

## PHOINIX, AGAMEMNON AND ACHILLEUS: PARABLES AND PARADEIGMATA

Achilleus' speeches and action in *Iliad* 24 'complete a development of character – or better, enlargement of experience and comprehension – which stretches through the whole poem'.<sup>1</sup> I largely agree with this statement, but since I also believe that an 'enlargement of experience and comprehension' necessarily entails 'a development of character', I do not hesitate, as its author does, to assert that Achilleus' character develops, i.e., changes for the better, in the course of the *Iliad*.<sup>2</sup> It is my purpose here to discuss one of the ways in which his speeches in Book 24 are specifically designed to bring this out. I will also argue that it is precisely because his character changes for the better that the poem fits the Aristotelian concept of epic. Lastly, I will attempt to refute Redfield's arguments in support of his opinion that Achilleus does not change in the course of the story.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the attempts to find parallels for the major speeches of the poem, especially the speech of Phoinix in Book 9 (434–605),<sup>4</sup> no one has noticed that this speech of Phoinix, the speech of Agamemnon to Achilleus and the Achaian assembly in Book 19 (78–144), and the first speech of Achilleus to Priam in Book 24 (518–51) are the only three speeches in Homer containing both a parable and a paradeigma. Phoinix's speech contains the parable of the Prayers (502–12) and a paradeigmatic story about Meleager (529–99); Agamemnon's a parable about Ate (91–4) and a paradeigmatic story about Ate (95–144); Achilleus' the parable of the Jars of Zeus (527–33) and a paradeigmatic story about Peleus (534–42). Achilleus also later tells another paradeigmatic story to Priam, that about Niobe (24.599–617), which shares certain unusual characteristics with the stories about Meleager and Ate. I believe that these several parallels evince an effort by Homer to create resemblances between the words of the three men on these three occasions, and will argue that he has created them for the purpose of underscoring Achilleus' ethical and intellectual development. Of course, since the thematic and formulaic nature of Homeric composition tends to produce so many random parallels, 'stronger evidence' than the mere fact of a parallel is needed before one can assert that a specific parallel in Homer is significant.<sup>5</sup> In the case of

<sup>1</sup> Homer, *Iliad: Book XXIV*, ed. C. W. Macleod (Cambridge, 1982), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Macleod perhaps means that Achilleus changes intellectually but not morally. But do not the two spheres overlap? They do at least for Aristotle; cf. my article, 'The Meaning of *ἥθος* in the *Poetics*', *Hermes* 113 (1985), 285.

<sup>3</sup> See J. M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad* (Chicago, 1975), 218–19. E. Howald, *Der Dichter der Ilias* (Erlenbach–Zürich, 1946), 96 also denies change in Achilleus.

<sup>4</sup> W. Schadewaldt, *Iliastudien* (Leipzig, 1938), 83, asserted that Phoinix's speech in form is much like Nestor's at 11.656–803. D. Lohmann, *Die Komposition der Reden in der Ilias* (Berlin, 1970), 263–71, following Schadewaldt, argues that Phoinix's speech mirrors Nestor's in great detail. But some of his parallels are quite dubious: for example, he holds that 11.657–64, which contains a catalogue of wounded soldiers, corresponds to the parable of the Prayers and that the basis of the correspondence is that both passages are unnecessary digressions (p. 267). For parallels to Phoinix's speech, see also J. A. Rosner, 'The Speech of Phoenix: *Iliad* 9.434–605', *Phoenix* 30 (1976), 314–27. All of the above scholars believe that the parallels which they point out corroborate the much-debated authenticity of Phoinix's speech. For arguments against its authenticity, see D. L. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (Berkeley, 1972), 297–315 and G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge, 1972), 217–18.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. B. Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes in the Iliad* (Wiesbaden, 1968), 45. Let me make clear that what is important in my eyes is the significance of the parallels which I will discuss, not their origin. Here and elsewhere I assert that these parallels are the product of Homer's conscious

these parallels that stronger evidence, as I see it, is provided both by the extreme rarity of parables in Homer (those mentioned above are the only three which occur in his two epics)<sup>6</sup> and by the structure of the *Iliad*, which brings Books 1, 9, 16, 19 and 24 into close relation with each other. A brief discussion of its structure is a necessary preliminary to an explanation of why I would attach such significance to the above-mentioned parallels. To that I now turn.

It has long been recognized that the following four scenes of supplication in the *Iliad* are of great structural importance: the scenes with Chryses in Book 1, the embassy and Phoinix in Book 9, Patroklos in Book 16, and Priam in Book 24. They form an interrelated pattern and a framework for the poem's action, which therefore falls into three parts of about eight books each.<sup>7</sup> Also part of this pattern is the scene of the reconciliation of Agamemnon and Achilles in Book 19. This scene is not fully parallel to the others since Agamemnon there is not in the position of a suppliant. He makes his plea to Achilles rather in Book 9, and there only by proxy. But it is in Book 19 that Achilles in effect accepts the plea of Agamemnon which he had earlier refused. A summary of the poem's major action might be derived from merely these five Books. In Book 1 Agamemnon refuses the plea of Chryses; Achilles and he quarrel; Achilles makes a conditional withdrawal from the army. In Book 9 Achilles refuses the plea which is made on Agamemnon's behalf by the embassy and Phoinix; he withdraws unconditionally from the army. In Book 16 Achilles accepts the plea of Patroklos and allows Patroklos to fight in his armour; Achilles thus by means of a substitute makes a partial return to the army. In Book 19 Achilles in effect accepts the plea which had been made by the embassy and formally returns to his place in the army. In Book 24 he accepts the plea of the suppliant father Priam and in so doing gives evidence of having resumed the liberal qualities which had characterized him before his quarrel with Agamemnon.<sup>8</sup>

Chryses, Phoinix, and Priam have in common not only the fact that they are suppliants but also that they are either fathers or father-figures.<sup>9</sup> The correspondence between Chryses and Priam is the most obvious: both are fathers in the full sense, and both plead for the return of one of their children. The action at the end of the poem, therefore, parallels that at its beginning, though it also reverses it: Priam's plea is accepted whereas Chryses' was rejected.

The correspondence between Priam and Phoinix is in certain respects even closer.

intention because I do not see how otherwise they can be significant in the way I suggest. There may, however, be some who, while allowing the significance which I attach to them, would hold that these parallels are rather largely or entirely the product of thematic and formulaic composition, i.e. Homer's tendency to repeat, rather than to vary, the structures of speeches, descriptions, etc. Such readers I will consider to be in complete agreement with me on all that is important in this essay.

<sup>6</sup> The only other passage in Homer which might qualify as a parable is Penelope's description of the gates of horn and ivory (*Od.* 19.560–7), but it seems to me to lack the moral didacticism of a true parable.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Howald, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 19.

<sup>8</sup> On the theme of withdrawal and return in the *Iliad*, see M. N. Nagler, *Spontaneity and Tradition* (Berkeley, 1974), 131–66, esp. 139.

<sup>9</sup> R. Finlay, 'Patroklos, Achilles, and Peleus: Fathers and Sons in the *Iliad*', *CW* 73 (1980), 267–73, argues that Patroklos is also something of a father figure. His case would be stronger if it were true, as he says, that 'Phoinix and Patroklos were sent by Peleus to accompany Achilles to war' (p. 270). Actually it was Menoitios, Patroklos' father, who sent Patroklos to accompany Achilles to Troy and who appointed him as an adviser to Achilles (cf. *Il.* 11.769–89) – though, admittedly, he did so in the house and presence of Peleus and therefore presumably with his approval. In any case, Patroklos is hardly a father figure in the same sense as are Chryses, Phoinix and Priam.

