MORALITY IN HOMER

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QUESTIONS concerning the general subject of moral or ethical values in the Homeric poems have been the subject of considerable debate during the last half-century and more. In this paper I cannot examine all the issues that have been raised, but I shall suggest an approach to the problem that may shed light on the subject as a whole. I shall focus on one specific and relatively limited idea, morality, and shall attempt to determine its role and significance in the poems. Of course, any conclusion about morality in Homer depends to a large extent on precisely what we mean by "morality," which is in many respects a modern concept. In using this term I do not presuppose the existence of any fully developed Christian or Kantian morality in Homer; but I think we can see the beginning, at least, of a moral sense and can evaluate its significance in the epics. Furthermore, the examination of morality in Homer may illuminate certain other features of Homeric values and Homeric behavior.

Before saying explicitly what I mean by morality, I shall briefly consider the advice Nestor offers Agamemnon and Achilles during their dispute in Book 1 of the *Iliad* and the interpretations of this advice presented by two scholars who represent strongly opposed views, Arthur Adkins and Hugh Lloyd-Jones.[1] This will provide a context for delineating a concept of morality that will be useful specifically for examining the role of morality in Homer.

I. THE PROBLEM: NESTOR'S ADVICE

When Agamemnon is forced to give up his slave girl Chryseis without a ransom (a scene we shall examine later), he decides to take someone else's girl as recompense; and since Achilles has been openly critical of his leadership, he decides upon Achilles' girl Briseis. In response Achilles

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1. Adkins' first and most important work on the subject is *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford, 1960). I shall also refer to his articles, "Values, Goals, and Emotions in the *Iliad*," *CP* 77 (1982): 292–326, and "'Friendship' and 'Self-Sufficiency' in Homer and Aristotle," *CQ* 13 (1963): 30–45. For Lloyd-Jones I shall refer to the second edition of *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983). I hope in this paper to establish a reasonable intermediate position between the views of Adkins and Lloyd-Jones.

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withdraws from the war and threatens to sail home. In the middle of this dispute, before the threats have been realized in action, Nestor delivers a speech (254–84) urging a calming of tempers and restraint on both sides. He ends his speech as follows (274–84):

> So obey me, both of you, since it is better to obey (ἐπεὶ πείθεσθαι ἄμεινον). Do not, distinguished though you [Agamemnon] are (ἀγαθός περ ἐών),[2] take away his girl but leave her, since the sons of the Achaeans first gave her to him as a prize. And you, son of Peleus, do not seek to contend against a king, since never is the allotted honor (τιμή) of a scepter-bearing king, to whom Zeus has given glory, [merely] equal [to that of others]. Even if you are stronger and a divine mother bore you, yet he is mightier, since he rules over greater numbers. And you, son of Atreus, hold your spirit; indeed I beg you, put aside your anger toward Achilles, who is a great bulwark for the Achaeans against wretched war.

Adkins analyzes this advice (and the entire dispute) in prudential terms: "In order to maximize his *time,* Agamemnon would be well advised to wait for the promised threefold or fourfold compensation later; and as commander-in-chief of the Greek army he would be well advised not to antagonize his mightiest warrior, for it will be *aischron,* the most powerful term of value available to decry an action or state of affairs, for Agamemnon if the Greek army fails to capture Troy."[3] Agamemnon miscalculates, however, and although by taking Briseis he gains some τιμή in the short run, he loses considerably more τιμή in the end. Achilles, on the other hand, calculates correctly that his withdrawal will bring him greater τιμή in the end, though later, in Book 9, he errs in rejecting Agamemnon's generous offer, since he does not foresee that his continued absence will lead to Patroclus' death. We should note that Adkins supports his view that Nestor's advice to the two heroes is entirely practical by translating ἄμεινον (274) "more advantageous": "Take my advice, since it is more advantageous to do so."[4] This translation is consistent with Adkins' understanding of the passage, but we shall have reason to question it.

For Lloyd-Jones, on the other hand, the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles raises a moral issue both for the Greeks (in particular, Nestor) and for the gods. According to Lloyd-Jones, Nestor, in the lines quoted above, points out to each hero "in what way he is acting

2. Adkins' interpretation of ἀγαθός περ ἐών here and elsewhere in Homer has been challenged by K. J. Dover, "The Portrayal of Moral Evaluation in Greek Poetry," *JHS* 103 (1983): 35–48. See the Appendix, below.

3. "Values, Goals, and Emotions," p. 301. The word αἰσχρόν does not actually occur in Nestor's advice (or anywhere else in Book 1), though Adkins could presumably rephrase his analysis to eliminate this implication.

4. "Values, Goals, and Emotions," p. 299. Ἄμεινον occurs in two other key passages in Book 1 (116, 217; I shall examine 116 in part V, below), and Adkins consistently translates it "advantageous." He must mean advantageous to oneself—that is, if a course of action is said to be ἄμεινον, it is (in Adkins' interpretation) advantageous to the person who so acts, but not necessarily to others. In Adkins' view, Nestor in 274 is considering the advantage of Agamemnon and Achilles, not that of others (see further below, n. 35). One passage in the *Iliad* where ἄμεινον can scarcely mean "advantageous to oneself" is 11. 469, where Menelaus calls on Ajax to join him in assisting Odysseus, "for it is better [sc. for Odysseus] to go to his defense" (ἀλεξέμεναι γὰρ ἄμεινον).

wrongly. . . . This speech of Nestor's may contain no mention of an abstract notion of justice, but justice is what Nestor is aiming at; he wishes to settle the dispute by persuading each participant to accord to the other his proper *time.*" Furthermore, although in one respect Zeus is merely acceding to Thetis' request, he is also "ensuring the triumph of Achilles in a dispute in which Achilles is undoubtedly in the right."[5] Lloyd-Jones concludes that Zeus sees to it that a violation of "justice" among humans is punished.

Although Lloyd-Jones does little to explain precisely what he means by the sense of "justice" or being "in the right" in Homer, he seems to be saying that people have an obligation to respect the rights of others—in Achilles' case, the right to a "proper *time*"—not simply out of self-interest but because it is in some sense (in some moral sense, I assume) "wrong" not to. Zeus will see to it (on some occasions, at least) that one is punished for doing something "wrong," but for Lloyd-Jones right and wrong conduct are determined independently of Zeus' intervention. One ought to do what is right not just from self-interest, to avoid Zeus' punishment, but in some sense because it is right. For Adkins, on the other hand, "human beings have no rights *qua* human beings in Homer, only in virtue of some definite relationship";[6] and such relationships are grounded in self-interest. Achilles may have a certain "right" to Briseis, but this right exists only within the system of distribution of τιμή; and within this system Agamemnon as commander-in-chief also has the right to take her away (though he is foolish to do so). In Lloyd-Jones' view Achilles' right has some basis or sanction outside the system of τιμή: Agamemnon does not have a similar right and is thus wrong (in some larger sense), not merely mistaken, to take Briseis away.

I have tried to focus as precisely as possible on the essential point of disagreement between these two ways of understanding Nestor's advice because the same point seems to me to be at issue in interpreting other passages, and indeed the poem as a whole. The fundamental question is whether there exists in Homer any sense of right and wrong, or of obligation, external to and independent of the system of τιμή, as it is so thoroughly analyzed by Adkins, a system ultimately grounded on prudential self-interest. In other words, the contemporary debate concerns the presence or absence of an additional factor of morality or moral obligation in Homer.

