

TIMĒ AND ARETĒ IN HOMER

Much effort has been invested by scholars in defining the specific character of the Homeric values as against those that obtained at later periods of Greek history. The distinction between the 'shame-culture' and the 'guilt-culture' introduced by E. R. Dodds, and that between the 'competitive' and the 'cooperative' values advocated by A. W. H. Adkins, are among the more influential ones.¹ Although Adkins's taxonomy encountered some acute criticism, notably from A. A. Long,² it has become generally adopted both in the scholarly literature and in general philosophical discussions of Greek ethics.³ Objections to Adkins's approach have mainly concentrated on demonstrating that his denial of the cooperative values to Homer is untenable on general grounds and is not supported by Homeric evidence.⁴ Characteristically, Adkins's thesis concerning the centrality to Homer's ethics of the so-called 'competitive values' has never received similar attention, probably owing to the fact that this is the point at which his picture of the Homeric society concurs with the influential reconstructions by W. Jaeger and M. I. Finley.⁵ The present study of *timē* and *aretē*, generally held to be the two competitive values central to the Homeric poems, purports to address this issue.

I

Let us begin with Adkins's definition of the competitive values. 'In any society there are activities in which success is of paramount importance; in these, commendation or the reverse is reserved for those who in fact succeed or fail.'⁶ As far as I can see, this definition does not take into account some hallmark characteristics of the competitive values as understood by the Greeks themselves. Nowhere do these characteristics come to light more clearly than in the most competitive of Greek institutions, the athletic contest. First of all, the basic assumption that makes the competition possible is that it is a mutual emulation of equals that alone, in the Greek view, can bring one to the threshold of the greatest perfection attainable to mortals, 'the peak of virtue' (*ἄκρον ἀρετῆς*) in the language of the poets.⁷ Nobody expresses this point better than Plutarch in his discussion of the Sacred Band of

¹ E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), pp. 28–63; A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility. A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 30–85.

² 'Morals and values in Homer', *JHS* 90 (1970), 121–39.

³ See e.g. A. Macintyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*² (Notre Dame, IN, 1984), p. 133: 'A. W. H. Adkins has usefully contrasted the co-operative and the competitive virtues. The competitive he sees as Homeric in their ancestry; the co-operative represent the social world of the Athenian democracy.'

⁴ See Long, *JHS* 90 (1970), 121–39; H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus*² (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 12–20; M. Schofield, 'Euboulia in the *Iliad*', *CQ* 36 (1986), 6–31; B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 81–4, 100–2; D. L. Cairns, *Aidōs. The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 50–146; G. Zanker, *The Heart of Achilles. Characterization and Personal Ethics in the Iliad* (Michigan, 1994), pp. 1–45.

⁵ W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, vol. 1, tr. G. Highet (Oxford, 1965), pp. 3–14; M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*² (Harmondsworth, 1978), pp. 118–21. Cf. A. W. H. Adkins, *JHS* 91 (1971), 1–2.

⁶ Adkins (n. 1), p. 6.

⁷ Cf. e.g. Hes. *Erga* 291; Tyrt. 12.43 West; Pi. *N.* 6.23.

Boeotia:

For as horses run brisker in a chariot than singly, not that their joint force divides the air with greater ease, but because being matched one against the other emulation kindles and inflames their courage; thus he [Pelopidas] thought brave men, provoking one another to noble actions, would prove most serviceable in a common cause, and most resolute.⁸

This is why Plato maintained that mutual emulation as evinced in what he saw as the typically Greek pursuits of homosexual friendship, philosophy, and gymnastics not only leads one to the perfection of virtue but is also dangerous in the eyes of tyrants.⁹ Only social equals can take part in this kind of competitive interaction and consequently they are also the only ones entitled to the possession of *aretē*. Obviously, this would exclude the slave from laying claims to *aretē*, but the same would also hold true of the single ruler, who by definition cannot be a party in a competitive situation. Accordingly, the lack of social equality would make *aretē*, as well as any other competitive value, totally irrelevant.¹⁰

Furthermore, important as was victory in competition, participation as such was held as no less important. Pindar dedicated his *Nemean* 11 to Aristagoras of Tenedos, who was prevented by his parents from participating in the Olympian and Pythian contests. After expressing his confidence that Aristagoras would have won the first prize had he become a participant, Pindar wrote:

Of mortals one is expelled from the ranks of the good (*ἀγαθοί*) by the boasts of empty mind; the other, too distrustful of his own strength, misses the fine things he deserves because his spirit, devoid of daring, draws him back by the hand.¹¹

The presence of the word *agathoi*, the adjective which corresponds to the noun *aretē*, indicates that what is at issue here is the basic qualification required in order that one may be recognized as a possessor of this value. That is to say, not just the success, as in Adkins's formulation, but the very fact of participating in the competition would be sufficient to either qualify or disqualify a person as belonging to the category of the possessors of *aretē*. We shall return to this issue in discussing Achilles' abstention from fighting in the *Iliad*; for the present, it will be sufficient to emphasize that this is essentially the same attitude as that expressed in Aristotle's comparison of human life with the experience of the games: 'And as in the Olympian games it is not the most beautiful and the strongest that are crowned but those who compete (for it is some of these that are victorious), so those who act win, and rightly win, the noble and good things in life.'¹² Mutual emulation and participation as such were thus the

⁸ *Pelop.* 19.4. Tr. J. Dryden, rev. A. H. Clough, with slight changes.

⁹ *Symp.* 182bc. Cf. *Ar. Pol.* 5.11 1313a39–b6, 1314a5–8.

¹⁰ This point was admirably expressed by Peter Brown (*The Making of Late Antiquity* [Cambridge, MA, 1978], p. 31) in his discussion of *philotimia* at the age of the Antonines. After quoting R. MacMullen's saying that 'no word understood to its depths goes further to explain the Greco-Roman achievement', he writes: 'On the one hand, it committed the members of the upper class to a blatant competitiveness on all levels of social life. . . . On the other hand, the competitiveness of *philotimia* still assumed and needed, as it had done for centuries, an audience of significant others who were potential competitors. Without these the exercise of *philotimia* would have been deprived of a large part of its meaning.'

¹¹ *N.* 11.29–32; my translation. See also *N.* 3.70–1 *ἐν δὲ πείρᾳ τέλος διαφαίνεται ὧν τις ἐξοχώτερος γένηται*. Cf. *I.* 1.68–70; *Parth.* 1. 6–10.

¹² *Eth. Nic.* 1.8 1099a3–7, tr. D. Ross. These words were paraphrased by Pierre de Coubertin at the Berlin Olympics as follows: 'The important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part. Just as in life, the aim is not to conquer, but to struggle well.' See N. Spivey, 'Faster, Higher, Stronger?' (without acknowledging the Greek source), in *TLS* July 19, 1996.

two factors essential to the standard Greek view of the competitive values. To what degree can these two factors be regarded as relevant to the Homeric epics?

The main conflict of the *Iliad* is that of honour. It was because of considerations of honour that Agamemnon took Briseis from Achilles and it was considerations of honour again that caused Achilles to retire from participation in the Trojan campaign from the moment that his prize of honour, *geras*, had been taken from him. The value of honour is thus interwoven into the very core of the *Iliad* plot. As it is generally assumed that honour is a competitive value, it is not surprising that it is central to the approach treating Homer's ethics as strictly competitive. Thus, Finley wrote in *The World of Odysseus*: 'It is in the nature of honour that it must be exclusive, or at least hierarchic. When everyone attains equal honour, then there is no honour for anyone. Of necessity, therefore, the world of Odysseus was fiercely competitive, as each hero strove to outdo the others.'¹³ This is not, however, what the distribution of honour in Homer shows us.

