ought" directly from pity. "X pities Y and so helps him" may be an accurate account of X's thought processes, but "X pities Y and so *ought* to help him" is simply a false inference. Neither "X pitied Y but ought not to have done so, for Y was not worth his pity" nor "X killed Z out of pity for Y but ought not to have done so, because killing anyone in the circumstances was wrong" is self-contradictory or difficult to understand. In fact, there are criteria in terms of which pity is justified or not justified.[6] Gagarin holds that the obligation to pity the army has essentially the same moral aspect as the obligation to pity guests, suppliants, and beggars. That puts the "ought" on the other side of the pity but does nothing to solve the problem of when pity is appropriate. In addition, one can have no obligation to feel any emotion at a particular time, for "ought" implies "can," and no one can feel anything at will.[7]

3. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985). Williams, as Gagarin notes, is himself hostile to "morality" so defined and advocates a return to the ancient Greek position.

4. "Apparent" suggests that Gagarin has not entirely escaped the attractions of the tradition that he claims to be rejecting. The distinction between apparent and real self-interest runs from Socrates through Plato and Aristotle to the Stoics and Cicero, and beyond.

5. Were more space available, I should discuss the meanings of "concern," "disinterested," and "altruistic," suggest that disinterested action and altruistic action are not necessarily the same thing, and try to establish as precisely as possible the difference between actions arising from concern and actions arising from the motive of duty. I should also discuss "moral sense" and "moral rules" both in general and in reference to Gagarin's paper.

6. In addition to the problems noted above, one can remark that pity is essentially exercised *de haut en bas*. So, of course, is behavior in accordance with traditional ἀρετή. For the ancient Greek, this is one of the attractive features of ἀρετή, which is traditionally an indication of one's superiority to others in ways unlikely to be attractive to Gagarin. Kant is aware of what he, unlike Aristotle, sees as the problems of beneficence, and he prescribes a very different attitude for the benefactor; see *On Duties of Virtue to Others*, trans. M. J. Gregor (New York, 1964). pp. 120–21.

7. For Aristotle and Kant's solutions to this problem, see *EN* 1114a3–7, and *Groundwork to the Metaphysic of Morals*[2], trans. H. J. Paton (London, 1947), p. 67.

Though these topics are rarely discussed in philological journals, they are relevant here. Gagarin is looking for "our morality" in Homer. It seems appropriate to inquire what characteristics "our morality" has. No simple answer can be given. At the present time, there are four major types of moral philosophers, distinguished by the prominence that they give to duties, rights, ends, and virtues. Virtue-ethics, nearly extinct for many years, has recently returned to the scene. Each of the four camps disagrees with the other three, and there are also disputes within each camp. Many would disagree that heteronomy disqualifies an act from being moral. No virtue-ethicist would accept as virtues only characteristics that *cannot* benefit their possessors. Few moral philosophers would treat pity or disinterested concern as fundamental, for the reasons I have suggested and for others. Nor can Gagarin appeal to the person-in-the-street, who certainly does not distinguish morality from ethics in this manner.[8]

My own use of "Kantian" has aroused much comment.[9] If the word is read in its context, it becomes evident that my meaning, perhaps too flamboyantly expressed, is that all now agree that "ought" implies "can." My goal was clearly stated. I wished to render Greek ethics more accessible to those whose values differed from the ancient Greeks' by choosing a concept, moral responsibility, that, by its relative unimportance in the Greek world and its fundamental importance to "us," pointed up the differences. The book is a study of Greek ethics in its own right, and my demands on "our morality" are of the kind that it is able to bear.

Gagarin is in a different position. He is explicitly looking for "our morality" in Homer, and it matters very much which version of it is chosen, particularly since motivation, on which there is much dispute, is so important to him. Many readers will doubt whether he is discussing morality at all.

Gagarin seems to say that he chose the account of "morality" that was most useful for his purposes. He was surely mistaken in supposing it useful. Pity is not a virtue by Homeric, Aristotelian, Kantian, or—at least some—modern criteria.[10] Gagarin is really searching for disinterested beneficent actions, which themselves might be actions that many moralists would regard as immoral. With characteristic honesty, he admits that there are really very few actions of this kind in Homer. I inquire below whether there are any at all.