First, they are suppliants of the same man, Achilles, whereas Chryses and Priam are suppliants of different men. Achilles' acceptance of Priam's plea at the end of the poem, therefore, reverses not only Agamemnon's earlier rejection of Chryses' plea, but also, and perhaps more importantly, Achilles' own earlier rejection of Phoinix's plea. Second, both Phoinix and Priam, unlike Chryses, include in their pleas autobiographical accounts emphasizing their roles as fathers.<sup>10</sup> Chryses' role as a father is quite obvious, but his plea includes no such account. Third, the autobiographical account of each stresses the speaker's *complete* lack of sons. Phoinix can have no natural sons as a result of his father's curse. Priam had fifty sons, but has lost them all – or at least so he says (24.494: τῶν δ' οὐ τινά φημι λελεῖφθαι). In fact at least nine of his sons are alive when he leaves for the Achaian camp (cf. 24.248–51). This last parallel, therefore, is quite arbitrary. Of course, it is dramatically appropriate under the circumstances for Priam to exaggerate his plight, and Homer frequently exhibits an insouciance about factual details; but the very arbitrariness of this parallel may also be, and I think is, an index to the deliberateness with which Homer has created it. He has deliberately created it in order to make the parallels between Phoinix and Priam all the more precise. Fourth, the autobiographical account of each stresses his dependence on a son whom he expected to protect him in his old age, and each account is designed to persuade Achilles to return that son to him. This last is perhaps the most important for an understanding of the relationship between the two scenes. Since it is not immediately obvious that Phoinix does desire and request the return of a son, I will explain more fully the basis for this last parallel.

Priam's major (and only) purpose in supplicating Achilles is to obtain the body of his son, Hector. His autobiographical account supplies the reason why Achilles should return it to him: Priam's similarity to Achilles' father, Peleus. Priam's account accordingly is brief, just long enough to bring out the parallel between himself and Peleus. He, like Peleus, is an aged father surrounded by troubles and has no son to protect him (24.489: οὐδέ τις ἐστὶν ἀρὴν καὶ λοιγὸν ἀμύναι). But whereas Peleus has just one son from whom he has been merely separated, Priam had fifty sons of whom none is left.

Phoinix's major purpose in supplicating Achilles is to persuade him to accept Agamemnon's gifts and to return to his place in the Achaian army. The second and third main parts of Phoinix's speech, the parable and paradeigma, supply the reason why Achilles should grant his plea: in brief, self-interest. The first main part, the autobiographical account, may seem to supply other reasons as well. It has been interpreted as a paradigmatic story designed to teach Achilles the ill consequences of quarrelling with a father over a woman.<sup>11</sup> This interpretation seems to me dubious for several reasons, especially the fact that Phoinix nowhere compares his quarrel with his father to that of Achilles with Agamemnon or even implies that Achilles should view Agamemnon as a father. It has also been asserted that: 'In conformity with the usual style of supplicating a god or a more powerful man for a favor, Phoinix reminds Achilles of all he has done for him in the past to induce him to grant in return what he now wishes: that he change his mind and come back to the army'.<sup>12</sup> But Phoinix

<sup>10</sup> Thus, all three main parts of Phoinix's speech recur in identical order in Book 24. The first speeches of Priam and Achilles to each other there form together a tripartite unit roughly parallel in structure to Phoinix's speech: an autobiographical account emphasizing one's role as a father, a parable and a paradeigma.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. S. Schein, *The Mortal Hero* (Berkeley, 1984), 111. Rosner, op. cit. (n. 4), 318, even supposes that Phoinix makes an attempt at 'recasting Agamemnon as Peleus'.

<sup>12</sup> Schein, op. cit. (n. 11), 111.

says nothing about recompensation. Homeric suppliants are usually much more direct in expressing their desire to obtain *quid pro quo*.<sup>13</sup> A more likely interpretation, it seems to me, and one which is at least implied in the comments of some scholars,<sup>14</sup> is that Phoinix reminds Achilles of their previous intimacy and of his paternal authority over him in order to suggest to him that he grant his plea out of a sense of respect and love for him and of obedience to him. But again it is notable that Phoinix does not explicitly cite this intimacy or authority as reasons why Achilles should grant his plea. In fact, he does not explicitly link his autobiographical account to his main purpose in any way. The ἀλλά in 496, where Phoinix first broaches the question of what Achilles should do about Agamemnon's offer, seems to indicate an abrupt transition to a new topic (9.494–7):

ἀλλὰ σὲ παῖδα, θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,  
ποιεύμην, ἵνα μοί ποτ' ἀεικέα λοιγὸν ἀμύνῃς·  
ἀλλ', Ἀχιλλεῦ, δάμασον θυμὸν μέγαν· οὐδέ τί σε χρὴ  
νηλεὲς ἦτορ ἔχειν.

A connection between Phoinix's autobiographical account and his major purpose, such as the latter two suggested above, may, I admit, be implicit, but I believe that commentators are wrong to assume that the former is intended merely to supply reasons for the granting of the latter. I submit that Phoinix intends his autobiographical account not primarily to supply reasons why Achilles should grant his major plea, but rather to make a different and separate plea, a plea that Achilles recognize and resume his previous role as a son to Phoinix: in effect, a plea that he give Phoinix back his son. This, Phoinix's minor plea, is implicitly made: he merely reminds Achilles of their previous relationship and leaves it to him to see the point of his doing so.

The most immediate, though not the only, reason why Phoinix makes his minor plea is that Achilles, in offering Phoinix the choice of leaving with him or staying behind with the army (427–9), had seemingly forgotten the nature of their relationship. Phoinix finds this offer disconcerting, for it attributes to him an independence from Achilles which he by no means desires and which he views as a threat to his security. As the exasperated question at the beginning of his speech to Achilles implies (9.437–8: *πῶς ἂν ἔπειτ' ἀπὸ σείο, φίλον τέκος, αἶθι λιποῖμην | οἶος;*), Phoinix has no choice but to follow Achilles home.<sup>15</sup> Both duty and love constrain him: duty stemming from his role as Achilles' father-appointed teacher (438–43) and love stemming from his role as a quasi-father to Achilles. As he explains, he assumed the latter role because he can have no sons of his own; for this reason he has always treated Achilles as a son – in the hope that Achilles would one day protect him from ruin. Phoinix uses the same phrase (*λοιγὸν ἀμύνειν*) to refer to the act of a son protecting

<sup>13</sup> Cf. B. K. Braswell, 'Mythological Innovation in the *Iliad*', *CQ* 65 (1971), 16–26 and M. L. Lang, 'Reason and Purpose in Homeric Prayers', *CW* 68 (1975), 309–14.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. K. F. Ameis and C. Hentze, *Homer's Ilias* (Leipzig, 1930), ad 9.496: 'Auf Grund der Schilderung des innigen persönlichen Verhältnisses zwischen beiden folgt nun die Bitte, den Zorn aufzugeben'.