The Greek word conventionally rendered by the English 'honour' is *timē*. This is not to say that 'honour' and *timē* are strictly equivalent. As Jasper Griffin has pointed out, it is often overlooked that Homer sees honour as inseparable from such outward manifestations of it as honourable cuts of meat, gifts, and possessions.¹⁴ And indeed, the use of the word in the *Iliad* shows that in the majority of the contexts in which it appears the appropriate translation of the Greek *timē* would be 'status' and/or 'prestige' rather than the unqualified 'honour'; judging by Aristotle's argument of the superiority of virtue (*aretē*) over honour (*timē*) because the latter 'is thought to depend on those who bestow honour rather than on him who receives it', the same was also true of the classical Greek concept of *timē*.¹⁵ Characteristically, the only Homeric formula in which the word *timē* occurs is *ἐμμορε τιμῆς*, 'he/she has been allotted a *timē*', or 'has been given his/her portion of *timē*'. The formula and its modifications appear in the Homeric corpus, in Hesiod, and in elegy; its dispersion and productivity show that the idea of the allotment of *timē* rather than gaining it in fair competition was deeply rooted in the epic tradition.¹⁶ This seems to indicate that *timē* should be regarded not as a competitive but rather as what can be called a 'distributive' value.

'I have sacked twelve of men's cities from my ships', Achilles says bitterly in Book 9 of the *Iliad*, 'and I claim eleven more by land across the fertile Troad. From all of these I took many fine treasures, and every time I brought them all and gave to Agamemnon son of Atreus: and every time, back there by the fast ships he had never left, he would take them in, share out a few, and keep the most for himself.'¹⁷ These words repeat in a more elaborate form a similar complaint made by Achilles in his quarrel with Agamemnon in Book 1, and what Thersites says in Book 2 is much to the same effect.¹⁸ At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that it was above all Achilles' being deprived of his share of the booty rather than general social discontent that stirred his passionate invective against the existing order of things in *Iliad* 9:¹⁹ as we

¹³ Finley (n. 5), p. 118.

¹⁴ *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 14–15.

¹⁵ *Eth. Nic.* 1.5 1095b23–4.

¹⁶ *ἐμμορε τιμῆς* *Il.* 1.278, 15.189; *Od.* 5.335, 11.338; *H. Aphr.* 37; *Hes. Th.* 414, 426; cf. *μείρο τιμῆς* *Il.* 9.616; *τιμῆς ἐμμοροι* *Od.* 8.480; *ἐμμορέ τοι τιμῆς* *Hes. Erga* 347; *τιμῆς ἐμμορεν* *Theogn.* 234 West. Note that this is the only context in which the perfect *ἐμμορε* appears in Homer.

¹⁷ *Il.* 9.328–33. Tr. M. Hammond, with slight changes.

¹⁸ *Il.* 1.165–8, 2.225–34.

¹⁹ That it would be wrong to take the Achilles of this speech as a social 'outsider' who rejects the ethical values of his society has recently been argued in C. Gill, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy. The Self in Dialogue* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 124–54.

shall see presently, his own distribution of prizes in the athletic contests over which he presided was based on the same principles as Agamemnon's distribution of booty. Note also that on other occasions it is 'the Achaeans' in general rather than Agamemnon alone who are represented as responsible for the distribution of the booty;²⁰ this, however, does not alter the fact that this distribution was not in proportion to the achievements of the recipients.

Nowhere is this disproportionality shown with greater lucidity than in the description of what is supposed to be the most competitive of events, the athletic contests held by Achilles at Patroclus' tomb in Book 23 of the *Iliad*. In analysing the chariot race in which the man who came last receives the first prize because he is 'the best', *aristos*, and he who came third receives the second prize on exactly the same grounds, Adkins, proceeding from the assumption of the superiority of the competitive values in Homer, naturally comes to the conclusion that what is depicted here is 'a hopeless tangle of values': 'Unless the allotment of prizes bears some relation to the result of the race, there is no point in running at all, since the prizes could be distributed before the race starts.'²¹ Characteristically, Adkins does not adduce the episode that concludes the competitions, namely, the throwing of the spear in which Agamemnon receives the first prize without even participating in the contest. This is the Homeric *timē* at its clearest:

Then the son of Peleus brought a long-shadowed spear and put it down in the gathering, and a cauldron untouched by the fire, the worth of an ox, with a pattern of flowers on it: and the spear-throwers rose for the contest. Up stood the son of Atreus, wide-ruling Agamemnon, and Meriones rose too, Idomeneus' brave lieutenant. The swift-footed godlike Achilles said to them: 'Son of Atreus, we know how superior you are to all others, and how much you are the best (*ἄριστος*) in strength for the spear-throw. So you take this prize with you on your way to the hollow ships, and let us give the spear to the hero Meriones, if that might be the wish of your own heart—that is what I suggest.' So he spoke, and Agamemnon, lord of men, did not fail to agree. The hero gave the bronze spear to Meriones, and then handed his beautiful prize to his [Agamemnon's] herald Talthybius.²²

A society in which a contest can be won without even a slight effort on the part of the winner can hardly be considered an embodiment of the competitive values.