8. See n. 32 below.

9. See *Merit and Responsibility*, p. 7. On a number of occasions I observe that though the modern reader may find the position of some Greek thinker strange, the thinker has solved his problems in terms of Greek values. I can see no sense in which *Merit and Responsibility* is a Kantian study of Greek values or, as has been claimed by different critics at different times, a Christian, Marxist, or logical positivist study. Others have characterized my conclusions as manifest nonsense, and yet others as true but unexcitingly obvious. I infer from all this that my position is probably rather a moderate one.

10. Not all modern versions of virtue-ethics find it problematic that a virtue may lead to wrongful actions. See, e.g., G. H. von Wright, *The Varieties of Goodness* (London, 1963), cited by Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978), p. 15. But there are other reasons for disputing the classification of an emotion as a virtue, as we have already observed.

Since Gagarin is not criticizing the position that I hold, in many places we cannot be said to agree or disagree. But he discusses many passages of Homer which I also discuss, and which I treat differently in a manner that affects his interpretation. I turn now to some points of this kind.

Gagarin's categories of the legal, the religious, and the moral are crucial for his thesis, which seems to require that the categories are "out there" in Homer's world. If they seem to be absent, and if other categories seem to be present, this must affect Gagarin's thesis. To be moral, an action must be motivated by disinterested concern for "unprotected persons." "Legal considerations influence the behavior of one person toward another and are sanctioned directly by the response of the other party." "Religious rules are sanctioned directly by the deity concerned, who punishes or rewards a mortal's behavior"; the category includes protection of members of a god's immediate family (Polyphemus), or of mortals such as priests, "though both these examples may involve other considerations as well."

I shall begin with Gagarin's category of the moral, which concerns the treatment of what Gagarin calls "unprotected persons." Neither Gagarin nor anyone else denies that ξεῖνοι, ἱκέται, and πτωχοί form a group recognized as such in the poems. Most interpreters suppose that they are protected by deities unspecified or by Zeus, sometimes qualified by the epithets Xeinios or Hiketesios. Consider the motivation, first, of the gods. Once accepted under his protection by Zeus, the "unprotected" becomes part of Zeus' household, a φίλος whom it would be αἰσχρόν for him not to protect. The problem is to explain how "the unprotected" became part of Zeus' household in the first place. Elsewhere I ascribe the belief to perceived social need for such protection.[11] Gagarin's argument, so far as I can see, gives me no reason to modify my own, which indeed resembles his rather closely.

Do the Homeric gods show pity to mankind? Certainly the verb ἐλεεῖν appears in contexts that involve deities. Some will be reminded of the prayer Χριστὲ ἐλέεισον in some forms of Christian worship. The echo points the contrast. The Christian worshiper confesses his *unworthiness* and asks for pity (mercy?). Mortals in the Homeric poems try to establish a claim on the deity, asking for pity either on the ground of sacrifices given in the past or to the accompaniment of sacrifices now rendered. For example, Alcinous, becoming aware that the Phaeacians have angered Poseidon, offers twelve bulls in sacrifice to him, "if haply he may ἐλεεῖν us" (*Od.* 13. 182); and the Trojans behave in the same way in seeking the pity of Athena (*Il.* 6. 94, 275, 309). Again, Zeus ἐλέησε his son Sarpedon, φίλτατον ἀνδρῶν, about to be killed by Patroclus (*Il.* 16. 431–38). Hera expresses disapproval, in which the other gods will share. From a similar motive (ὀλοφύρεσθαι), Zeus

11. See *Merit and Responsibility*, pp. 63–66, and "Homeric Gods and the Values of Greek Society," *JHS* 93 (1973): 3–12.