II. MORALITY

Although no two philosophers (or classicists) would agree completely on the meaning of "morality," it is important to try to explain what I understand by the term. We may begin by distinguishing, as Bernard Williams recently has, "the ethical"—a relatively broad concept "that

5. *Justice of Zeus*[2], pp. 12–13.
6. "'Friendship' and 'Self-Sufficiency,'" p. 33.

understandably relates to us and our actions the demands, needs, claims, desires, and, generally, the lives of other people"—from the more restricted area of morality, characterized by a specially authoritative, indeed inescapable sense of moral obligation.[7] Morality in this narrow sense is a relatively modern notion in Western thought, with roots in Christianity and strongly influenced by such thinkers as Hume and especially Kant. We may speak of this morality as "pure," in the sense that it imposes obligations or rules for behavior that are separate from, and sometimes in conflict with, the apparent demands of self-interest. Indeed, morality may often require consideration for other persons in themselves (*qua* persons), as opposed to consideration of one's own interest.[8]

In this pure sense the notion of morality is too restricted for our purposes. The only example of purely disinterested behavior I can find in Homer is the Phaeacians' conveying Odysseus home to Ithaca, but this single example is not very useful for our understanding of Homeric values. It will be more helpful to understand "morality" in a slightly broader sense, while still maintaining the distinction between a broad area of ethics and a narrower field of morality. I shall therefore use "morality" to designate a disinterested concern for others, what Geoffrey Warnock calls the "countervailing of limited sympathies,"[9] but without assuming any exclusive disjunction between rational self-interest and morality, and without ascribing to moral reasons the absolute or overriding force they have in "pure" morality.[10]

In essence I shall use "morality" to designate that sense of consideration for others not closely tied to rational self-interest, but without the specially privileged status of pure morality. Rather than seeing morality and self-interest as discrete opposites I shall treat them as the ends of a continuous spectrum, along which we may think of a gradual extension of concern, from concern for oneself to concern for others. Concern for others may manifest itself first as concern for only a few, closely related others, then as concern for progressively larger groups, until finally (and this is essentially the stage of pure morality) one may feel a disinterested

7. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London, 1985), esp. chaps. 1 and 10 (the quotation is from p. 12). Williams proposes that morality in this narrow sense is actually harmful. J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Harmondsworth, 1977), pp. 106–7, draws a similar distinction between a broad and a narrow sense of morality.

8. There is a good collection of essays on this much-discussed issue in D. P. Gauthier, ed., *Morality and Rational Self-Interest* (Engelwood Cliffs, N.J., 1970). It is often difficult, of course, to separate the motives of self-interest and morality, whether in literature or in life. Indeed, one may be unable at times to distinguish these motives in oneself.

9. *The Object of Morality* (London, 1971), p. 26: "The 'general object' of morality . . . is to contribute to betterment—or non-deterioration—of the human predicament, primarily and essentially by seeking to countervail 'limited sympathies' and their potentially most damaging effects." B. Williams, *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (New York, 1972), pp. 73–74, traces this general approach back to Hume. Mackie, *Ethics*, pp. 107–15, links Warnock's view with those of Protagoras, Hobbes, and Hume.

10. Along these lines Philippa Foot (*Virtues and Vices* [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978], pp. 157–73) has proposed the notion of "morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives" (as opposed to Kant's categorical imperative); see also Warnock, *Object*, pp. 162–66.

concern for all other humans simply *qua* humans.[11] This raises the question: if we speak of a gradual extension of moral tendencies, should we also try to find some fixed dividing line at which we can say that these tendencies amount to morality? When we turn to the evidence of the poems (below, part III), I shall suggest that we can draw a line that will prove useful in our understanding of Homeric behavior, a line separating consideration for one's friends (φίλοι) and other full members of the society, which is still largely a matter of self-interest, from consideration for unprotected persons, which is largely moral.

Before we begin this search for morality in Homer, however, let me consider one objection that may immediately arise, namely, that such a project is anachronistic: this sense of morality is a modern philosophical or theological notion, and even the Greek philosophers, from Plato on, never conceived of a morality independent of self-interest (in the form of an ultimate good for man). Homer, to be sure, is no philosopher, and we should certainly not look for moral philosophy, Greek or modern, in him or his characters;[12] but if we are looking for certain ways of speaking or behaving that happen to have been granted a privileged status in Christian or modern philosophical thought, we may find these in the literature of any period. Certainly it would be wrong to assume that moral tendencies, if present, are similarly privileged among other people; but it is perfectly legitimate to look for this sense of morality in Homer and then, if we find it, to assess its status.

Furthermore, although for the most part Greek philosophical ethics was dominated by a notion of "agent-centered" morality in which virtue (ἀρετή) was treated as fully compatible with and even a constituent part of one's own good, this approach may have been primarily the result of Plato's influence.[13] Plato's views, however, were in some respects a response to the doctrines of earlier thinkers who, like Thrasymachus in Book 1 of the *Republic,* drew a sharp distinction between morality (primarily justice) and rational self-interest.[14] It also seems likely, as Vlastos has argued,[15] that Socrates, unlike Plato, viewed morality as justified in and of itself rather than as a mere instrument for attaining some other good. Thus the moral views of Plato and later philosophers are not straightforward guides to Homeric attitudes but respond to

11. Cf. Williams, *Morality,* pp. 9–11, 70–77.

12. See Dover, "Portrayal," pp. 47–48, on the difference between moral notions in literature and those in moral philosophy.

13. For Plato, see T. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues* (Oxford, 1977). A number of recent thinkers have promoted a return to the concept of "virtue" as the basis of morality; see most notably A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, 1981), and also the works cited by Williams, *Ethics,* p. 205, n. 7.

14. See, e.g., *Resp.* 343B–44C. An important part of the fifth-century background to Plato is examined in M. Nill, *Morality and Self-Interest in Protagoras, Antiphon and Democritus* (Leiden, 1985).

15. In a review of Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory,* in *TLS* for 24 February 1978, pp. 230–31, and in subsequent letters in that journal, Vlastos does not dispute Irwin's analysis of Plato but argues that there is a true, noninstrumental morality in the teachings of Socrates.

problems that Plato perceived in the views of the sophists, who in turn were reacting to the element of morality they perceived in traditional Greek culture going back to Homer. It is methodologically preferable, at any rate, to examine Homer first and then seek explanations for any discrepancies between what we find there and the ethical systems of later Greek philosophers.

III. MORALITY IN HOMER

In assessing the role of morality in Homer we must first decide where along our spectrum it will be most useful to draw a line separating morality from (relatively more) prudential behavior. A person in Homer obviously has a concern for himself and his own interests—for his security, his property, his status, in short for his τιμή. We may reasonably see this as his primary concern, though perhaps not his entire concern (as Adkins might maintain). He is also concerned with the security of members of his family and other dependents, though this concern can be seen as an integral part of his concern for himself. He has a similar concern for the interests of his "friends" (φίλοι), on whom he must rely for his own security and status.[16] In all these cases a person's self-interest in protecting or assisting others is relatively clear and direct: if any of one's family or friends is harmed, one's own τιμή is diminished.

A man's relationship to the gods is similar in certain respects. Although we may not wish to speak of mortals' concern for the gods, mortals certainly are concerned that the gods be pleased, and they attend to the gods' welfare as best they can, primarily with sacrifices and by avoiding any slights to a god's honor. Even more clearly than in the case of one's family and friends, the primary motive for this concern is self-interest.