Consider also the following. Patroclus, although he is Achilles' closest friend, is not held equal to Achilles; nor is Aegisthus to Agamemnon, who, after all, is his close relative; Menelaus is prevented by Agamemnon from trying his strength against Hector on the *a priori* ground that he is not as good as Achilles or Ajax or Diomedes; nevertheless, he is 'better' than Antilochus and therefore receives the second prize in the chariot race whereas Antilochus, who came before him, ought to be content with the third; we saw that Agamemnon in his turn receives the first prize without even taking part in the contest; finally Ajax, in spite of his outstanding military prowess and his exemplary performances on the battlefield, is permanently allotted only the second place in the pre-established hierarchy of the Achaean warriors whereas Achilles remains the 'best of the Achaeans' without even taking the trouble to prove his worth in the battles of the *Iliad*.²³ As a result, the only genuinely competitive

²⁰ See J. B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1993) on *Il.* 9.333, pp. 105–6. ²¹ Adkins (n. 1), p. 56. ²² *Il.* 23.884–97.

²³ Patroclus *Il.* 16.709; Aegisthus *Od.* 3.250; Menelaus *Il.* 7.103–19; 23.578, 588, 605; Agamemnon *Il.* 23.891–2; Ajax *Il.* 2.768–9. As the range of the application of the formula *ἀρετῇ δ' ἦν* (or: *ἔσαν*) *ἐξοχος αὐτῶν* (or: *ἐξοχ' ἄριστοι*) shows, full equality was reserved only for such homogeneous groups as the sons of the same father or the suitors of Penelope; see *Il.* 14.118; *Od.* 4.629, 21.187, 22.244.

situation in which the Homeric warrior finds himself involved is that of the single combat: here indeed he must be cautious in order not to dishonour himself by fighting against his social inferior.²⁴

It is little wonder, then, that it is in confrontation with the enemy rather than in competition against his equals and peers that the Homeric warrior earns his glory (*kleos*). In a society such as this, glory indeed seems to be the only levelling factor. Yet, as Achilles' case amply demonstrates, important as it is for the preservation of one's name in posterity, glory nevertheless does not act as a substitute for status. Consider the following two verses in Achilles' speech in *Iliad* 9, showing the same connection between *timē*, 'honour', and *moira*, 'portion, share' as in the formula *ἔμμορε τιμῆς*: 'Stay at home or fight your hardest—your share will be the same. Coward and hero are given equal honour.'²⁵ Bryan Hainsworth comments on the second line: 'This verse implies that for Achilles there is an ideal equation between *κλέος/κύδος* and *τιμῆ*. In the real world this equation is a pretence, because distinctions in rank are not established by the achievement of fame, and the possession of status *ipso facto* confers *κύδος*, cf. 1. 279. In a world where status was inherited along with the sceptre of kingship (2. 100–8), it was hard even for an *ἄριστος* *Ἀχαιῶν* to be upwardly mobile.'²⁶

'After all,' Finley wrote of Homeric society, 'the basic values of the society were given, predetermined, and so were a man's place in the society and the privileges and duties that followed from his status.'²⁷ Indeed, it was above all the pressures of status, aptly defined by Griffin as *noblesse oblige*, rather than the spirit of competition that caused Homeric warriors to risk their lives on the battlefield. 'Glaucus', Sarpedon says in *Iliad* 12,

why is it that we two are held in the highest honour in Lycia, with pride of place, the best of the meat, the wine-cup always full, and all look on us like gods, and we have for our own use a great cut of the finest land by the banks of the Xanthus, rich in vineyard and wheat-bearing plough land? That is why we should now be taking our stand at the front of the Lycian lines and facing the sear of battle, so that among the heavy-armoured Lycians people will say: 'These are no worthless men who rule over us in Lycia, these kings we have who eat our fat sheep and drink the choice of our honey-sweet wine. No, they have strength too and courage, since they fight at the front of the Lycian lines.'²⁸

In a similar vein, Odysseus, remaining alone against the enemy, says 'I know that it is

²⁴ See esp. *Il.* 6.119–211 (Glaucus and Diomedes), 20.176–258 (Achilles and Aeneas).