proposed to save Hector on the grounds of Hector's abundant sacrifices (22. 168–76). To be related to a god is to be a φίλος to that god, even if one is as unprepossessing as Polyphemus; to offer sacrifice and to have done so in the past is to maintain an established relationship of φιλότης. Pity is not to be equated with disinterested concern in Homer, nor need it be the most powerful consideration when it is relevant. Homer knows that pity may lead to inappropriate actions. It is not that pity-in-response-to-services-rendered is a disreputable motive. Other considerations are sometimes stronger.[12] At the very least, pity does not serve to distinguish "moral" relationships from others.[13]

Nor are ξεῖνοι, ἱκέται, and πτωχοί a matched set in Gagarin's terms. The motives for protecting them may differ. A ξεῖνος may be a "guest-friend," a participant in a relationship that may have been entered into several generations back (cf. 6. 215–31). It depends on the perception and pursuit of long-term enlightened self-interest and is presumably "legal." Neither pity nor disinterested concern is an appropriate motive for fulfilling the terms of a contract. Yet ξεῖνος may also be used of a person, once accepted, whose status would never enable him to enter into such a guest-friendship and return the hospitality and protection he has received.[14] His host cannot be motivated by "legal" considerations. That both are termed ξεῖνοι suggests that Homer classes such actions in terms not of their motivation, but of the situation of the persons protected. All ξεῖνοι are in a situation both hazardous and "liminal."[15] Consequently, guest-friends, strangers of rank, and beggars are placed in the same category. All need protection in the same way by some god, for *at the crucial time* they are equally helpless against other human beings. That some have a contractual claim while others have not is mentioned neither by Homer nor by his characters. Zeus Xeinios may also be concerned with "regular members" of the community. Menelaus threatens the Trojans with the wrath of Zeus Xeinios that will destroy their city (13. 624–25). When Menelaus welcomed Paris to his oikos, both men

12. The complete role of "pity" in the poems needs more space to discuss than I have here. See, e.g., the complex debate in *Il.* 24. 18–76, discussed in "Values, Goals, and Emotions in the *Iliad*," *CP* 77 (1982): 315–16.

13. Gagarin distinguishes between the religious and moral punishments suffered by Agamemnon for his rejection of Chryses' offer of a ransom for Chryseis. The plague is the religious penalty, the (lighter) moral penalty being the demanded offering of the hecatomb and the loss of the ransom. Now it seems evident from the text that had not Chryses prayed to Apollo, reminding him of past favors done by him to the god, the god would have taken no action, in which case Agamemnon would have suffered neither penalty. In fact, there is no sign that Apollo is moved by "moral" considerations. (Chryses at no point makes what Gagarin would regard as a moral claim to Apollo.) Since Gagarin's distinction between types of action is based on motive, and since actions in both the legal and religious categories are motivated by self-interest and use the same values, once again I see little reason for distinguishing between these categories, and less for supposing that the Homeric Greek distinguished between them in any significant way.

14. See, e.g., *Od.* 14. 402, 415, 18. 223.

15. For this useful term, proposed by Victor Turner but used in rather different ways by different anthropologists, see, e.g., P. Friedrich, *The Meaning of Aphrodite* (Chicago and London, 1978). Those who dislike anthropological terms are referred to "Homeric Gods and the Values of Homeric Society," where an explanation is given which, though compatible with liminality, does not invoke it. Indeed, my account resembles Gagarin's own.

were ξεῖνοι, and Menelaus was off his guard.[16] (The hindsight of the audience would ensure that the wrath was not taken lightly. "Religious" reasons for the city's ruin are given elsewhere.)[17] Menelaus found himself an "unprotected person" in his own oikos. Any other "regular member of society," even a stay-at-home, might find himself in similar plight. In this kind of situation, it is hoped that Zeus will punish the wrongdoer. That the punishment was not inflicted by the gods in person seems immaterial. Greek gods regularly achieve their goals through human agents. What does Zeus *do* to fulfill his promise to Thetis? The belief persists. What do the gods *do* in the *Septem* or the *Antigone?* Yet the outcome is ascribed to them and their motives are given.[18]