<sup>15</sup> J. A. Arieti, 'Achilles' Alienation in *Iliad* 9', *CJ* 82 (1986), 16, believes that Achilles wants Phoinix to stay with him, 'for Phoenix... will, by accompanying him, sanction Achilles' internal and personal alienation and its rejection of human values... Yet he recognizes that Phoenix's approval must be voluntary to have any meaning.' Achilles may be thinking along these lines, but one should remember that in Phoinix's opinion he has no choice but to stay with Achilles. His staying with him therefore is not 'voluntary' and hence implies no approval of Achilles' actions.

his aged father as Priam does later in making his appeal to Achilles (cf. 9.494–5 with 24.489, both cited above). The recurrence of this phrase is symptomatic of the similarity between the thoughts and purposes of the two men.<sup>16</sup> Phoinix in Book 9 fears to fall into the situation in which Priam finds himself in Book 24: that is, to be alone (cf. *oîos* in 9.438, cited above) in his old age without a son to protect him. Priam, while in this situation, asks Achilles for the return of a son; Phoinix, in fear of this situation, also implicitly asks Achilles for the return of a son. Thus, the pleas of Chryses, Phoinix and Priam are linked all the more closely: all three men desire the return of a child. Of course, Phoinix, unlike the other two, desires not the physical return of his child, but the affective and spiritual.

The less immediate but ultimately more important reason why Phoinix makes his minor plea is Achilles' threat to return home. Such a course of action would deprive Phoinix of his son, for it would entail a drastic change in Achilles' character, so drastic that he would then in effect no longer be the same person he previously was, no longer the person whom Phoinix had loved as a son and whom he wishes to be a son to him again. It would entail such a drastic change in his character because it would involve a rejection of the educational ideal which it was Phoinix's job to teach him to pursue, the ideal of being a great speaker of words and doer of deeds (9.633).<sup>17</sup> As Jaeger has noted,<sup>18</sup> each of the two leading members of the embassy, Odysseus and Aias, exemplifies one aspect of this ideal: the former is a great speaker of words, the latter a great doer of deeds. Achilles exemplifies both aspects; he is the concrete embodiment of the whole ideal. To reject it, therefore, is to reject himself and drastically to change himself. The scene has been brilliantly analyzed by Jaeger in terms of this educational ideal. I accept his analysis as far as it goes. My own discussion is intended to correct what I see as an imbalance in his. He rightly emphasizes Phoinix's role as a teacher, but wrongly neglects his role as a father. Phoinix plays both roles, and they are both important.<sup>19</sup> Phoinix has both a personal and a professional interest in Achilles. The two intertwine and cannot be separated. It is precisely the dual nature of Phoinix's role which creates the peculiar crisis in which he finds himself and the particular demands which he makes on Achilles. As just a father, he might be satisfied merely to have Achilles love and protect him; as just a teacher, he might be satisfied merely to have him pursue the educational ideal; but as both a father and a teacher, he can be satisfied with either eventuality only if it is accompanied by the other. Accordingly, Phoinix's two pleas are interdependent: Achilles cannot grant the minor plea if he rejects the major. Pursuit of the educational ideal requires that Achilles return to his place in the army, resume the quest for fame and honour and eschew the desire for a long life. If he rejects the major plea, Achilles may grant the minor plea to the extent of loving and caring for Phoinix, but he cannot in that case return Phoinix's son to him because that son would then virtually no longer exist.

It may be asked why rejection of Agamemnon's plea entails rejection of the

<sup>16</sup> The phrase, admittedly, is a rather common one, occurring eight times elsewhere in the *Iliad*.

<sup>17</sup> Lohmann, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 248, argues that Phoinix plays the role of teacher to Achilles only while they are at Troy and that he had never held that position before. I do not accept his arguments. The logistics of how Phoinix could be both a teacher of Achilles and a ruler of the Dolopes on the outskirts of Phthia (9.483–4) did not trouble Homer and should not trouble us.

<sup>18</sup> W. Jaeger, *Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture*, 1 trans. G. Highet (New York, 1965), 26.

<sup>19</sup> Lohmann, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 252, asserts that Phoinix is cast primarily in the role of a father rather than an educator; E. Valgiglio, *Achille eroe implacabile* (Torino, 1956), 21, adopts virtually the same position. Jaeger, *op. cit.* (n. 18), 25–9, and K. Reinhardt, *Die Ilias und ihr Dichter* (Göttingen, 1961), 221, emphasize Phoinix's role as an educator.

educational ideal. Scholars have in fact debated the question, though in doing so they have employed the term 'heroic ethos' rather than 'educational ideal'. They have asked whether Achilles' long speech in Book 9 constitutes a rejection of the heroic ethos (= educational ideal). A. Parry has argued that Achilles tries to express his 'disillusionment' with this ethos but has to 'misuse' words to do so and is otherwise impeded in his efforts by Homeric formulae and language.<sup>20</sup> Claus has argued against Parry that Achilles rather expresses a basis for refusing Agamemnon's plea which lies *within* the heroic ethos:

By depriving Achilles of his *geras* in *Iliad* 1 Agamemnon... has transformed the gifts from their proper status as a mere symbol of Achilles' *arete* into a practical measure of it. In *Iliad* 9 Achilles recognizes that... his worth continues to be regarded by Agamemnon and the others as something that can be calculated and obtained by an adequate enumeration of gifts, when he knows that his efforts and willingness to die can only be a gesture offered freely, out of *charis*, ultimately unanswerable except by other gestures. Simply put, he must be paid, but he cannot be bought.<sup>21</sup>

I largely agree with Claus that there is within the heroic ethos the basis for rejecting Agamemnon's plea which he describes and that Achilles tries after a fashion to express it, but I think that he does not succeed in doing so nearly as well as does Claus. I hold Achilles himself rather than Homeric formulae and language responsible for what confusion there may be. On the other hand, I reject Claus' conclusion that what Achilles says does not constitute a rejection of the heroic ethos, for Achilles, in rejecting Agamemnon's plea, does not limit himself to the rationale so well formulated by Claus. He goes on to discuss the two alternative fates prophesied for him by his mother (410–16) and cites these also as a reason for his decision to return home. The future, he says, offers him only two possibilities: either he can stay at Troy and die and win great fame there, or he can go home and lead a long life without fame. He envisions no possibility of his pursuing honour and fame, and therefore of obeying the single most important injunction of the heroic ethos, except *at Troy*. His citation of these alternative fates as a reason for rejecting Agamemnon's plea makes his rejection of it virtually equivalent to a rejection of the heroic ethos/educational ideal. Homer creates the story of these two fates and includes it here precisely in order to elevate the issue in Book 9 from one which possibly concerns a mere conflict of personalities to one which necessarily concerns the adherence to an ethos and the pursuit of an ideal.

No one other than Achilles makes any reference to his alternative fates or seems concerned about them. Of course, their urging him to accept the gifts would be absurd if they did accept the validity of his alternative fates; it may also be that in Homer 'a man's divine revelations are his personal affairs and do not create an obligation

<sup>20</sup> A. Parry, 'The Language of Achilles', *TAPA* 87 (1956), 1–7.