The Homeric heroes are also expected to show concern for other groups of people, where the relationship is less direct and where one's self-interest is not so clearly involved. This category includes those who are connected with a person through three specific roles: guest (ξεῖνος), suppliant, or beggar. We may contrast the members of these three groups with full members of a society, who normally protect their own interests. These latter, with their families and friends, are expected to reciprocate both for injuries suffered and for benefits received. One's conduct toward these regular members of the community is directly a matter of self-interest; one refrains from injuring them in order to avoid injury in return. In contrast, guests, suppliants, and beggars are all unprotected: if they are harmed, they will not normally be able to retaliate; and if one treats them well, one cannot normally expect any

16. See Adkins, "'Friendship' and 'Self-Sufficiency,'" pp. 32–36. Although the nature of our evidence requires us to speak primarily about the leaders of the community (the ἀγαθοί), judging from what little we see of other characters I do not think those who are not ἀγαθοί think substantially differently; dependents understandably tend to identify their own interest with that of their lord.

direct benefit in return. In Homer it is widely accepted that one has an obligation to show consideration toward these unprotected persons, and quite elaborate rules govern their treatment, especially in the case of guests or of suppliants.

Various reasons are given in support of the obligation to show special consideration toward these unprotected persons. Sometimes (more often in the *Odyssey*),[17] members of these groups are said to be under the protection of the gods, usually Zeus. The system of hospitality (or "guest-friendship") as a whole is also justified on the basis of its reciprocal benefits (e.g., *Od.* 4. 33–36). The uncertain identity of an unprotected person may be given as a prudential reason for treating him well (*Od.* 17. 483–87), and this lesson is reinforced by the actual appearance of Athena disguised as the guest Mentes in *Odyssey* 1. Often no specific reason is given, but the obligation is no less clear, and explicit statements concerning the proper way to treat these unprotected persons are reinforced by many examples of both proper and improper treatment.

Despite the occasional appeal to self-interest, as in the argument from uncertain identity, the proper or improper treatment of an unprotected person does not appear primarily motivated by self-interest. We may suspect that the lavish hospitality of a host like Menelaus is somehow gratifying to his ego, but normally hosts fulfill their obligations without expecting anything in return, and in an extreme case the Phaeacians do so at some cost to themselves. The protection the gods are said to give unprotected persons is not an important factor and does not usually deter a man from pursuing his self-interest. Heracles, for example, is not deterred from killing his guest Iphitus (see below, part IV), and a number of suppliants are killed with little hesitation and no apparent consequences. In other words, the treatment of unprotected persons brings much less reciprocal harm or benefit, and is thus motivated much less by self-interest, than the treatment of full members of the society.

In view of the relatively small degree of self-interest present in the obligations felt toward these unprotected persons, I think we are justified in separating this category from those already considered and in regarding conduct toward unprotected persons a matter of morality. It may be in the best interest of the whole society and thus ultimately in everyone's self-interest to show consideration toward unprotected persons. But this justification and such injunctions as "put yourself in the other person's place" are also common in modern discussions of morality; they provide no ground for not recognizing the special character of moral obligations.

17. I am not now looking for differences in the role of morality in the two poems. Differences may exist, but such factors as the more frequent mention of Zeus Xenios in the *Odyssey* (only once in the *Iliad*) are readily explained by the much higher number of guests in this poem. See J. Gould, "*HIKETEIA*," *JHS* 93 (1973): 74–103, esp. p. 80, n. 38. V. Pedrick, "Supplication in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*," *TAPA* 112 (1982): 125–40, argues, not altogether convincingly, against Gould, that there is a significant difference in the poet's handling of the theme of supplication in the two poems.

The experiences of Odysseus seem to confirm the special position of rules for the treatment of unprotected guests. In recounting his travels Odysseus frequently mentions the treatment of guests as a crucial distinction between savages and civilized peoples (e.g., *Od.* 9. 175–76), and the Phaeacians, who are in certain respects a model of civilized society, are specially characterized by their generous treatment of foreign visitors. Savage groups, on the other hand, have no sense of obligation toward guests, though they may cooperate among themselves to a high degree, as the Laestrygonians apparently do (*Od.* 10. 80–132); and even at the most primitive stage the Cyclopes take care of their own families (*Od.* 9. 112–15). These and other examples imply that the benevolent treatment of guests is a special mark of civilized peoples.

Thus the Homeric poems portray a sense of obligation toward unprotected persons that we may classify as moral because it is significantly less motivated by self-interest than are one's obligations toward one's family, one's friends, or the gods. Let me suggest that the same moral sense underlies the consideration a military leader is expected to show for his troops, not only those under his immediate command but all those on his side. Such consideration is not necessarily seen as directly linked to any reciprocal benefits; and the troops in the field are dependent on the goodwill of their leaders (as well as their skill and intelligence), just as unprotected persons are dependent on the goodwill of their host or benefactor. Moreover, concern for one's troops and for the Achaean army as a whole approaches concern for people in general, though there is no sign in Homer of a general concern for all human beings, which (for the Achaeans) would include concern for the Trojans and for at least some of the uncivilized people encountered by Odysseus. But concern for one's army as a whole is a significant extension of one's consideration for others, and we shall consider below (part V) the role that it plays in the poems.

IV. MORALITY VERSUS LAW AND RELIGION IN HOMER

At this point we have distinguished the consideration granted those whom I have called "unprotected persons" from that granted those who either are more closely related to oneself or are in a position to reciprocate directly for whatever treatment they receive, and I have argued that we may legitimately include consideration for unprotected persons, but not consideration for other mortals or gods, within the sphere of morality. Let me now assign the terms "legal" and "religious" to these kinds of nonmoral considerations, so that we may examine more fully the differences between nonmoral and moral considerations.

For want of a better term, I shall designate as "legal" the relations between two or more full members of a community. Legal considerations influence the behavior of one person toward another and are sanctioned directly by the response of the other party. Although the Homeric

Greeks possessed no true laws,[18] I use the terms "legal considerations" and "legal rules"[19] because this area of behavior came to be regulated by laws when these were later enacted (in writing). The consequences of ignoring a legal consideration or violating a legal rule often seem quite independent of the violator's intent; and as we shall see, the violator may be extremely well regarded by those other than the victim of his violation.

By "religious considerations" and "religious rules" I mean those considerations and rules that influence the behavior of a mortal toward a god, particularly in such matters as sacrificing and performing other rites. Religious rules are sanctioned directly by the deity involved, who punishes or rewards a mortal's behavior. We may also include in this category behavior toward another mortal who is a member of a god's immediate family, such as Polyphemus, or toward mortals such as priests who are closely connected with a god, though both these examples may involve other considerations as well. Violations of religious rules bring severe punishment with little or no regard for the violator's motives or for possible extenuating circumstances. As Lloyd-Jones notes, "the gods are jealous of their own superiority, and are quick to punish even the least action which may seem to challenge or deny it." After giving several examples he concludes, "from a modern point of view . . . such gods are monstrously unjust. But for Homer . . . they are perfectly within their rights."[20] This begs the question. A god's "right" to retaliate is in the first instance a consequence of his power and of mortals' acceptance of that power. It does not necessarily have a moral basis, and the fact that mortals accept it is not necessarily a sign of moral approval.

Moral considerations influence the behavior of one person toward another who is unprotected.[21] Moral rules are presented either as having no external sanction or as sanctioned by the gods, in most cases by Zeus. It is important to note, however, that the punishment for neglecting moral considerations differs significantly from the divine punishment for violating religious rules. In the first place, Zeus' concern for unprotected persons is only indirect. As we noted above, the idea that unprotected persons are under the protection of Zeus is only one of the reasons given for showing consideration to them. The nature of this protection is vague, moreover, and there is no indication that the god's interest or τιμή is directly involved. For instance, both Nausicaa and Eumaeus say they will help the stranger, Odysseus, because "all guests

18. See M. Gagarin, *Early Greek Law* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986), esp. pp. 9–12.

19. By "rules" I mean both those that are stated explicitly and those that are conveyed implicitly by means of stories or by example.