Consider now the motivation of the ἀγαθός who protects the weaker, in contexts where the gods are not mentioned.[19] Gagarin takes "unprotected persons visiting an oikos" as the paradigm case and tries to subsume larger groups under this concept, invoking (disinterested) concern as the motive for the action of the protector. The largest group he discusses is the Greek army before Troy, for whose safety Agamemnon should take thought. But Homer, or his characters, explain this situation without invoking disinterested concern. Sarpedon makes it clear that the ἀγαθός or βασιλεύς enjoys a privileged position (12. 310–28) on the understanding that he will be valiant and successful.[20] The fact that Agamemnon receives the best share of the booty is a consequence of his position as commander-in-chief, and therefore it is demanded of him that he display his ἀρετή in leading the army to success.[21] *A fortiori,* he must not lead it to failure. In such circumstances, leading the army to success is not only an "ought" (derived from a *quid pro quo,* and so not a moral "ought" in Gagarin's sense) but something desirable. Agamemnon (1. 116–20) uses no word of obligation, only words of "wishing" and "wanting." No "ought" is introduced, and none is needed. To receive τιμή is a desirable, and the army may be viewed as an institution for the gathering and redistribution of τιμή.[22] There are two motives, neither of them "moral," for Agamemnon's wishing to do what is best for the army. Its continued existence benefits him above all others, and his reception of more τιμή than others rests on his position as—successful—commander-in-chief. As early as *Iliad* 2. 110–41 Agamemnon is already maintaining that Zeus has tricked him and is bidding him to "return

16. Ξεῖνος is juxtaposed with ξεινοδόκος where a distinction between the roles is needed (e.g., *Od.* 8. 543). In other circumstances ξεῖνος may refer to the host (e.g., *Il.* 15. 532).

17. See *Il.* 4 ad init. and my discussion in "Homeric Gods and the Values of Homeric Society."

18. See my discussions in "Laws versus Claims in Early Greek Religious Ethics," *HR* 21 (1982): 222–39, and "Divine and Human Values in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes,*" *A&A* 28 (1982): 32–68.

19. I discuss this situation further in n. 31.

20. See my "Values, Goals, and Emotions," pp. 292–93, and *Merit and Responsibility,* pp. 34–35. Sarpedon is a Lycian fighting on the Trojan side, but the values of the Trojan army are not notably different from those of the Greek army.

21. I argue that in Homer τιμή is material goods (e.g., booty) with a high emotive charge, in "'Honour' and 'Punishment' in the Homeric Poems," *BICS* 7 (1960): 23–32.

22. So Achilles, *Il.* 9. 330–33.

home δυσκλεής, since [he has] lost much λαός."[23] Agamemnon was willing to return Chryseis, if that were better (sc. for the army), because for the head of any unit in Homeric society, the demand that he successfully preserve that unit is unqualified. Agamemnon's desire to avoid ill κλέος is exactly similar to the desire for (favorable) κλέος that motivates Sarpedon and Glaucus. All three desire to maintain their position, their τιμή and their κλέος. In wartime, all three goals should be attained by fighting bravely and successfully in the foremost ranks. In the *Iliad,* Agamemnon alone is responsible for the well-being of the whole army, as its commander-in-chief. Achilles is not.[24]

Thus Gagarin's broadest example of disinterested concern is not merely explicable in terms of ἀρετή, τιμή, and φιλότης, it is so explained and is presumably "legal." I am puzzled by Gagarin's distinction between "legal" and "religious," since the same vocabulary of evaluation—ἀρετή, τιμή, φιλότης, ὕβρις, et cetera—is used of god-mortal, mortal-god, mortal-mortal, and god-god relationships not merely in Homer but in extant Greek down to the middle of the fifth century at least.[25] There is one scale extending from Zeus down to the humblest mortal. Since Gagarin's "moral" position depends essentially on the ascription of motives, it must be confusing to assign to different classes actions to which Homer assigns the same motive.[26]

Gagarin writes: "In this way the gods are brought in to oversee 'morality,' but this oversight does not extend to the regular members of society, who are expected to protect themselves." "Regular members of society" seems to mean "heads of oikos when at home in their own oikos or away from it and not under the protection of another head of oikos." (Sometimes even those in their own oikos may have to threaten those who wrong them with the punishment of Zeus Xeinios, as the case of Menelaus shows.) Women of any class,[27] δημιοεργοί, most servants and slaves, and all children are not expected to defend *themselves.* They must rely on their head of oikos, whose ἀρετή will be tarnished if he fails to defend them against others. The self-interest of the head of oikos would normally protect them against the head of the oikos himself.