<sup>21</sup> D. B. Claus, 'Aidōs in the Language of Achilles', *TAPA* 105 (1975), 23–4. For further criticisms of Parry's thesis, see M. D. Reeve, 'The Language of Achilles', *CQ* 23 (1973), 193–5 and P. Friedrich and J. M. Redfield, 'Speech as a Personality Symbol: The Case of Achilles', *Language* 54 (1978), 263–8. J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford, 1980), 74–6, agrees with Claus; Schein, *op. cit.* (n. 11), 104–10, largely agrees with Parry. S. Nimis, 'The Language of Achilles: Construction vs. Representation', *CW* 79 (1986), 217–25, provides an excellent synthesis of the views of both Parry and Claus. He argues that one should view 'Achilles' speeches and actions as attempts to *construct* a version of the heroic code rather than as a series of unsuccessful attempts to *represent* an idealized version he knows all along' (p. 219; his emphasis). J. A. Arieti, *op. cit.* (n. 15), 2 n. 4, agrees with Parry that Achilles is trying to create a new concept of honour, but disagrees with him to the extent that he holds that Achilles *successfully* 'stretches the available diction to express his new feelings'.

on others'.<sup>22</sup> The fact that Phoinix takes no notice of these fates, however, may seem to conflict with my assertion that in his eyes the issue in Book 9 concerns Achilles' pursuit of the educational ideal, inasmuch as I have argued that it is only the existence of these fates which entails that the issue there necessarily concerns Achilles' pursuit of this ideal. But this is not really the case. The important word here is 'necessarily'. Without these fates, the issue is complicated. Without them, the question of what the heroic ethos and the educational ideal require of Achilles is debatable: by emphasizing either the obligations of Achilles or the faults of Agamemnon, one can reach different conclusions. Homer creates the prophecy of the alternative fates precisely in order to simplify the issue for Achilles and for us, if not for the other personages in the story. These others, however, quite apart from the story of his alternative fates, do not lack grounds for believing that Achilles' obligations to the heroic ethos/educational ideal, to others and to himself, require him to accept Agamemnon's plea and to return to the army. Phoinix in any case clearly thinks so.

Achilles' response to Phoinix's speech shows that he has understood the fact that Phoinix was making two pleas, not one, and that he has understood by and large the nature of each (9.607–19):

Φοῖνιξ, ἅττα γεραιέ, διοτρεφές, οὐ τί με ταύτης  
 χρεὼ τιμῆς· φρονές δὲ τετιμῆσθαι Διὸς αἴση,  
 ἥ μ' ἔξει παρὰ νηυσὶ κορωνίσιν, εἰς ὃ κ' αὐτμῇ  
 ἐν στήθεσσι μένῃ καὶ μοι φίλα γούνατ' ὀρώρη. 610  
 ἄλλο δέ τοι ἔρῳ, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσι·  
 μή μοι σύγχει θυμὸν ὀδυρόμενος καὶ ἀχεύων,  
 Ἀτρεΐδῃ ἥρωϊ φέρων χάριν· οὐδέ τί σε χρὴ  
 τὸν φιλέειν, ἵνα μή μοι ἀπέχθῃαι φιλέοντι·  
 καλὸν τοι σὺν ἔμοι τὸν κήδειν ὅς κ' ἐμὲ κήδη· 615  
 ἴσον ἔμοι βασιλευε καὶ ἤμισιν μείρεο τιμῆς.  
 οὗτοι δ' ἀγγελεύουσι, σὺ δ' αὐτόθι λέξῃο μίμνων  
 εὐνῇ ἐνὶ μαλακῇ· ἅμα δ' ἡοὶ φαινομένηφι  
 φρασσομένη· ἥ κε νέωμεθ' ἐφ' ἡμέτερ' ἥ κε μένωμεν.

In 607–10 he rejects Phoinix's major plea. In 611–19 he grants a conditional acceptance to his minor plea: he will love Phoinix as long as Phoinix loves those whom he loves and hates those whom he hates. Otherwise, he will hate him, though having tried to love him (614). The hyperbolic statement in 616, that he will share with Phoinix half of his kingdom and honour, is in direct response to the fears expressed by Phoinix about his future security. This statement is at once a promise of a close future relationship and an admission of the closeness of their past relationship.

Achilles' response, however, also shows what he has failed to understand. First, he has not understood Phoinix's reasons for making his major plea. Achilles in 612–15 implies that Phoinix makes it out of love for Agamemnon and that the tears which Phoinix shed after hearing Achilles' rejection of Agamemnon's offer stemmed from his concern for Agamemnon's welfare. Admittedly, no less an authority on the matter than Homer himself seems to corroborate this view when he tells us that Phoinix wept, 'for he feared for the ships' (433). Homer's statement seems to me an awful narrative blunder, which I would like to attribute to the hazards of oral composition. It should be clear from Phoinix's speech that he makes his major plea because he loves Achilles and sees him acting contrary to his own interests and to those of Phoinix, and clear also that he weeps because of this threat to their mutual interests and because of the estrangement from himself implied in Achilles' offer to allow him to stay behind. Second, Achilles has failed to understand the inter-

<sup>22</sup> E. Voegelin, *Order and History*, 2 (Baton Rouge, 1956), 86.

dependence of the two pleas. He does not see that he cannot, for reasons explained above, grant the minor plea if he rejects the major.

After Book 9 Phoinix is mentioned only three times in his own right (16.196, 19.311, 23.360) and once more when Athena assumes his appearance as a disguise (17.555–66); never again does he speak a single word or perform an action of importance. It may seem therefore that whatever the importance of Phoinix and his pleas in Book 9, Homer loses interest in him and them thereafter. This, however, is not really the case. Rather, even in Book 9 Homer is interested in Phoinix not for the sake of his own person, but only for the sake of his relationship to Achilles.<sup>23</sup> It is Phoinix's person which virtually disappears from the rest of the poem, but the two roles that he played in relation to Achilles, of father and teacher, are played again, very significantly, at the climax of the story. Furthermore, Phoinix's two pleas are not forgotten: in fact, the whole of the rest of the poem is a dramatization of their fulfilment. Books 10–18 present the ill consequences which Phoinix's parable of the Prayers predicted would result from Achilles' refusal of Agamemnon's plea. In Book 19 Phoinix's major plea is granted as a direct result of these ill consequences. In the subsequent books his minor plea, whose complete fulfilment is ultimately beyond the range of the poem's action and which in fact can never be granted in full because of Achilles' imminent death, is granted to the extent that Achilles is then shown to be the man whom Phoinix had wanted him to be and to attain to the ideal which Phoinix had taught him to pursue: in Books 20–4 he proves himself to be a great doer of deeds, and in Book 24 (more so than anywhere else) a great speaker of words.<sup>24</sup>

As I have said, Phoinix's two roles, of father and teacher, recur at the climax of the story. There Priam plays the role of father, and Achilles the role of teacher. The correspondence between Priam and Phoinix as fathers has already been discussed, but that between Achilles and Phoinix as teachers is just as important. Achilles in Book 24 does not merely grant the plea of the suppliant father Priam, an act by which he symbolically rectifies his rejection of the plea of the suppliant father Phoinix, but also, in an effort to console Priam, employs on him the same two didactic devices which Phoinix had employed on Achilles, a parable and a paradeigma.<sup>25</sup> This is Homer's

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Reinhardt, *op. cit.* (n. 19), 276, and Schein, *op. cit.* (n. 11), 94 n. 37.