²⁵ *Il.* 9.318–19 ἴση μοῖρα μένοντι, καὶ εἰ μάλα τις πολεμίζου' ἐν δὲ ἰῇ τιμῇ ἡμὲν κακὸς ἦδ' ἐὶ ἐσθλός.

²⁶ Hainsworth (n. 20), p. 104. Characteristically, Aristotle in *Pol.* 2.7 1267a1–2 quotes Achilles' 'Coward and hero are given equal honour' in support of his argument that the distribution of honour must be proportionate to one's contribution to the well-being of the state.

²⁷ Finley (n. 5), p. 115.

²⁸ *Il.* 12.310–21; cf. Griffin (n. 14), p. 14. While I agree with Gill (n. 19), pp. 131–6, that comparison of Sarpedon's speech to Achilles' great speech in *Iliad* 9 does not prove Achilles a 'social outsider', I cannot share his marginalizing of Sarpedon's speech into a private statement which has very little to do with the so-called 'heroic code'. As Gill himself points out, Achilles' deviant behaviour and social criticism as expressed in *Iliad* 9 directly result from the breach in the normative behaviour on the part of Agamemnon, his social equal, who 'has undermined the relationship of generalized reciprocity which should exist between chieftains' (p. 135, cf. also p. 149). However, the reciprocity meant in Sarpedon's speech is the one between the chieftains and their vassals, a sort of *contract social* intended to regulate the division of functions between the nobles and the commoners, and therefore it can hardly be relevant to the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon, both of whom belong to the class of the nobles. Cf. Cairns (n. 4), p. 95: 'while one hero may have more *timē* than another, in dealing with his fellow heroes he is never dealing with one who has a negligible claim to *timē* of his own.'

only unworthy ones (κακοί) who keep clear of fighting'.²⁹ Although it is true that the substantive adjective κακοί does not necessarily imply social inferiors,³⁰ this does not alter the fact that the stimulus behind the Homeric warriors' behaviour is first of all the drive to meet the expectations that flow from their status: that those who enjoy high social status may nevertheless prove 'unworthy ones' (Penelope's suitors immediately come to mind in this connection) only shows that there are some who fail to meet these expectations rather than alters the character of the expectations involved.³¹

As was shown by Long, side by side with risking one's life in war, these expectations also embraced assistance to and protection of those with whom the person was tied by the mutual obligations of military alliance, guest-friendship, or vassal relations.³² These are the cooperative values that complete the distributive value of *timē*. Failure to meet expectations arising from either kind of value would evoke the feeling of shame (*aidōs*), the same feeling that caused Hector on two memorable occasions to repeat the phrase 'I feel shame before the men of Troy and the women of Troy with their trailing dresses': on the first occasion, the words explain why he should return to the battlefield instead of staying in Troy with his family; on the second, they explain why, after the army he commanded had been destroyed, he should meet almost certain death in single combat with Achilles instead of returning to Troy.³³ In both cases Hector behaves in accordance with the obligations imposed on him by his status;³⁴ neither of them involves a competitive situation. It seems, then, that as far as we have no better term for designating a society the central value of which is that of honour,³⁵ Dodds' 'shame-culture' would be a far more appropriate characterization of Homeric society than Adkins's 'competitive values'.

Where does the value of virtue, *aretē*, enter this scheme? If, as is generally agreed, it is the famous Homeric dictum 'always to be the best and excel over others' that more than anything else delineates the idea of *aretē*, then *aretē* surely is a competitive value.³⁶ Indeed, it goes without saying that in order 'to be the best' and 'to excel over others' both participation in a competitive situation and the presence of 'others' whom one is allowed to surpass are indispensable: this is after all what the competitive values are about. Yet, as we saw, what actually goes on in the *Iliad* can hardly support this dictum.