23. Later in the same book (284–88) Odysseus says to Agamemnon that "the Achaeans are now willing to make you [singular] ἐλέγχιστος in the eyes of all mortal men—and are not fulfilling the promise that they made when they were still on the way to Troy, to return only when you [singular] had sacked well-walled Ilium."

24. For all these points, see "Values, Goals, and Emotions," passim.

25. See my "Homeric Gods and the Values of Homeric Society" and "Divine and Human Values in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes.*"

26. That divine punishment or revenge is in any instance indirect does not mark that instance as "moral." The Greeks ascribed any notable event to the intervention of a deity: so Oeneus (*Il.* 9. 533–46) left Artemis out inadvertently when offering sacrifice, but she punished him by sending a wild boar to ravage the land. This seems to me no less indirect than Gagarin's examples. (In *Od.* 19. 108, the just ruler is promised all manner of indirect "natural" benefits. Presumably the unjust might expect indirect "natural" disasters.)

27. It is puzzling that Gagarin does not make more of the ἀρετή of Homeric women, which prima facie (though not, I think, in fact) has the kind of characteristics for which he is searching.

Conflicts of interest do, however, occur in oikoi. On such occasions fear of the "Erinyes of a brother" or "of a mother" seems to be invoked.[28]

Gagarin gives as the motive for bringing the gods in "to oversee morality" that they "are evidently a benefit to the community as a whole . . . and rules regarding their treatment are given a divine sanction." Granted, in Gagarin's text "their" immediately refers to corpses, oaths, and the legal process as a whole,[29] which he then assimilates, as his thesis requires, to "unprotected persons." But if these "unprotected persons" are given the protection of divine sanctions because the "moral sense," which Gagarin invokes at the beginning of the paragraph, does not suffice, it seems difficult to argue that the moral sense is adequate to ensure the safety of those who are literally "unprotected persons," especially when we find that divine sanctions are in fact invoked frequently in the Homeric poems to secure their safety. It seems strange (*a*) to argue that consciousness of the utility of certain beliefs about corpses, oaths, and the legal process as a whole led to the adoption of the belief that such institutions had a divine sanction and simultaneously (*b*) to deny that consciousness of the utility of another belief (that those away from their own oikos and its immediate neighborhood, at all events when accepted into another oikos by its head, are protected by a deity) led to the adoption of the belief. Maybe I am misreading Gagarin, but he seems here to argue that perceived communal advantage led to the adoption of certain beliefs that were intended to deter certain kinds of behavior and encourage others. As far as I can see, the behavior encouraged is coextensive with Gagarin's category of "morality." Neither "moral sense" nor "pity," if this is to be distinguished from "moral sense," suffices. In other words, perception of the needs of society—enlightened self-interest—led to the belief that gods punished certain moral transgressions and attempted to deter the would-be evildoer by threatening disaster if he transgressed—a deterrence that appeals to unenlightened self-interest. I argued precisely this case long ago.[30] If I read Gagarin correctly, he is abandoning his thesis, or should be doing so. The last sentence of the paragraph suggests that he is abandoning it. If the gods are concerned with the oversight of "morality" as defined by Gagarin, no scope remains for disinterested concern, and the set of "moral" actions—in the strong sense of actions not needing reinforcement from a deity—seems to be empty.[31] If Gagarin is trying to retain

28. If, as seems likely, the Erinyes are personalized curses, whose sole function is to harm the person cursed, deservedly or undeservedly, they are not themselves moral agents. (This seems to be Aeschylus' view in the *Eumenides*.) They may be sustaining the co-operative excellences. Are they upholding "morality"?