20. *Justice of Zeus*[2], pp. 3–4.

21. E. A. Havelock, *The Greek Concept of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), pp. 155–78, traces the theme of the ξεῖνος in the *Odyssey*. He classifies the code of behavior toward guests among the "moralities" of the *Odyssey*, in contrast to the "legalities" of relations between equal members of the polis.

and beggars are from Zeus (πρὸς Διός) and the favor is a small one and welcome" (*Od.* 6. 207–8 = 14. 57–58); but the relationship "from Zeus" is not further specified.

Occasionally the retaliation exacted for harm done to a supposedly unprotected person is ascribed to Zeus, but in no case is this retaliation a direct act of the god. Moreover, when Menelaus boasts to the Trojans that Zeus Xenios will destroy their city (*Il.* 13. 624–25), or when Odysseus tells Polyphemus that Zeus and the other gods are punishing him (*Od.* 9. 479), these heroes are attributing to the gods actions that are in fact those of mortals.[22] As Pedrick has shown, the mention of divine protection for suppliants is a feature that the poet manipulates for literary effect:[23] suppliants themselves do not cite the protection of Zeus as a reason for their supplication to be granted; and although the fear of Zeus is twice given as a motive for helping an unprotected person,[24] in fact Zeus takes no action against those who reject a suppliant (most notably Agamemnon and Achilles in the *Iliad*). The protection Zeus affords unprotected persons is at best only manifest in the indirect support he lends other mortals who retaliate against injuries to themselves; in most cases Zeus' protection is more remote, even nonexistent.[25] We may thus conclude that Zeus' concern for the interests of unprotected persons is both indirect and remote, and that if there is any divine punishment for moral violations, it is not nearly as severe as it is for religious violations. Zeus may protect guests, but he and the other gods are much more concerned about their own more immediate interests.[26]

Another indication of the difference between moral and religious considerations is perhaps evident in Apollo's response to Agamemnon's rejection of his priest Chryses. This rejection may be considered a violation of both religious and moral rules, in that a priest is in one sense an unprotected person and in another sense a direct representative

22. In both these cases the speaker makes it clear that he, the human agent, is himself retaliating for a legitimate human grievance.

23. "Supplication," pp. 125–40.

24. In one of his false Cretan tales (14. 276–84), Odysseus recounts how the Egyptian king accepted his supplication and pitied and protected him, fearing the wrath of Zeus Xenios. Later in the same book (and perhaps influenced by Odysseus' tale) Eumaeus says he will protect Odysseus, "fearing Zeus Xenios and pitying him [Odysseus]" (389).

25. Note that in the cases of injuries to Chryses and Polyphemus, where the mortal's relationship to the god is considerably more direct than that of guests, beggars, and suppliants, Apollo and Poseidon are portrayed as responding only after the mortal has made an explicit appeal for help: the god's protection even of these closely related mortals is rather indirect.

26. Even if we grant Athena and Zeus a large role in the punishment of the suitors, it is not clear that either god is motivated by moral considerations. (I am not persuaded by the recent theory of J. S. Clay, *The Wrath of Athena* [Princeton, 1983], pp. 213–39, that Athena puts aside her earlier wrath against Odysseus because of her concern that the suitors receive the justice they deserve.) Lloyd-Jones, *Justice of Zeus*[2], p. 30, takes it as evidence for justice in the *Odyssey* that "the suitors fail to respect strangers, suppliants or heralds, and so they perish." In his note supporting this claim he mistakenly refers to the words of Penelope (19. 134–35): "I no longer pay attention to (ἐμπάζομαι) guests, suppliants, or heralds [who presumably bring reports of Odysseus]" (p. 192, n. 22; the last two references in this note should be 24. 351, 456). More important, the passages Lloyd-Jones cites concerning the suitors' punishment at the hands of the gods speak only in vague terms of their hybris or general misdeeds, though there may possibly be a reference to the suitors' mistreating unprotected persons when it is said (22. 414–15 = 23. 65–66) that they honored no other mortal, whether κακός or ἐσθλός.

of the god. At first Apollo brings a devastating plague on the Achaeans, but Agamemnon's ultimate penalty is rather mild: he forfeits the ransom he would otherwise have received and sacrifices a hecatomb. The first response (the plague) is a typical religious punishment, whereas the second, milder punishment may perhaps be seen as Apollo's response to Agamemnon's moral offense.

In distinguishing these two kinds of nonmoral rules from moral rules I have stressed differences between their sanctions. In an ideal, Kantian system we could distinguish moral rules by the absence of any sanction: one does the right thing simply because it is right, not because of any practical consequence for oneself. When cast in such absolute terms, however, this formal criterion for moral rules (like the substantive criterion of consideration for humans simply *qua* humans) is of limited value in examining Homer. I have therefore used a more flexible criterion that includes rules that are only weakly and indirectly sanctioned by the general supervision of the gods. The weakness of this indirect divine sanction justifies our treating these rules as moral, without distinguishing between religious and nonreligious morality.[27]

We can perhaps most easily observe the difference between moral and legal rules in the treatment of homicide in the poems. As Odysseus tells Telemachus after killing the suitors (*Od.* 23. 118–22), and as numerous actual examples demonstrate, homicide in Homer commonly leads to retaliation by the victim's relatives, who drive the killer into exile.[28] After going into exile, however, many killers are highly honored; intent seems not to be a factor in evaluating most homicides; and in most cases the homicide does not appear to be of concern to the gods. Consider, for example, Tlepolemus, son of Heracles (*Il.* 2. 661–70), who kills his father's maternal uncle, Licymnius, for reasons not mentioned by Homer.[29] Tlepolemus immediately goes into exile to avoid the threats of other descendants of Heracles, and as a much-suffering fugitive he settles in Rhodes. There he is loved by Zeus, who showers divine wealth on him. He eventually leads a contingent of nine ships to Troy. Thus this homicide meets with no punishment other than retaliation by the victim's relatives, and the killer is highly regarded by other men and by the gods.[30]

In contrast, the killer of a guest meets with no retaliation, since no relative is present to retaliate, but he does incur the displeasure of the

27. This may be an important distinction when one is considering the morality of a contemporary religion like Christianity (Warnock, *Object,* pp. 138–42), but the moral authority of the Greek gods is really not comparable to what we find in contemporary religions.

28. For a summary of all references to homicide in the epics, see M. Gagarin, *Drakon and Early Athenian Homicide Law* (New Haven, 1981), pp. 6–18.

29. Pindar relates that Tlepolemus killed Licymnius in anger (*Ol.* 7. 27–30). There is later evidence for another tradition in which the killing was accidental; see E. Wust, "Tlepolemos," *RE* 6A (1937): 1615, for references.