<sup>24</sup> Achilles' great deeds include his returning Hector's body. The fact that the gods order a man to do something does not lessen his own responsibility and hence culpability or credit for doing what they ask. Cf. W. Schadewaldt, *Von Homers Welt und Werk* (Stuttgart, 1944), 348: 'Die Tat gehört deswegen nicht weniger dem Menschen, nur eben nicht ihm allein'. Achilles therefore deserves full credit for returning Hector's body despite that fact that he does so only upon orders from the gods. Howald, *op. cit.* (n. 3), 96, and Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, 213–14, are wrong to imply the opposite. Both make much of the fact that Achilles obeys the gods' orders immediately and seemingly without mental anguish or conflict. The latter fact seems to me rather to indicate that when the gods' orders come, Achilles is already psychologically ready to return Hector's body.

<sup>25</sup> Though Lohmann accepts the authenticity of the parable of the Prayers because he finds a parallel to it in one of Nestor's speeches (a dubious parallel, see above, n. 4), he rejects the authenticity of the parable of the Jars of Zeus because he finds no parallel to it in the speech of Priam at 24.486–506 (p. 123). He holds that this speech and that of Achilles which follows it have an identical ring-compositional structure, which the lines containing the parable of the Jars of Zeus interrupt. He also argues that the meaning of this parable is inappropriate to its context (p. 123 n. 48) because it makes the point that no man is completely happy, whereas Achilles, in order to refute Priam's assertion that he is *πανάποτμος* (24.493), should rather want to argue that no man is completely unhappy. I think that the parable of the Jars of Zeus appropriately makes the point that great suffering is universal and unavoidable. That is the consolation which Achilles offers to Priam, and to himself. I also think that ring-compositional parallels are no basis for including or excluding anything from the Homeric poems. For a critique of Lohmann's methods, see J. B. Hainsworth's review of his book, *JHS* 92 (1972), 187–8.



way of underscoring the development of Achilles' character in the course of the story. As Jaeger holds, the poem 'dramatizes the educational process'.<sup>26</sup> The final step of that process is when the pupil becomes the teacher: in Book 24 Achilles takes that final step. His doing so indicates that he has not merely learned the hard way the lesson which Phoinix tried to teach him but is now a fitting representative of the tradition which Phoinix himself had represented in Book 9.

As already noted, besides the two speeches of Phoinix and Achilles, the only other speech in Homer containing both a parable and a paradeigma is Agamemnon's speech to Achilles and the Achaian assembly in Book 19 (78–144). The parable and paradeigma in it, moreover, like those in Phoinix's speech, are concerned with the power of Ate. The parable describes Ate in terms which emphasize her power over men (19.91–4):

πρέσβα Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἄτη, ἥ πάντας ἀάται,  
οὐλομένη· τῇ μὲν θ' ἀπαλοὶ πόδες· οὐ γὰρ ἐπ' οὐδεὶ  
πίλναται, ἀλλ' ἄρα ἡ γὰρ κατ' ἀνδρῶν κράατα βαίνει  
βλάπτουσ' ἀνθρώπους· κατὰ δ' οὖν ἑτερόν γε πέδησε.

The paradeigmatic story demonstrates that her power extends even to the greatest of the gods: Zeus himself was once blinded by Ate, which enabled Hera to arrange for the birth of Erechtheus in place of Heracles. Agamemnon, of course, says what he does much more in order to excuse himself than to teach Achilles; and it is questionable whether Achilles under the circumstances would be inclined to listen closely to him and to learn from him. Agamemnon, nevertheless, does teach a moral lesson similar to that taught by Phoinix. Their speeches are similar in both form and content; the one reinforces the effect of the other. This fact bolsters my argument above about the significance of Achilles' usage of a parable and paradeigma in Book 24. His usage of them in trying to teach Priam a moral lesson is all the more salient and significant for the fact that not just once but twice earlier in the poem men have employed these same two didactic devices in teaching him very similar moral lessons.

Commentators have noted the parallel between Phoinix's parable of the Prayers and Agamemnon's parable about Ate, but have universally ignored the parallel between either and Achilles' parable of the Jars of Zeus. Leaf's comments on the parable of the Prayers are typical: 'This remarkable passage is unique in Homer, where there is no other equally clear case of an allegory. T 91–4 is the most similar'.<sup>27</sup> This view is technically correct: nowhere else in Homer do we find *pure* allegory, but the passage is anything but isolated, and not merely because of the existence of 19.91–4. Homer, in the climactic scene in the poem, provides an even more important parallel to it, and expects us to see the parallelism. Achilles' tale of the Jars of Zeus is overtly similar in narrative style and purpose. The ancient reader or listener, unacquainted with our modern distinctions between allegory, parable, personification and fable, etc., would have been aware of the similarities between all three passages, but obtuse to their differences.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> I have taken this phrase from E. A. Havelock's *Preface to Plato* (Oxford, 1963), 120. He uses it there to describe Jaeger's views as presented in chapters 2 and 3 of *Paideia* (cited above).

<sup>27</sup> W. Leaf, *The Iliad* (London, 1900–2), *ad loc.* Cf. D. B. Monro, *Iliad* (Oxford, 1884), *ad loc.*: 'In this instance the personification is drawn out with more detail than usual, and in a style that suggests *allegorizing* – that is to say, a process in which the poet was fully conscious of the difference between the *thing* prayer and the *persons* that he was imagining. Whether such a mental process as this is one which can be attributed to a poet of the Homeric age is a difficult historical question' (his emphasis). Reinhardt, *op. cit.* (n. 19), 222, asserts that the parable of the Prayers is better termed a personification than an allegory.

<sup>28</sup> Modern scholars are themselves inconsistent in their usage of these terms in regard to the stories in question. Cf. preceding note. Curiously, Lohmann refers to both the parable of the

Paradeigmatic stories, unlike parables, are relatively common in Homer, and there is no unusual characteristic, shared by the stories about Meleager, Ate, and Peleus, which distinguishes them as a group from the other paradeigmatic stories in Homer. The parallels among the speeches in which these stories occur would obviously be stronger if there were some characteristic of this sort. The mere fact, however, that these speeches are the only three in Homer containing either a parable or a parable and a paradeigma together seems to me sufficient to substantiate the parallel I see among them. The thesis that Homer expects us to see correspondences between the words of the speakers of these three speeches, moreover, receives additional support from the fact that Achilles later tells to Priam a second paradeigmatic story, that about Niobe (24.599–617), which does share with the stories about Meleager and Ate an unusual characteristic which distinguishes them from nearly all of the other paradeigmatic stories in the *Iliad*.

Most 'myths' in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are simply stories about the speaker, or the person addressed, or a relative of one of them, or an event which occurred in the speaker's own lifetime and which he himself has witnessed. I know of only four myths in the *Iliad* which do not fit this description: the stories about Meleager, Ate, and Niobe; and Diomedes' paradeigmatic story to Glaucos about how the gods punished Lucourgos because he foolishly strove against them (6.130–40). The stories about Meleager, Ate, and Niobe, therefore, are distinguished from nearly all of the other 'myths' in the *Iliad* in that they are among the very few stories which are drawn not from the personal experience or family history of the speaker or the person addressed but rather from a communal fund of traditional stories. Thus they are much more like what a myth is considered to be today, that is, a traditional story passed on from generation to generation and known to those who may tell it only by hearsay.