As is the case with many other analogous Greek words, the semantic development of the word *aretē* proceeded from the particular to the general. The entry for ἀρετή in Ebeling's *Lexicon Homericum* offers the following range: (1) *praestantia, principatus*, (2) *fortitudo*, (3) *primae*, (4) *successus, salus, res secundae*, (5) *virtus, morum probitas*. Ebeling's only example of the last is the *Odyssey* line 'Zeus the Thunderer takes away

²⁹ *Il.* 11.408.

³⁰ See Gill (n. 19), pp. 69–74.

³¹ Cf. Cairns (n. 4), p. 101: 'It is certainly not part of the structure of Homeric values that any and every action of an *agathos* is legitimized by his *aretē*.'

³² *JHS* 90 (1970), 123–6. See also Zanker (n. 4), pp. 1–45.

³³ *Il.* 6.442, 22.105 αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρωάδας ἐλκεσιπέπλους.

³⁴ Cf. Cairns (n. 4), p. 81: 'Hector's education will have taught him how society expects him to behave, and so contributes to the formation of his social role; in as much as his *thumos* and his *aidōs* combine in leading him to pursue this role, he has obviously made the values under which he acts his own, made the expectations of society equivalent to his own expectations of himself.'

³⁵ The subject is discussed in Cairns (n. 4), pp. 43–4, 139–40.

³⁶ *Il.* 6.208, 11.784 αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων. Cf. Jaeger (n. 5), p. 7.

the half of a man's *aretē*, when the day of slavery comes upon him'.³⁷ As we shall see later, this is probably too restrictive a classification. However, it does not alter the essential fact that *aretē* in the sense of 'virtue' is extremely rare in Homer. The evidence of the Homeric formulae points in the same direction. Of the two principal formulae for *aretē* one means 'all manner of *aretē*' and is usually followed by the enumeration of various qualities such as swiftness of foot, military prowess, intelligence, etc.,³⁸ and the other is an enumeration of these very qualities preceded by the word *aretē*.³⁹ The *aretē* of a horse consists in its swiftness of foot, that of soil in its fertility, that of a woman in her being a good housewife, that of a slave in his or her loyalty to a master, that of a warrior in his bravery, and so on.

One can see that what unites all the examples adduced is the sense of fitness as regards the specific function that a person, an animal, or even an object are purported to fulfil at a given moment. By the same token, from the rise of the Greek polis in the eighth century B.C. the specific function of the free-born male was his fitness in fulfilling his function as a citizen of the city-state. This is how man in general, for whom the Greek man served as a model, came to be understood, to borrow F. E. Adcock's apt translation of Aristotle's famous definition, as a 'city-state animal', ζῶον πολιτικόν, and his fitness for this function as human virtue *par excellence*.⁴⁰ Not so in Homer. In the majority of the Homeric contexts in which the word *aretē* is given a general sense, it functions as a characteristic which is as innate to a person as his or her physical properties, such as strength or beauty. This seems to indicate that, in conformity with the general Homeric system of values and contrary to the later Greek view, *aretē* as such is envisaged in the Homeric poems as predetermined by birth and wealth rather than as ought to be proved in fair competition; accordingly, the translation 'breeding' would fit the majority of such contexts.⁴¹

Thus, contrary to the system of values established with the rise of the polis, according to which the distribution of honour must follow one's personal achievement as expressed by the word *aretē*, the distribution of honour in Homer followed a person's social status, which was determined by superiority in birth and wealth. It follows from this that placing the competitive values in the centre of Homer's ethics is an anachronism due to projecting the values of the city-state on the Homeric poems. The values central to Homer's ethics are the distributive value of *timē* and such cooperative values as flow from it.

II

At the same time, it would be wrong to say that the poet of the *Iliad* unambiguously sides with the considerations of personal honour and prestige which move his heroes and the very plot of his poem. Hector sacrifices not only his own life on the altar of

³⁷ *Od.* 17.322–3 ἤμισυ γάρ τ' ἀρετῆς ἀποαίνυνται εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς/ἀνέρος, εὖτ' ἂν μιν κατὰ δούλιον ἤμαρ ἔλθουσιν. Tr. S. H. Butcher and A. Lang, slightly changed.