30. Perhaps the clearest case of a killer's being highly regarded by other men is Telemachus' acceptance of the fugitive Theoclymenus, who killed a man in Argos (*Od.* 15. 271–81). Theoclymenus does not relate the circumstances of the homicide, nor does Telemachus inquire about them.

gods, particularly Zeus. When Heracles kills his guest Iphitus in order to get his horses, he does not afterwards go into exile (since there is no threat of retaliation), but he is criticized by the poet for disregarding the will of the gods (*Od.* 21. 24–30). Similarly, when the swineherd Eumaeus is entertaining the disguised Odysseus, he implies that if he were to kill his guest, he would incur ill fame among men and perhaps also anger Zeus but would not suffer otherwise. Eumaeus apparently assumes (with reason, given his ignorance of Odysseus' identity) that there would be no threat of retaliation.[31] Thus the poems seem to distinguish fairly clearly between what I call the legal violation of killing a regular member of society, resulting in retaliation by the victim's relatives but neither punishment nor even disapproval from the gods or other mortals, and the moral violation of killing a guest, resulting not in retaliation but in human (and perhaps also divine) disapproval.[32]

The separation of moral rules from legal and religious rules may make it easier to understand the role of intent in evaluating behavior in the poems. As Adkins and others have shown, intentional behavior and unintentional behavior often bring the same response from the injured party and the same evaluation from others; and Adkins relies in part on this conclusion to deny a sense of true moral responsibility to the Homeric Greeks.[33] But others have believed that intent is surely significant in a number of ways in Homer, and that the Greeks cannot have been unaware of the difference between intentional and unintentional acts. If we consider separately the different areas we have distinguished, we see that in the areas of religious and legal rules the injured party suffers a direct loss or injury regardless of the intent of the violator, so that the intent is not a significant factor in the victim's desire to retaliate. In the area of moral rules, however, there is no question of retaliation and the agent's intent may play a more significant role in any evaluation of his action by others.

A possible illustration of this difference can be found in Odysseus' revenge. When he retaliates for the damage the suitors have done him, he and his ally Athena take little or no notice of the motives or characters of the individual suitors.[34] One of them, Amphinomus, is a

31. *Od.* 14. 402–6. It is difficult to draw a certain inference from this passage, since Eumaeus' remarks are expressed ironically. Odysseus (as yet unidentified) has just told Eumaeus that if his prediction of Odysseus' return is false, Eumaeus may kill him. The swineherd responds, "In that way, stranger/guest (ξεῖνος), I would certainly gain fame and stature among men, both now and in the future, if I should take you into my tent and give you hospitality, and then kill you and destroy your life. Cheerfully after that would I sacrifice to Zeus, son of Cronus."

32. It appears that parricide in Homer is treated similarly: the father's relatives are also the killer's relatives and thus do not retaliate against him; see *Il.* 9. 458–61, where Phoenix says that he planned to kill his father but stopped when he realized that he would incur ill repute among men (but apparently no other retaliation). These lines are often considered spurious; nonetheless, they are consistent with the Homeric attitude toward killing an unprotected person. Note too that Oedipus does not go into exile after his parricide (*Od.* 11. 271–80; cf. *Il.* 23. 679–80).

33. *Merit and Responsibility,* esp. chap. 3, pp. 30–60: "Mistake and Moral Error."

34. Although in some ways the suitors fit the role of guests, they are not unprotected persons. They would not be in Odysseus' house as guests were it not for their position as suitors, in which role they have apparently received at least some encouragement from Penelope. As regular members of society

relatively decent fellow. He is warned by the disguised Odysseus to leave the hall and seems about ready to do so, but, as the poet tells us, "Athena bound him there to be killed by Telemachus" (*Od.* 18. 155–56; cf. 17. 363–64). The bard Phemius, on the other hand, is spared by Odysseus, in part at least because he was forced to play for the suitors against his will (*Od.* 22. 351–53). Bards are unprotected persons in much the same way as guests, and there is no question of Phemius' injuring Odysseus. Other factors may be present (such as Homer's sympathy for a fellow singer), but the difference between Odysseus' treatment of Amphinomus and his treatment of Phemius may be at least partly explained by the different weight given to the factor of intent in behavior toward full members of the society and toward unprotected persons.

V. MORALITY IN THE "ILIAD"

Now that we have developed criteria for differentiating moral considerations from legal and religious considerations, let us return to the central story of the *Iliad.* At the beginning of Book 1 Agamemnon dishonors Apollo's priest Chryses by refusing his request to ransom his daughter. Chryses makes his request briefly but respectfully (17–21), and there is no evident reason why it should not be granted. "All the other Achaeans," Homer tells us, "urge Agamemnon to respect the priest and agree to the ransom" (22–23). He rejects this advice, however, and dismisses Chryses angrily (24–32).

The rejection of Chryses is certainly "wrong" in some sense. I suggested above that Agamemnon's error is at least partly moral, since Chryses is in one respect an unprotected person (a suppliant) whom one has a moral duty to respect. He is also Apollo's priest, of course, but the Achaeans do not appear to treat Agamemnon's offense as primarily religious (in the sense of a violation against a god). In urging respect for Chryses they do not mention the possibility that Apollo may retaliate; indeed, they give no reason at all why Agamemnon should respect the priest. When the plague comes, moreover, they do not at first associate it with the treatment of Chryses (64–67), thus confirming that the possibility of punishment from Apollo was not in their minds when they warned Agamemnon. We might further note that Chryses' request appears wholly reasonable and that Agamemnon gives no reason for rejecting it, though the scornful and abusive language with which he dismisses Chryses indicates that he is motivated largely by anger. As the poet says, "it was not pleasing to his θυμός" (24). Thus a reasonable request from an unprotected person is selfishly (indeed, childishly) rejected, and only afterwards does Apollo's interest in the matter become apparent. We may conclude that Agamemnon's mistreatment of Chryses is portrayed as primarily a moral offense.

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they are expected to protect themselves, and in their dispute with Odysseus the ordinary means of retaliation come into play.

Agamemnon reverses his decision after Apollo sends the plague. In response to the army's suffering Hera prompts Achilles to call an assembly, "for she was concerned for (κήδετο) the Danaans because she saw them dying" (56). Achilles himself reveals no such concern and mentions only the military consequences of the plague, but Agamemnon appears to share Hera's concern. After Calchas reports that the plague will not end until Chryses' daughter is returned, Agamemnon first rebukes the prophet and praises the beauty and character of Chryseis. He then continues, "Nonetheless, I am willing to give her back, if this is better (εἰ τό γ' ἄμεινον). I want the people to be safe, not destroyed" (116–17). Here (as in line 274) Adkins translates ἄμεινον as "more advantageous" ("I am willing to give Chryseis back, if that is more advantageous"), implying that Agamemnon evaluates the return of Chryseis in purely practical terms: the advantage he will gain from the army's safety outweighs the momentary disadvantage of losing his prize.[35] But, although the only reason Agamemnon states for his decision to return Chryseis is his desire for the army's safety, and although it is arguable that the army's safety is important, even essential, for Agamemnon's success as commander-in-chief, his words certainly convey the sense that he feels concern for the army independent of his own advantage.

In the first place, Agamemnon's praise of Chryseis seems clearly intended to emphasize to his comrades the greatness of his sacrifice in giving her up. It would be out of place for him to suggest that the sacrifice is to his own advantage in the long run, as Adkins' translation implies. Agamemnon wants at least to appear to be acting out of genuine concern for the army, and thus he must recognize the existence of this moral sense and the need to pay lip-service to it in the presence of others. We should further note that immediately after Agamemnon agrees to return Chryseis, he demands someone else's prize so that he will not be the only one without a prize. This response also suggests that he is not thinking of any long-run advantage that might compensate for his loss. Indeed, one of Agamemnon's evident faults in the *Iliad* is his inability to look beyond the immediate situation; Adkins' interpretation of his behavior as motivated by calculated, long-term self-interest is thus quite implausible. It is much more likely that Agamemnon here recognizes, however dimly, a moral obligation to act out of consideration for the interests of the army as a whole, even at some harm to his own interests.