The stories about Meleager and Niobe, moreover, share some other unusual characteristics as well. The first of these is that in both a well-known traditional story is drastically changed in its most important elements in order to provide a paradeigma to suit the particular situation at hand. Achilles thus demonstrates the same ability as had Phoinix to extemporize in the telling of didactic stories, and extemporizes in the same way as he. Admittedly, this interpretation is undercut to some extent by the fact that on six other occasions in the *Iliad*, by Willcock's count, Homer allows characters to create or revise myths in order to provide paradeigmata, including on one of these occasions Achilles himself.<sup>29</sup> The six are: (1) 1.259–74: Nestor's story to the quarrelling Agamemnon and Achilles about how better men than they used to heed his counsel; (2) 1.393–407: Achilles' story to Thetis about how she once came to the aid of Zeus when the other Olympian gods tried to bind him; (3) 4.370–400: Agamemnon's story to Diomedes about the great deeds of Diomedes' father, Tydeus; (4) 5.382–404: Dione's story to the wounded Aphrodite about how other Olympian gods, specifically Ares and Hera, had also been harmed by men; (5) 7.124–60: Nestor's story to the Greek leaders about his duel with Ereuthalion; (6) 18.394–405: Hephaistos' story to Thetis about how she once helped him when Hera had thrown him out of Olympus. That Homer allows himself and his characters a free hand with myth is beyond dispute, but the existence of these other six examples does not in my eyes greatly obscure the salience of the special parallel which I see between the stories of Meleager and Niobe. It does not both because the kind of change made in these

Prayers and that of the Jars of Zeus as allegories, but argues that the latter is an interpolation because he can find no parallel to it (see above, n. 25).

<sup>29</sup> M. M. Willcock, 'Mythological Paradeigma in the *Iliad*', *CQ* 58 (1964), 141–54.

two stories differs from that made in the other six and because there are a number of other differences which distinguish these two stories from the other six.

In Willcock's own opinion, five of the other six appear to be new inventions rather than revisions of traditional stories.<sup>30</sup> Only one of the six, the story of Hephaistos' fall, has come down to us in any other form. Some of the others may have been traditional, but the important parts of them appear to be new inventions. For example, in Willcock's opinion, Tydeus' embassy to Thebes was probably traditional, but not his exploit on the way back;<sup>31</sup> yet it is this exploit which forms the most important part of Agamemnon's story. It is one thing to invent a new story or merely to add an episode to a traditional one, and another thing drastically to revise a well-known traditional story in its most important elements so that not only the form but also the meaning of the story is quite different. To the best of our knowledge, the latter is done only with the stories of Meleager and Niobe.<sup>32</sup> Niobe, traditionally a prototype of inconsolable grief, is made into her opposite, someone who despite her grief accepts consolation in the form of food. The story of Meleager, whose traditional version bears no resemblance to that of Achilles, is thoroughly revised so as to provide the necessary parallels.

There are other differences, which may be brought out with the help of Willcock's definition of a paradigm:

I define a paradigm as a myth introduced for exhortation or consolation. 'You must do this, because X, who was in more or less the same situation as you, and a more significant person, did it [or suffered ill consequences because he did not do it]'.<sup>33</sup>

This definition stipulates that there should be correspondences between the situation of X and that of the person addressed, and between the action which was or should have been performed by X and that to be performed by the person addressed. But correspondences of this sort are much more limited in the case of the other six examples than with the stories of Meleager and Niobe. For example, there is little correspondence between the situations of Tydeus and Diomedes, except that both require them to be brave. Willcock's definition also at least implies, if not actually stipulates, that X, 'a more significant person', is different from the speaker and the person addressed, and that the person addressed is the one who is being exhorted to action. It is notable, however, that in four of his six examples, the stories told by Hephaistos and Achilles and the two told by Nestor, the speaker and/or the person addressed are characters in the myth, which is not the case with the stories about Meleager and Niobe. Three of these four in fact do not fit the requirements of Willcock's definition, as interpreted above. In Nestor's story of his duel with Ereuthalion, the speaker is identical with X; in Hephaistos' story, the speaker is the person being exhorted to action, and the person addressed, Thetis, is identical with X. Thetis, the person addressed, is also arguably identical with X in the case of Achilles' story. The main problem with the stories of Hephaistos and Achilles,

<sup>30</sup> There is no general statement by Willcock to this effect, but his particular statements about each of the other six examples lead to this conclusion.

<sup>31</sup> Willcock, *op. cit.* (n. 29), 145.

<sup>32</sup> The story of Hephaistos' fall is a borderline case, but it seems to me that the basic form and meaning of the story do not change from one version to the other. What changes is mainly just the personages involved.

<sup>33</sup> Willcock, *op. cit.* (n. 29), 142. The words in brackets are my own, not Willcock's. They need to be added to this definition if the story of Meleager is to fit it, as Willcock clearly intended that it should. When I refer below to Willcock's definition, I mean his definition as slightly modified by myself here.

however, and why clearly neither of them fits Willcock's definition, is not the identity of X, but rather that the stories themselves are not truly paradigmatic in purpose. They are not because they provide, not an example of an action by a more significant person which is to be imitated, but rather a reason why in all fairness a request should be granted. Hephaistos by helping Thetis imitates her action in helping him, but he helps her not because he views her as a more significant person whom he should emulate, or her previous action as a model to be imitated, but rather because he recognizes that as a result of that action he owes her a favour.

Achilleus' story to Thetis is most important for our purposes since it constitutes the one other possible instance in the *Iliad* of his employing a paradigmata, besides the two instances in Book 24. His use of paradigmata in Book 24 would be somewhat less conspicuous if he had already employed one earlier in the poem. Some probably would hold that this speech well fits Willcock's definition: that Thetis, the person addressed, is being exhorted to action by the example of the more significant person, Zeus. But this interpretation will not bear scrutiny. Achilleus by means of this story tries to exhort Thetis to the action of supplicating Zeus, but the story has the desired effect, not because it provides her with a model to imitate (Zeus in the story in fact does not supplicate Thetis; she helps him on her own initiative), but because it offers her hope of success: she trusts that Zeus, if she repeats this story to him, will feel obliged to do her a favour. It might also be argued that Achilleus is providing Thetis with a paradigmatic story to use on Zeus, in which she herself is the paradigmata. This view, however, is untenable because what I have said above about the case of Hephaistos helping Thetis applies also to the case of Zeus helping her: Thetis is not for Zeus a more significant person, nor is her previous action for him a model to be imitated. Zeus, if the story were repeated to him (which it never is), would help Thetis because he, like Hephaistos, would recognize an obligation to return a favour. Achilleus' story to Thetis, therefore, is paradigmatic neither for Thetis nor for Zeus, and hence there is no other instance in the *Iliad* of Achilleus' employing a paradigmata besides the two instances in Book 24.

It should also be noted that Agamemnon's story about Ate is not paradigmatic in the sense defined by Willcock. Agamemnon by his story is trying to exhort Achilleus to the action of forgiving him. The story has the desired effect, however, not by providing a model of forgiveness to imitate or of unforgiveness to shun, but rather by providing an example of a mistake similar to Agamemnon's own. Agamemnon cites this example because it supports his argument that mistakes such as his are common and unavoidable and that he therefore should be forgiven (cf. 19.94). Agamemnon's story is paradigmatic only in the limited sense that it exemplifies one thing by another. Diomedes' story about Lucourgos is paradigmatic in the sense defined by Willcock, but there the speaker, not the person addressed, is the one who is being exhorted to action – or rather, more precisely, inaction. Phoinix and Achilleus, therefore, are the only two characters in the *Iliad* who, for the purpose of providing paradigmata in the sense defined by Willcock, narrate stories which are inversions of traditional myths and which describe actions performed by personages unrelated to themselves or to the persons addressed who are being exhorted to action.