³⁸ παντοίας ἀρετάς *Il.* 15.642; παντοίην ἀρετήν *Od.* 18.204; παντοίης ἀρετῇσι *Od.* 5.725, 815; παντοίης ἀρετῆς *Il.* 22.268; cf. ἀρετήν . . . παντοίην *Od.* 13.45.

³⁹ ἀρετήν εἶδος τε δέμας τε *Od.* 18.251, 19.124; ἀρετῇ βουλῇ τε νόω τε *Od.* 12.211; ἀρετῇ τιμῇ τε βίῃ τε *Il.* 9.498; cf. ἀρετῇ τε βίῃ τε *Il.* 23.578.

⁴⁰ *Pol.* 1.1.9 1253a; F. E. Adcock, *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War* (Berkeley, 1957), p. 2.

⁴¹ As Long, *JHS* 90 (1970), 126–8, has shown, the prevailing function of the corresponding adjective *agathos* is to denote high social status rather than moral excellence. On the Homeric *aretē* as encompassing birth and wealth and therefore never being affected by anyone's disapproval, see Cairns (n. 4), p. 101.

honour but also the safety of his family and of the entire city whose principal defender he was: had he listened to the advice of Andromache and Polydamas and continued to lead the campaign from within the city of Troy, he, as he recognizes in the last moments of his life, would have saved himself and his army and thus would have brought much more good to his family and city. Again, it is because of his personal prestige that Agamemnon insults Achilles and thus eventually brings about the heaviest defeat of his army in the war's history; note, however, that he eventually not only recognizes his mistake but also goes so far as to offer his apologies and to pay a vast compensation to the offended, for the sake of the common cause. Similarly, considerations of prestige rendered Achilles indifferent to the sufferings of his companions and, as is explicitly stated at the very beginning of the *Iliad*, caused the loss of many Achaean lives; only the death of Patroclus made him analyse his past behaviour and realize at last that his cherishing of his wounded honour has brought him too far. It is the case of Achilles that is of especial interest for us here.

Although in Book 1 of the *Iliad* Zeus solemnly promises Thetis that the Achaeans will suffer loss and defeat as long as Achilles has not received proper compensation for the insult he has suffered at the hands of Agamemnon, nothing decisive happens on the battlefield in the books that follow. At the beginning, it is, rather surprisingly, the Trojans who are heavily pressed (Books 5–6), then indeed the Achaeans (Books 8–9), but it is not until *Iliad* 11 that it can be said with certainty that Zeus' promise is being fulfilled. In the course of this book, the most prominent leaders of the Achaeans—Agamemnon, Diomedes, and Odysseus—are wounded one after the other and compelled to leave the battlefield. Hector and the Trojans approach the Achaean ships, and the situation of the Achaeans begins to become desperate. Achilles, who watches the battle from the stern of his ship, notices that Nestor in his chariot carries a wounded man back to the Achaean camp, and he sends Patroclus to Nestor's hut to inquire about the man's identity. Homer, who usually does not conceal the unfolding of the plot from his audience, makes it clear that this is a crucial moment: 'Patroclus heard him inside the hut, and came out looking like Ares god of war: and this was to be the beginning of his doom (κακοῦ δ' ἄρα οἱ πέλεν ἄρχή).'⁴² Nestor's lengthy reminiscences and importuning, to which Patroclus is compelled to listen, culminate in practical advice: if Achilles himself is not prepared to fight, he can at least assist his fellow Achaeans by sending to the battlefield his friend Patroclus clad in his armour.

The very length of Nestor's address to Patroclus indicates the importance of the episode in which it appears: Patroclus' intervention in the course of events, in that it will eventually lead to Achilles' return to the field, is the turning point in the plot of the *Iliad*.⁴³ After delivering a story about the glorious part he played as a young man in a local conflict between his native Pylos and its Epean neighbours, Nestor turns to comparing his own behaviour with that of Achilles:

That is the man I was, if ever I was, among my fellow-men. But Achilles will be the only one to profit from his *aretē* (οἶος τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀπονήσεται). Indeed I think it will be long weeping on his part afterwards, when the army have perished.⁴⁴

The standard translation of the *aretē* of this passage is 'prowess', 'valour', or 'courage'. It is true, of course, that when *aretē* is used in the contexts where risking

⁴² *Il.* 11.603–4.