29. The legal process seems to be in the category, not of "legal," but of "moral," in Gagarin's eyes.

30. See "Homeric Gods and the Values of Homeric Society."

31. It is unclear to me how Gagarin understands the situation. The possibilities include: (*a*) some members of the society are moved entirely by "moral" considerations *simpliciter* and do not need the fear of divine punishment as a deterrent; (*b*) all members of the society are sometimes motivated by fear of deity, but some much more than others; (*c*) the same person is sometimes motivated by fear of the gods, sometimes not. (In my terms, all these are examples of co-operative excellences.) It may be

some trace of disinterested concern as a motive along with the belief in "moral," punishing deities, then the moral quality of a person's life is inversely proportional to his belief in the said deities. This sounds bizarre, but if "morality" must not have any trace of the heteronomous, the conclusion follows.[32] However, though Homer often ascribes motives to his characters, I find no trace of such an evaluation in the Homeric poems. Once again, Gagarin's categories seem not to fit the judgments and behavior of Homer and his characters.

"Agamemnon, under the influence of anger, has made a mistake."[33] The words refer, in context, to Agamemnon's judgment of his actions after he believes that they have led to disaster, that is to say, from *Iliad* 2 on. However, I am prepared to defend the judgment with respect also to Book 1. There Agamemnon does not suppose that he has made a mistake, nor yet a moral error, in depriving Achilles of Briseis. He is simply taking something he wants and believes himself to be entitled to. He is warned in *Iliad* 1 by Achilles (163–71) that Achilles will no longer fill the coffers of Agamemnon under the prevailing unfavorable terms. Agamemnon tells Achilles to run away if he wants to, for there are many others who will give him τιμή, especially Counselor Zeus (172–75). Thus far the threat is that Agamemnon will lose by angering Achilles, and Agamemnon denies that he will suffer any significant loss. Achilles tells Agamemnon that Agamemnon is making a mistake, and Agamemnon denies it. Later Achilles is more specific: "The time will come when a great longing will come over the Greeks, and Agamemnon will be powerless to help, when they are dying at the hands of Hector. Then Agamemnon will be tormented in his spirit that he gave no τιμή to the ἄριστος of the Achaeans" (1. 240–44). Agamemnon is being warned in prudential terms of the consequences of angering Achilles—that he is making a mistake—and he sweeps the advice aside. Presumably no one will deny that he does so because he is angry. I also claim that Agamemnon will treat his behavior as ἄτη only if disaster follows.[34] As soon as the balance of the fighting goes against the Greeks—indeed, before what he fears has yet occurred—Agamemnon complains that

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doubted whether there are Homeric Greeks motivated entirely by "moral" considerations. Homer does ascribe motives for heroes' actions, and had he wished he could have said "X acted thus not out of fear of the gods, but because the action was [some adjective of commendation, e.g., καλόν]." In Homeric and later Greek, acting without fear of the gods is more likely to lead to ὕβρις than to autonomous, "Kantian" morality. The absence of the gods from some types of situation in which mention of the gods is common need not be evidence for moral motivation. All strangers who come to the oikos from elsewhere present themselves as ἱκέται, literally, "comers." There is a ritual, which includes touching the chin and knees of the person supplicated; see J. Gould, "*HIKETEIA*," *JHS* 93 (1973): 74–103. But such rituals for most people are not "moral," for the deserts of the suppliant are not considered; and insofar as the successful performance of the ritual should guarantee protection for the suppliant, the protector is bound by magico-religious obligations, not moral ones.

32. Such paradoxes are the everyday fare of philosophers, who accept the linguistic consequences of their terms of art. But this use of "morality" is evidently not "ours," in the sense of "all, or even almost all, persons-in-the-street." A substantial proportion of "us," to judge from the news media, *contrasts* "morality" with "secular humanism" and supposes that "morality" requires belief in a punishing deity.

33. *Merit and Responsibility*, pp. 50–51.