There is one outstanding dissimilarity between the stories of Meleager and Niobe: the former is long and complex whereas the latter is much shorter and simpler. But, with this one exception, the stories of Meleager and Niobe seem, in respect to all relevant criteria, more similar to each other than either one of them is to any other myth in the *Iliad*.

Aristotle considered epic, like tragedy, to be an imitation of a *πρᾶξις σπουδαία* (*Poet.* 1449b9–28). I have shown elsewhere that *σπουδαῖος* is for Aristotle a teleological term, that therefore epic and tragedy are for him imitations of actions directed at the end proper to man's nature, happiness, and that since according to Aristotle one advances toward happiness by pursuing the ancillary ends, virtue and knowledge, tragedy and epic according to his theory imitate actions involving the pursuit of virtue and knowledge.<sup>34</sup> I have also shown elsewhere that the action of the *Gilgamesh Epic* is distinctly one of this kind.<sup>35</sup> Its hero goes through a tripartite process of ethical development very similar to the one described by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*, a process involving the pursuit, first of pleasure, then of practical virtue, then of knowledge, and culminating in the obtainment of the happiness proper to man's nature:

Gilgamesh at first is leading the hedonistic life and is devoted to the lower forms of love. Then, after meeting Enkidu and coming, as it were, under the influence of Aphrodite Ouranios, he takes up the practical life and begins to pursue virtue and seek immortal fame through great deeds. Finally, horrified by Enkidu's death and the imminence of his own, he takes up a life which, while not philosophical in practice, does produce in him the desired effects of the philosophical life, i.e., wisdom and knowledge. At this point he obtains the end or goal toward which the story has been leading him, a happiness which is possible only for someone who, like Gilgamesh and Socrates, in the course of his life acquires both virtue and knowledge and by this means develops the potentiality inherent in his human nature.<sup>36</sup>

I believe that the action of the *Iliad* is also pointedly *σπουδαία* in the Aristotelian sense, that Achilles grows in virtue and knowledge in the course of the story and that the final events of the poem and especially his speeches to Priam, for the reasons cited above, are designed to bring this out. There are in fact some interesting, though by no means precise, parallels between the action of the *Iliad* and that of the *Gilgamesh Epic*: Achilles, after his quarrel with Agamemnon, ceases to pursue practical virtue through the performance of great deeds and says he will not do so until certain conditions are met; in Book 9 he threatens to reject the pursuit of practical virtue unconditionally and rather to take up a life of pleasure. After the death of Patroclus he resumes the pursuit of practical virtue through great deeds. His final act, the returning of Hector's body to Priam, is as loaded with meaning as Gilgamesh's final act, his self-satisfied admiration of the walls of Uruk. This act of Achilles is usually interpreted as indicating merely his resumption of the generous nature which he possessed before the start of the poem; I believe it rather indicates his acquisition of a new and better nature, better because grounded in new and greater knowledge and wisdom. Achilles, unlike Gilgamesh, does not make continuous and uninterrupted progress toward virtue and knowledge in the course of the story: his *aristeia* in fact includes some cruel and barbarous actions;<sup>37</sup> and he does not obtain greater happiness at the end of the story; but he does make progress overall toward those ancillary ends and thus for Aristotle is more capable of happiness at the end of the story than he was at its beginning. The plot of the *Iliad* as a whole therefore is distinctly *σπουδαία* in the Aristotelian sense, and the poem accordingly well fits his concept of epic.

<sup>34</sup> ΣΠΟΥΔΑΙΟΣ and Teleology in the *Poetics*, *TAPA* 114 (1984), 159–76, esp. 172–3.

<sup>35</sup> 'Parallels between *The Gilgamesh Epic* and Plato's *Symposium*', *Journal of Near-Eastern Studies* 42 (1983), 133–41.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 140.

<sup>37</sup> On the change in Achilles' behaviour after Patroclus' death, see Griffin, *op. cit.* (n. 21), 61.

Redfield denies any change in Achilles in the course of the story. Since his ideas have been generally well received and I have argued the opposite, I will now attempt to demonstrate the fallaciousness of his arguments. My criticisms will be directed primarily at what he says in the following two excerpts:

The ceremony [of Achilles' reconciliation with Priam] enables Achilles to know his situation and no longer merely experience it. What was baffling in its immediacy becomes lucid at a distance. Achilles surveys and comprehends his world and himself. That is the purification of Achilles.

On the other hand, nothing has changed. Priam is still Achilles' enemy.... Nor is Achilles reconciled with his own community; his dealings with Priam are explicitly an act to be done in secret, an act which his community does not permit.... The purification of Achilles does not heal him. But he does come to repose, to food and sleep.<sup>38</sup>

and

Culture confers on life a meaning and at the same time divides men from one another....

Since life takes on meaning only when formed by culture, this ceremony of reconciliation is not a discovery of meaning. It is rather an accurate recognition of meaninglessness. Achilles is not changed; his anger and his isolation remain. He is left, like Niobe, 'consuming his sorrows'....

... The *Iliad* comes to a conclusion, not because the action imitated reaches a resolution, but because the poet has conferred on the event, in the manner of his telling it, a form and an ending.<sup>39</sup>

In the above Redfield twice makes statements which categorically deny change with respect to Achilles. He also states, however, that Achilles in the course of his reconciliation with Priam obtains a new insight into 'his world and himself'. The two ideas are manifestly incompatible. If Achilles changes with respect to knowledge, then he changes, and it is wrong categorically to deny all change with regard to him. His statements, however, despite their unqualified form, might within their contexts (i.e., by reason of the fact that they are surrounded by qualified statements on the same subject) be taken as intended to deny not all change in Achilles, but merely change in certain respects, such as change in his relations with his community and with Priam and change in his emotions. That these statements are to be taken in a qualified sense, on the other hand, is not clear, and the ambiguity is purposive and typical of Redfield's method of argument in the last pages of his book. What would best support his assertion that the poem's action does not reach a substantive resolution is a complete lack of change in Achilles and his relations with others. These categorical statements serve to suggest to the uncritical reader that this is indeed the case.

These statements, moreover, even if taken in this qualified sense, are untrue. They rest on a number of untenable assumptions and unrealistically rigid dichotomies. They assume, first, that Achilles, for the purpose of discussing the poem's action, may be reduced to his emotions and social relations. What happens to his mind is irrelevant. This is to conceive the poem's action too narrowly. If Jaeger is at all right to hold that 'the poem dramatizes the educational process' (see above), then what happens to Achilles' mind is very much a part of the poem's action and the substantive development of his mind contributes to a substantive resolution of the poem's action.

Redfield is able to reduce Achilles to just emotions and social relations because there are for him in effect two Achilles: one divine and the other human.<sup>40</sup> One of the Achilles' parents, of course, was divine and the other human; so he himself

<sup>38</sup> Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, 218.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 218–19.