In contrast to the rejection of Chryses, the injuries inflicted by Agamemnon and Achilles on one another are avenged by the injured

35. "Values, Goals, and Emotions," p. 294; see above, n. 4. It is true that when Adkins later summarizes Agamemnon's reasoning in lines 116–20, he says, "Agamemnon will return Chryseis, since it is in the army's interest that he do so" (p. 295); but his whole discussion reinforces the impression of his translation, that the army's interest is of concern to Agamemnon only to the extent that it affects his own interest.

person himself. Agamemnon takes Briseis away from Achilles in retaliation for a perceived lack of respect, and Achilles in turn retaliates by his withdrawal from Agamemnon's army. Each retaliation is justified in itself, and each is accepted as a legitimate response. Within the framework developed above the considerations motivating each hero are legal, not moral. Similarly, Achilles' retaliation is supported and assisted by his mother Thetis and by Zeus, but the conduct of each god is fully explicable in nonmoral terms. Thetis acts in support of her son's interest, and Zeus is drawn into the dispute because of an obligation to Thetis previously incurred.[36] Neither god appears to act from considerations we could call moral.

This analysis points up the difficulty in Lloyd-Jones' view that the dispute raises moral issues. Both Achilles' right to a proper τιμή and Agamemnon's obligation to respect that right exist within a system I have termed legal, a system that rests ultimately on each individual's self-interest. Indeed, in lines 277–84 (quoted in part I, above) Nestor makes clear that it will be to each hero's advantage to yield to the other: Achilles should not challenge Agamemnon because he will never be able to match his τιμή as commander; and Agamemnon should be reconciled with Achilles because the army needs his military valor. In this respect Adkins' analysis of the dispute in terms of self-interest seems correct.

Moreover, Nestor does not appear to believe that justice has been violated. He says nothing earlier, either when Agamemnon threatens to take someone else's prize (137–39) or when he first states explicitly his intention to take Briseis (184–85), but waits until Achilles threatens to withdraw from the fighting. And neither Nestor nor anyone else raises an objection when Agamemnon actually takes Briseis. Even Achilles apparently grants that Agamemnon has a certain right to take his prize (298–99);[37] and if Agamemnon does have this acknowledged right, Nestor could hardly consider the action an injustice, though he might well think it unwise. Even his remark in line 276, that the Achaeans gave Briseis to Achilles first, does not mean that Agamemnon therefore has no right to take her back. Nestor may simply be warning Agamemnon that because Achilles has already been given Briseis, he will be more upset and react more severely if he loses her now. Finally, if Nestor were thinking in terms of justice, he would presumably have blamed Agamemnon more than Achilles, since neither Achilles' threat to withdraw nor his abuse of Agamemnon is a violation of justice; but in fact Nestor seems to hold both parties equally responsible.[38]

36. Although Thetis uses only a traditional formula in her plea to Zeus (503–4, "If ever I have done anything for you . . ."), Achilles earlier (393–412) describes in some detail the actual favor she once did for Zeus and makes it clear that this favor will be the basis for her plea for Zeus' assistance at this time.

37. When Agamemnon's heralds come to take Briseis, Achilles will allow them to do so, "since you who gave her take her back" (299 ἐπεί μ' ἀφέλεσθέ γε δόντες). The plural may imply that Agamemnon only has this right because he is acting with the support of others; see G. S. Kirk, *The "Iliad": A Commentary*, vol. 1: *Books 1–4* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 83.

38. Lloyd-Jones also maintains that Agamemnon accepts moral blame when he replies to Nestor's advice κατὰ μοῖραν ἔειπες (286); but although this expression probably does mean "you are right" in

If we reject Lloyd-Jones' interpretation of the moral element in Nestor's speech, must we then entirely eliminate morality from the central dispute of the poem and conclude, as Adkins apparently does, that Nestor's advice is purely practical, as if he had said, "you may do whatever you like, but if you wish to gain the greatest amount of τιμή in the long run, this is the best way"? I think we may escape the horns of this dilemma if we follow the suggestion that consideration for the army as a whole, which is sometimes expressed as a sense of pity, is a moral obligation.

Lloyd-Jones and others speak often of the "cooperative virtues" of pity and loyalty, assuming these to be moral virtues. Upon consideration, the moral status of loyalty seems to me dubious. The obligations of loyalty arise out of the network of ties to family and friends, which as we have already seen involves a large degree of self-interest.[39] Loyalty to one's friends is undoubtedly admired, but its demands may well conflict with those of morality; one might say, for instance, that Achilles' loyalty to Patroclus causes him to mistreat Hector's corpse.[40] Loyalty is thus not essentially a moral virtue. Pity, on the other hand, which is frequently portrayed in Homer,[41] is essentially a moral sentiment, since it indicates concern for another person simply for his own sake. One may, of course, pity one's friends or family, but in Homer pity is more often felt toward those with whom one has no such tie, and especially those who are unprotected. For these reasons I consider pity, but not loyalty, a moral virtue in Homer.[42]

Now, the *Iliad* is not concerned with Agamemnon's or Achilles' feelings of pity for one another; but there is talk at times of feeling pity for the rest of the Achaeans, for the army as a whole, which may be

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general (as Lloyd-Jones argues, *Justice of Zeus*², p. 240, against Adkins, "Values, Goals, and Emotions," p. 300), the phrase κατὰ μοῖραν need not contain "an element that is irreducibly ethical" any more than does the expression "you are right" in English, which may be a moral judgment but more often is not. The ambiguity of this expression enables Agamemnon to agree with Nestor's advice in principle while ignoring it in practice, and we cannot say that Agamemnon admits moral responsibility for the quarrel here. Similarly, in Book 2, where Agamemnon says he was the first to be angry (378 ἐγὼ δ' ἦρχον χαλεπαίνων), he clearly accepts that in some sense he began the quarrel that led, as he now sees, to disaster for the Greeks, and of course he regrets this outcome; but his words are not necessarily an admission of moral error.

39. One of the difficulties with discussing loyalty in Homer is that there is no equivalent Greek word. Φιλία might convey some of the same sentiments, though it does not occur in Homer. It might be better to use some other term to describe Achilles' emotional ties to Patroclus.

40. So apparently Lloyd-Jones, *Justice of Zeus*², p. 22. I shall suggest below that consideration for a corpse is in some respect similar to the sort of consideration we have categorized as moral.

41. Note that in the two cases where the fear of Zeus Xenios is explicitly said to motivate consideration for an unprotected person (above, n. 24), pity is also mentioned as a factor.

42. Warnock, *Object*, pp. 78–86, distinguishes between certain virtues (e.g., courage) that may serve either moral or nonmoral ends and should therefore not be held to be moral virtues, and others (e.g., fairness) that are "fundamental *moral virtues*" (his emphasis). He does not mention loyalty; but if loyalty is held to be a virtue, it would certainly seem to belong to the first of these categories. One might, however, speak of loyalty to a larger community (Lloyd-Jones at several points speaks of "loyalty to the group") as a moral virtue, provided the group in question does not consist only of people with whom one has specific ties, such as a club. But when Lloyd-Jones maintains that the Achaeans deserve Achilles' pity "because as a partner in the expedition he owed them a debt of loyalty" (*Justice of Zeus*², p. 16), he seems to me to be unnecessarily confusing these two sentiments.

considered the victim most affected by the actions of its leaders. Unlike the two leaders, who can retaliate against those who injure them, the army has little or no means of retaliation for its suffering. In this sense it resembles the specific groups of unprotected persons, and the pity one feels for the army is essentially the same moral sentiment as the pity one feels for guests, suppliants, and beggars. With the exception of Achilles' treatment of Priam in Book 24 there is little evidence in the *Iliad* that this sense of pity might extend to one's enemies, but even the obligation to show pity for the army as a whole is evidence of a more extended moral sense.