34. Ibid., p. 50.

Zeus has deceived him and "bound him with heavy ἄτη," causing him to make a mistake (2. 111). From this point onward, Agamemnon's assessment of his own situation remains the same.[35]

Next Achilles and the mother bird (9. 323–35). My interpretation rests upon both the values and behavior of Homeric heroes in general and the structure of Achilles' speech. Homer clearly marks the thought-processes of Achilles as he discharges the pent-up pressure of his wrath, letting one idea suggest another. He is like a mother bird in respect of his ceaseless toil. He specifies the nature of that toil, giving example after example, all of which, as line follows line, distance him in time from his thought of the mother bird and, as exploit follows exploit, emphasizing his ἀρετή, his prowess as a warrior, distance his way of life from hers. In addition, by emphasizing the unvalorous and greedy nature of Agamemnon, he aggravates his charges that Agamemnon is not ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν. It was not I who first noted that in general in Homeric similes there is usually only one point of comparison between the two persons or activities compared. Here, the point is the toil of Achilles and the toil of the mother bird. Achilles is mingling something very like self-pity with his wrath. In so doing, he may be falling short of Plato's heroic ideal (*Resp.* 2 and 3. 386A–92A), but in the context of this speech and of Homeric values his state of mind leads him on very naturally to the train of thought already discussed. Achilles' wrath has the same cause as it does in the first book. Compare *Iliad* 1. 158–71 with 9. 314–45, and especially 9. 318–19: "there is an equal μοῖρα for him who remains behind and for him who fights hard.[36] In the same τιμή are the κακός and the ἐσθλός." Achilles is also following the advice of Peleus given in *Iliad* 9. 254–58.[37]

Should one grant this but maintain that, whether or not the characters or the poet express the thought, they believed that a Homeric warrior should emulate a mother bird no matter what the provocation? Presumably not, or the Trojan War would never have begun, or once begun would have quickly come to an end. There must be criteria of appropriateness for such avian behavior in Homeric heroes, and the most likely criteria surely include the existence of a φιλότης-relationship with the persons concerned. The other speakers in *Iliad* 9 make attempt after attempt to convince Achilles that such a relationship does or should exist. I have given reasons elsewhere for their lack of success.[38]

Gagarin's categories are not Homer's. Even if some of his examples were moved to different categories in the light of the present paper, ξεῖνος would still span two categories. Homer and his audiences classified ξεῖνοι, who have an important central role in Gagarin's search for "morality," by criteria different from Gagarin's. They classify in terms of

35. For fuller discussion, see ibid., pp. 50–51, and "Values, Goals, and Emotions," pp. 294–314, 324–26.The sense of *Il.* 2. 111 is the same whether or not Agamemnon really believes what he is saying.

36. Μοῖρα here is to be rendered "share." The idea of "death" is not introduced until 9. 320.

37. For Peleus' argument, see "Values, Goals, and Emotions," p. 303.

38. See ibid., pp. 302–12.

need. Here I agree with Gagarin.[39] They do not distinguish cases on the basis of motives for supplying what is needed.[40] (Yet again in Homer, results take precedence over motives and intentions.)[41] The claim that pity and disinterested concern are (the only) virtues raises problems not only in general philosophy but in Gagarin's interpretation of the poems. Pity may lead to acts that are reprehensible, and it is sought as a reward for services rendered, which places it outside Gagarin's "moral" category on two counts.

Let me offer in conclusion some more general comments on the continuing debate of this vexed question. I shall mention no scholars by name, since I have no space here to offer anything more than a broad indication of what my more detailed reply would be. I do not wish to make unargued claims concerning the particular views of others who have written on this topic, though some of them are affected by what I have written here in reply to Gagarin. I do not expect other scholars to accept my unargued pronouncements any more than I am prepared to accept theirs. I grant that, in the interpretation of a literary work, its value-terms must be handled with care. But there is abundant evidence that the cross-cultural understanding of aesthetic effects furnishes problems no less difficult than does the cross-cultural understanding of moral values, and that the close study of values and beliefs may throw much light on the effects aimed at by the poet.[42] In both cases, there is