<sup>40</sup> The idea of two Achilles in the *Iliad* does not lack precedent. E. Bethe, *Homer* (Leipzig, 1914), i.74, also found two, one 'der Sanguiniker' and the other 'der Melancholiker', each the creation of a different poet.

has a dual nature and is something of a dichotomy. But with this dichotomy, as with several others, Redfield unrealistically treats the parts as if wholly separate and distinct. For Redfield, it is the divine Achilles who participates in the reconciliation with Priam and obtains new knowledge.<sup>41</sup> Hence, only he is changed by the acquisition of that knowledge. When Redfield denies change in Achilles, he means the human Achilles, the one who feels emotions and participates in a community. Achilles' person simply cannot be divided in this way. Even if it could, it seems to me that Redfield exaggerates the nature and extent of the knowledge acquired by the one Achilles and is wrong to deny all change in the other. Let us consider first the evidence which Redfield cites as showing lack of change in the human Achilles.

In the first excerpt above Redfield asserts that Achilles is not reconciled with his community because he secretly participates in the reconciliation with Priam. But the mere fact that someone on one occasion does something in secret and contrary to the will of his community does not mean that he is not reconciled with his community – or few people could be said to be reconciled to theirs. Achilles' reconciliation with Priam, need it be pointed out, is ultimately not contrary to the interests of his community, and would not be contrary to its will if the others, like he, knew the will of Zeus. Redfield also cites as evidence the fact that Achilles continues to show signs of anger and sorrow. But this is to confuse emotions with social relations. Achilles cannot be said to be unreconciled with his community and isolated from it merely because he still feels some resentment toward its leader and some sorrow over the recent death of his best friend. The complete healing of Achilles' psychological wounds will take time, which is only natural, but the process of healing has well begun by the poem's end. Redfield's view discounts the significance of Achilles' formal reconciliation with Agamemnon and the rest of the army in Book 19 and the fact that Achilles is once again performing his previous role in the army. But these two things are most significant. They comprise all that the embassy in Book 9 had wanted to achieve: no one there was concerned to make Achilles like Agamemnon as a person. Achilles' reconciliation with Agamemnon may be largely formal in terms of their relationship, but it is definitely substantive in terms of the plot. His reconciliation with his community is by no means merely formal, but rather is quite substantive, since he is again performing his role in his community. Both reconciliations contribute toward a substantive resolution of the poem's action, for they are the culmination of the plan of Zeus begun in Book 1.

Besides the change in Achilles' social relations, there is also an important personal change in Achilles himself, which Homer underscores by means of the scene of his reconciliation with Priam. Redfield's analysis of this scene is interesting and valuable, but flawed. He holds that the reconciliation takes place in an area which he calls variously 'the divine sphere' (p. 218) or 'the sphere of nature' (p. 222) and describes as 'outside the human world' (pp. 219 and 222). Achilles, by drawing directly on the divine half of his nature (p. 218), is able momentarily to step into this sphere and obtain an 'Olympian' 'perspective' (p. 219) on the tragic nature of the human condition. He shares this with Priam through the two speeches discussed above, so that both experience 'the meaninglessness of life'. Their experience is aesthetic in nature: 'They become to each other aesthetic objects' (p. 218). As 'poetry offers him [*sc. man*] not gratification but intelligibility' (p. 220), so the experience of Achilles and Priam makes life for them more intelligible but not more gratifying or meaningful.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, 214: 'Priam must be introduced into the semihuman, god-inhabited world where Achilles is at home'.

There are three major faults which I find with this analysis. First, the hypothesis that poetry, or any aesthetic experience, provides intelligibility, i.e., knowledge, but not gratification, i.e., pleasure, is unrealistic and un-Aristotelian.<sup>42</sup> It cannot but lead to false conclusions, as it does. The experience of Achilles and Priam, if 'sublime' (p. 221), must also be somewhat gratifying and must add to the overall meaningfulness (i.e., worthwhileness) of life for both of them. Second, Redfield misinterprets the nature of Achilles' pessimistic statements to Priam. They are evidence of a new knowledge and wisdom, but not of a superhuman perspective on the human condition. Frankly, what he says is untrue: life in the eyes of most men, including, I am sure, Homer and his audience, is more good than bad, more pleasurable than painful. Certainly, at least some men manage to get through life having experienced a great deal more pleasure than pain. But Achilles' statements have a limited truth: they reflect well his own recent experience and that of Priam. More importantly, they are wise and appropriate for the purpose for which he says them: to console Priam. They are intended not so much to teach Priam about things in general, as one particular thing, that he does not suffer alone.

Third, Redfield does not always define his terms and uses some words ambiguously. Two such words are 'meaning' and 'life'. The former he uses many times throughout the book to mean 'significance' (pp. 65, 79, 219 and 222), but in the last few pages he uses it to mean both 'significance' and what I will call, for lack of a better term, 'worthwhileness'. In the first sentence of the second excerpt above, 'meaning' refers to significance: culture interprets what life is all about and attributes to it a certain significance or purpose, which those living within a particular culture are expected to accept and believe. The 'since' clause of the next sentence seems to be a reformulation of the preceding sentence, but in fact contains two very important changes: the addition of 'only' and the omission of 'a' before 'meaning'. Redfield now asserts that it is *only* culture which confers meaning on life, i.e., *any* meaning at all, not just some one meaning. If 'meaning' here refers to significance, this is still a stronger statement than the former and, though tenable, is much more debatable than it.<sup>43</sup> We might, therefore, have expected some recognition of the difference between them and argument to support the stronger assertion, but we get neither.

The major problem, however, is not this, but rather that 'meaning' in the sentence beginning with 'Since' ought to mean not 'significance', but 'worthwhileness'. It ought to because 'meaning' there should be the opposite of 'meaninglessness' in the next sentence, and 'meaninglessness' in that sentence, to be true to the facts of the poem, ought to refer not to 'lack of significance', but to 'lack of worthwhileness'. Achilles and Priam discover not that life has no significance, but rather that it is not worthwhile – because it brings at least as much pain as pleasure. 'Meaning' in the 'Since' clause, need it be pointed out, cannot mean worthwhileness: it is nonsense to say that only culture makes life worthwhile. Life is worthwhile primarily by nature – because it is by nature gratifying.

Consider also his usage of the word 'life'. He states that 'life must be lived in and for communities' (p. 221). 'Life' here ought to mean not 'all of life', but rather only 'most of life', 'life in general'. But the conclusions which Redfield draws about Achilles entail his having meant 'all of life'. For example, he says that 'we thus leave him [*sc.* Achilles] in a strange divided state, tensely poised between life and art' (p.

<sup>42</sup> Redfield's express purpose is to provide an Aristotelian interpretation of the *Iliad*.

<sup>43</sup> It might be argued that life is intrinsically pleasurable, and that the mere pleasure of living makes life seem to most people significant and purposive.



221). 'Life' here refers to life in the community, and 'art' to the sphere in which the reconciliation with Priam takes place. But why is it 'strange' that Achilles should be divided between the two – unless one assumes that life in the community is normally 'all of life?' Of course it is not, and therefore Achilles' having a foothold in two different parts of life and views of life is not at all 'strange'. Life is complex, and includes much that does not happen 'in and for communities'. It certainly includes the aesthetic sphere and the aesthetic experience. Participation in those aspects of life which lie outside the community does not necessarily or even normally diminish one's capacity for participation in life within the community. I suspect it usually has the opposite effect. If Achilles' experience at the end of the poem is aesthetic, this will very likely make him a better and more dependable person in and for his community. He is then not 'tensely poised' between life and something opposite to it, but rather more firmly and stably grounded in the whole of life than he was at the poem's start.

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