If we now look again at Nestor's advice in Book 1, we find that precisely this moral sense of obligation to the army as a whole provides the basic motivation for his speech. That the threat of harm to the Achaeans—not the threat of Agamemnon's committing an injustice—moves Nestor to intervene becomes clear when we consider his specific advice in lines 275–84 within the context of the entire speech. Nestor first observes (254–58) that the quarrel brings grief to the Achaeans but would gladden the hearts of the Trojans were they to learn of it. His first explicit concern is thus the threat to the whole army. The central section of the speech (259–74) begins and ends, in the manner called "ring composition," with a plea that the two heroes obey his advice;[43] the exact repetition of ἀλλὰ πίθεσθε at the beginning and end of the section (259, 274) both unifies it and provides a strong link between Nestor's initial expression of concern for the army and his specific advice to the two heroes at the end of the speech. Thus when Nestor says (274), "obey [my advice], both of you, since to obey is better," we still feel the force of the concern he expresses in his opening lines. In this context, therefore, ἄμεινον must mean "better for the Achaeans";[44] Nestor pleads with both heroes to stop their quarrel for the sake of the army. Neither hero accepts his advice, but Nestor (at least) feels a moral concern for the Achaeans; and we may perhaps add that the poet judges (and invites his audience to judge) the actions of the two heroes from this moral perspective.

The idea that the Achaeans deserve pity is one of the considerations Odysseus introduces in his speech to Achilles in Book 9, when he maintains (249–51) that if the Achaeans are destroyed, it will be an incurable grief for Achilles. This is, of course, an argument from self-interest, but it is based on the assumption that Achilles feels, or will feel, pity for the Achaeans and will therefore be grieved to see them destroyed. Odysseus returns to this idea at the end of his speech (300–306): "But if Agamemnon is too hateful to you, he and his gifts, then at least pity (ἐλέαιρε) all the other Achaeans in their suffering, and they will honor you as a god. Indeed you may gain great glory among them, for

43. For the structure of 259–74, see M. M. Willcock, *The "Iliad" of Homer: Books 1–12* (London, 1978), p. 192.

44. Not "more advantageous" (for the two heroes); see above, nn. 4, 35.

you might kill Hector." True, the plea for pity is here supported by considerations of self-interest, but the practical reward seems to be proposed less for the pity itself than for the consequent action of fighting in battle and killing Hector. If instead of "pity the Achaeans" Odysseus had said simply "fight for the Achaeans and they will honor you," we would have a different impression of his request. As it is, Odysseus' actual plea for pity reveals a distinct moral sense.[45]

In his firm rejection of Odysseus' plea Achilles introduces a famous and revealing simile. He compares his own earlier efforts on behalf of the Achaeans to those of a mother bird on behalf of her children (323–27). In neither case (as he sees it) is there any reward, and thus in neither case is the sacrifice of one's self-interest worthwhile. It would be hard to show more clearly that what Achilles is here rejecting is a moral sense of disinterested concern for others, as he dismisses even the most minimal, instinctive concern of a mother for her children as unprofitable. It is in this respect (and only in this respect, I think) that we may speak of Achilles' error in moral terms; and it is plausible to assume that the poet intends us to see the loss of Patroclus (who does take pity on the rest of the Achaeans) as Achilles' punishment for this error. It also seems likely that Achilles' acceptance of the plea that he pity the unprotected suppliant Priam in Book 24 (a scene I shall not examine here) is intended to compensate for his behavior in Book 9 and reinstate Achilles as a moral hero.[46] The poet, in other words, seems to be urging on his audience a stronger commitment to morality and moral concerns than Agamemnon and Achilles display in their dispute.

We may thus conclude that there are indeed moral elements in the language and behavior of the Homeric Greeks, though not the overriding moral concern asserted by Lloyd-Jones. There is a moral dimension to the consideration mortals are supposed to feel for unprotected persons; and this moral sense extends beyond guests, beggars, and suppliants, the traditionally recognized groups, to larger groups, such as the Achaean army as a whole. We could also extend this analysis to other entities that might fit this category, including corpses (though this raises complex issues about Achilles' treatment of Hector's body), oaths (which are protected by the gods), and even the legal process as a whole (δίκη), which occasionally in Homer is said to be of concern to Zeus. These "persons" have no means of protecting themselves;[47] but they are valued—corpses for complex religious reasons, oaths and δίκη because they are evidently a benefit to the community as a whole—and rules

45. Note that the troops Achilles is asked to pity are not his own Myrmidons (for whom he has, in fact, shown consideration by removing them from battle) but the other Achaeans, whose interests are much less closely identified with his own than are those of the Myrmidons.

46. Any treatment of Book 24 will necessarily owe much to Colin Macleod's sensitive commentary, *Homer: "Iliad," Book 24* (Cambridge, 1982). Pity, which Macleod sees as fundamental to morality, plays a significant role in his view of this book as a fitting end to the poem; see also Macleod's *Collected Essays*, ed. O. Taplin (Oxford, 1983), chap. 1, esp. pp. 13–14.

47. Since the Greeks often personified the oath (Ὅρκος) and law (Δίκη), they may have found it easier to treat these institutions as quasi-persons.

regarding their treatment are given a divine sanction. In this way the gods are brought in to oversee morality, but their oversight does not extend to the protection of regular members of society, who are expected to protect themselves.

Clearly the morality we find in Homer is weak in comparison with the demands of self-interest. When moral concern is exhibited (as in the proper treatment of guests in the *Odyssey*), it usually coincides with the requirements of self-interest; and when the two conflict, as in Book 9 of the *Iliad,* self-interest usually triumphs. Even the Phaeacians, who disregard their own self-interest in allocating substantial resources to conveying wayfarers and ignore an explicit prophecy of eventual disaster (*Od.* 8. 564–69), apparently give up this practice (*Od.* 13. 171–87) after they are punished for what we may classify as a religious violation (harming the interests of Poseidon). The poet himself, as we noted, seems to have a stronger sense of morality, but for his characters moral considerations are clearly underdogs in the struggle to motivate behavior.

Having barely scratched the surface of Homeric morality, I certainly cannot in this paper pursue the subject into post-Homeric literature; but if I were to do so, I think we would find morality gradually strengthened and extended, particularly into the area of law and the legal process. Hesiod's emphasis on the importance of a strong legal process (δίκη) overseen by Zeus, the writing of law codes authorized by the polis, Solon's poetic praise of justice in the polis, together with his innovative judicial activity (especially in the area of legal procedure), all these developments helped make the polis and its law the objects of moral concern and resulted in a considerable tension between moral and political concerns—a tension fully exploited in fifth-century tragedy. At this point some of the sophists challenged the whole basis of morality (and law, with which it was now associated) by asserting the fundamental incompatability of morality and self-interest. This challenge was met, as we noted earlier, by Plato.

These issues clearly require separate treatment; in this paper I have argued that morality, in the sense of disinterested consideration for others, is present, albeit weakly, in the Homeric poems and that it plays a limited but significant role in the major conflict of the *Iliad.* This sense of morality has formed a significant part of many ethical views in Greek and later Western culture. In this respect, as in so many others, the seeds of future developments can be found in Homer.