39. See *Merit and Responsibility,* p. 65, and "Homeric Gods and the Values of Homeric Society."

40. The guest-friend relationship cannot be subsumed under the class of "moral" and disinterested actions on the grounds (*a*) that reciprocity may be deferred for several generations, and (*b*) that such a period is too long for self-interest to play any significant role. The classification would require that it *must* be so deferred; but unless he preferred to sleep under the stars and take his chance with brigands, any one making a journey too long to permit return on the same day would require the services of a guest-friend, and the reciprocity in the relationship could hardly be overlooked. In the case of Glaucus and Diomedes, Diomedes is instantly aware of the relationship, and in *Il.* 6. 224–25 expresses its reciprocity; and the poet's view of the unequal exchange of armor (*Il.* 6. 234–36), intended to show those present that Glaucus and Diomedes are guest-friends, indicates that reciprocity, not generosity, was characteristic of the relationship.

41. For the "results-culture" of ancient Greece, see my *From the Many to the One* (Ithaca and London, 1970).

42. The close study of value terms in Catullus and Vergil in the context of later first-century Latin usage has greatly affected our appreciation of these poets. For Catullus, see E. A. Havelock, *The Lyric Genius of Catullus* (Oxford, 1939). The discussion of such words as *urbanus, lepidus, venustus, facetus, dicax, salsus,* and their contraries throws light on the cult-language of a coterie for whom wit, charm, and taste are the values by which both life and art are to be evaluated. (I owe my introduction, long ago, to this aspect of Catullus to unpublished lectures of R. G. C. Levens, who in the late 'forties both expounded and elaborated the thesis of Havelock in detailed discussions of individual Catullan poems.) Let me take one example from Vergil: *pietas.* The advance in understanding may be measured by comparing the notes of T. E. Page, *The "Aeneid" of Virgil* (London, 1894), on 1. 178 (*sum pius Aeneas*) and 4. 393 (*At pius Aeneas*) with those of R. G. Austin on the same lines. To contrast Catullus' use of *pius* and *pietas* (e.g., 76. 2 and 28) with the traditional usage, found in Vergil and already long established in Catullus' day, which must have endowed the words with their connotations, renders more comprehensible the effect which each must have had upon his contemporaries. In the last forty years, many very interesting, and some illuminating, contributions have been made to Catullan and Vergilian criticism; but they have not rendered irrelevant the work of Havelock and similar critics, which sometimes underlies, and always complements, later work. The need for studies of this kind, both in the Greek and Latin classics and elsewhere, is far from satisfied; any word, particularly when used by a great poet, may repay study. In "Meaning, Using, Editing and Translating," *G&R* 21 (1974): 37–50, I illustrate this point with passages from Shakespeare and Vergil.

an ever-present danger that one hears reflected from the text merely the echo of one's own voice, the more so whenever the modern critic endorses the values he has "found" in the text. In addition, what the critic treats as most important or relevant to the interpretation of the work is likely to be affected by the values and world-view of the critic. I have offered elsewhere a reinterpretation of the aesthetic effect of the closing books of the *Iliad*.[43] Using passages over which the eye of the modern critic usually passes without interest, though taken together they make a coherent point and one important to the early Greeks, I have argued that the closing books of the *Iliad,* many episodes of which have been scorned by modern literary critics, form a coherent whole. Even if my readers should reject my arguments for this particular interpretation, they can hardly deny that it is possible for a critic to fail to notice material that bears in an important way on the manner in which the original audience or readership experienced a work written in a different culture and language. Empathy is a great gift, and an essential part of the literary critic's equipment, but the critic of the literature of another time and place needs many other resources in addition. The argument from authority is not an argument. Any critical stance is only as good as the arguments in favor of the critic's own views and against those of his critics. I shall present my responses to other scholars on another occasion.

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43. "Art, Beliefs, and Values in the Later Books of the *Iliad*," *CP* 70 (1975): 239–54.