APPENDIX: ἀγαθός περ ἐών

In his recent article, "The Portrayal of Moral Evaluation in Greek Poetry," directed primarily against Adkins' work, Kenneth Dover is quite right to stress "the importance of interpreting an evaluation in terms of the function of the entire utterance which contains it."[48] Among

48. Page 38 (see n. 2, above).

the evidence he examines to illustrate his point are the six Homeric passages (all in the *Iliad*) containing the phrase ἀγαθός περ ἐών.[49] One of these is Nestor's advice to Agamemnon (1. 275 μήτε σὺ τόνδ' ἀγαθός περ ἐὼν ἀποαίρεο κούρην). Adkins understands this phrase as an acknowledgment that Agamemnon's claim to Briseis is valid within the Homeric system of (nonmoral) values: "That is to say, an *agathos* might well do this without ceasing to be an *agathos,* and indeed derives a claim to do it from the fact that he is an *agathos;* but in this case Nestor is begging Agamemnon not to do it."[50] Dover argues, on the other hand, that understood in its context this line contains a judgment based on a criterion of evaluation separate from the values of an ἀγαθός, a criterion he apparently understands to be moral. I have concluded above that Nestor's advice does contain an element we may properly call moral, but this moral element is not located in this particular line or in the expression ἀγαθός περ ἐών. Since Dover's observations are for the most part eminently sensible, it is important to make clear precisely why I differ with him about the sense of this passage.[51]

Dover apparently accepts that ἀγαθός in itself does not have a moral sense;[52] but he argues from several passages (particularly *Il.* 24. 53, where Apollo complains of Achilles' treatment of Hector's corpse and warns that the gods will be angry with him ἀγαθῷ περ ἐόντι) that, "if it is possible to contrast a 'good *agathos*' with a 'bad *agathos,*' . . . then a criterion of evaluation, not necessarily 'higher' or 'lower' than social and military deference, but certainly in conflict with it, is operative."[53] Dover implies that this other criterion is a moral one. He then notes "the conciliatory tone" of Nestor's remarks and suggests that he is simply being courteous and may not in fact consider Agamemnon ἀγαθός at all, much as someone today might use respectful language in addressing one whom he did not in fact respect. For Dover, Nestor's designation of Agamemnon as ἀγαθός "serves to define the speaker's standpoint and construct a certain relationship between him and his hearers."[54]

49. Ibid., pp. 37-38.

50. *Merit and Responsibility,* p. 37.

51. For criticism of Adkins' interpretation of ἀγαθός περ ἐών, see also A. A. Long, "Morals and Values in Homer," *JHS* 90 (1970): 127-28. M. M. Mackenzie, *Plato on Punishment* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981), pp. 73-74, strongly supports Adkins' view: "No word of moral condemnation of [Agamemnon's] action has been spoken. . . . [Nestor's] counter-claim is based upon prudence alone." M. Schofield, "*Euboulia* in the *Iliad,*" *CQ* 36 (1986): 6-31, esp. 28-29, endorses Dover's remarks and criticizes Mackenzie.

52. The nonmoral sense of ἀγαθός was established by M. Hoffmann, *Die ethische Terminologie bei Homer, Hesiod und den alten Elegikern und Jambographen,* part 1: *Homer* (Tübingen, 1914), pp. 71-79. He translates ἀγαθός περ ἐών in a social sense: "so hoch du stehst" (p. 76). That the sense of ἀγαθός is nonmoral is now recognized by most scholars, whether or not they subscribe to Adkins' view of this passage or of Homeric morality in general: see, e.g., Kirk, *Commentary,* p. 81; Macleod, *Homer,* p. 93.

53. "Portrayal," p. 37.

54. Ibid., p. 38. Note that Adkins too stresses Nestor's tact, calling his speech "an exercise in Homeric diplomacy" ("Values, Goals, and Emotions," p. 299). Schofield argues that Nestor's tactfulness accounts for the absence of explicit moral language: "The strong language of moral denunciation is just inappropriate" ("*Euboulia,*" p. 29). But a tactful mention of moral considerations would surely be possible.

Certainly Nestor implies a contrast between Agamemnon's being ἀγαθός and his taking Briseis. Indeed, whenever a noun or adjective occurs with περ ἐών in Homer, the regular force of περ is concessive, and a contrast is nearly always envisaged.[55] The Trojans, for example, are unable to withstand the onslaught of Diomedes, "many though they are" (*Il.* 5. 94 πολέες περ ἐόντες), and Telamon raised Teucer in his own house, "though he was a bastard" (*Il.* 8. 284 νόθον περ ἐόντα). But of course the force of the concessive is such that περ ἐών at the same time implies that there is normally a connection between the condition designated by the participial phrase and the actual state of things: a large number of Trojans would normally be able to resist a single opponent; a bastard usually receives less favorable treatment.

In the same way Nestor's statement implies that there is some connection between Agamemnon's being ἀγαθός and his taking Briseis. We need not necessarily interpret ἀγαθός περ ἐών, as Adkins does, to imply a valid claim, though this may in fact be what Nestor means; but we must at least understand that Agamemnon's being ἀγαθός creates some expectation that if he wishes to take Briseis, he will be able to do so (as indeed he is). This implication is present, moreover, whether or not Nestor believes that Agamemnon is truly ἀγαθός. If one says (to modify Dover's example), "Mr. X, although you have been an excellent chairman, I urge you not to seek reelection," one surely implies that the alleged excellence of Mr. X's chairmanship raises some expectation that he will seek reelection or that if he does, he will be successful; and the statement has this implication regardless of one's real opinion of Mr. X's first term.[56] Thus, although Dover is correct to conclude that Nestor's deference may not be sincere, this conclusion does not invalidate Adkins'

55. The one exception (of more than 70 instances) is ζωός περ ἐών in *Il.* 24. 749. In this case περ also occurs in the following line, and "the repeated particle stresses the antithesis [between living and dead]" (Macleod, *Homer,* p. 152). Hoffmann, *Terminologie,* p. 74, maintains that, besides its use in ἀγαθός περ ἐών, the collocation περ ἐών lends emphasis in three passages (in addition to 24. 749). In all three, however, a concessive sense is at least possible. In *Il.* 1. 352, if we take the force of γε with the main verb and περ with the participle, we may understand the meaning, "Since you, a goddess, bore me, even though for a short life, Zeus ought to grant me τιμή" (cf. Kirk, *Commentary,* p. 89). *Il.* 1. 587 is more difficult, but it is possible to take περ as concessive: "Endure, mother, lest I see you, dear though you are [to Zeus? cf. 1. 546], struck down." In *Od.* 8. 360 a concessive sense is likely, as in Lattimore's translation: "they were set free of the fastening, though it was so strong."

56. To take a different analogy: if one says to a chess player, "I advise you, although you are a grandmaster, not to try that line of play," one implies a contrast between the player's esteemed status and ability in general and his intended play in a particular case, of which one disapproves. This is not necessarily to say that there are good grandmasters and bad grandmasters, and it does not imply a criterion of evaluation in conflict with the criteria used to designate grandmasters. Of course there are differences in ability even at that rank, and if the intended move leads to defeat in this particular game, this grandmaster may be somewhat less esteemed afterwards, though he will nonetheless remain a grandmaster. The statement also implies, moreover, that as a grandmaster the player might have a legitimate expectation of success with this line of play, or at least that he would have a greater chance of success than someone who was not a grandmaster. Similarly, when in *Il.* 1. 131–32 Agamemnon says to Achilles, "ἀγαθός though you are, do not try to cheat me," it matters not whether Agamemnon really thinks Achilles is ἀγαθός: his being ἀγαθός, if such he is, would be a reason why he might be able to cheat Agamemnon and succeed.

analysis of the passage in terms of an inherent conflict (to put the matter a bit crudely) between long-term and short-term success within a single, nonmoral system. We must still ask: What is the basis for Nestor's advice, given that ἀγαθός designates a nonmoral social and military excellence? I have suggested an answer to this question in the body of this paper.

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