⁴³ See N. Austin, *GRBS* 7 (1966), 306; M. W. Edwards, in J. M. Bremer *et al.* (edd.), *Homer: Beyond Oral Poetry* (Amsterdam, 1987), p. 48.

⁴⁴ *Il.* 11.762–4.

one's life is concerned, its sense often converges on that of 'courage'. At the same time, Homer does not hesitate to use *tharsos*, *alkē*, and other words for courage proper whenever he sees fit. As K. J. Dover remarked while attempting to establish a relevant distinction between *aretē* and *andreia*, the word for courage in the classical Greek, 'courage to fight to the death when cornered is indeed a virtue, and few Greeks would have predicated *aretē* of a man who lacked it; but the will to take a larger view and risk life in fighting for others, or for a whole of which one feels one's own community to be a part, goes beyond simple *andreia*'.⁴⁵ It is not difficult to see that it is exactly such 'will to take a larger view' rather than simply courageous behaviour that is at issue in Nestor's rebuke of Achilles in *Iliad* 11. The subsequent unfolding of the plot of the *Iliad* points in the same direction.

The direct continuation of the scene between Nestor and Patroclus at the end of Book 11 is the beginning of Book 16, when Patroclus, weeping, returns to Achilles and accuses him of the military disaster of the Achaeans:

But you, Achilles, are impossible to deal with. May I never be taken by an anger like yours, the anger you are feeding! Your pride is ruinous—what will any other man, even yet to be born, profit from you, if you do not save the Argives from shameful destruction?⁴⁶

The phrase 'what will any other man, even yet to be born, profit from you' (*τί σευ ἄλλος ὀνήσεται ὀφίγονός περ*) is formed exactly as Nestor's words 'Achilles will be the only one to profit from his *aretē*', the verb (*ἀπὸ*)*ονίναμαι* with the genitive, meaning 'to have advantage of', 'to enjoy something', being employed in both cases. Although one of the expressions uses the word *aretē* and the other does not, the message they deliver is the same. Patroclus' words, however, have nothing to do with courage: they clearly imply that in persisting in his present line of behaviour Achilles begins to lose his *raison d'être* in the eyes of others, including posterity. The expressions 'to profit from a person's *aretē*' and 'to profit from a person' thus serve as functional synonyms, which seems to indicate that the concept of *aretē* entertained here cuts deep into the core of the person's identity. This is why I think that the rendering of the word *aretē* as 'virtue' is more appropriate at this point than the usual rendering 'prowess'.

'Oh, father Zeus and Athene and Apollo,' Achilles says to Patroclus in the continuation of the episode, 'if only none of all the Trojans would escape death, and none of the Argives, but only you and I could survive destruction, so that we alone could break Troy's holy crown of towers!'⁴⁷ These words, which are the most powerful expression of Achilles' extreme individualism in the entire poem, clearly indicate that Nestor's remark 'Achilles will be the only one to profit from his *aretē*' are consistent with Homer's general characterization of this hero. The question, however, remains open as to what happens to the *aretē* of one who, like Achilles, refuses to exercise it for public purposes or, in Nestor's words, is the only one to profit from his *aretē*. Judging by the subsequent development of events in the *Iliad*, Homer meant to show that in such cases as this the *aretē* ceases to exist.

Further, in *Iliad* 16 Patroclus, who eventually succeeds in persuading Achilles to adopt Nestor's advice, goes to battle bearing Achilles' shield and arms, fights bravely, and falls at the hands of Hector. The tidings of his death do not reach Achilles until the beginning of Book 18. Achilles is stricken by grief. In spite of the entreaties of Thetis, who reveals to him that he is destined to die after killing Hector, Achilles' only

⁴⁵ *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Berkeley, 1974), p. 166.

⁴⁶ *Il.* 16.29–32.

⁴⁷ *Il.* 16.97–100.

wish is to revenge the death of Patroclus even at the cost of his own life. Only now does he begin to realize where his uncompromising pursuit of *timē* has brought him:

Then let me die directly, since I was not to help my friend at his killing—he has died far away from his native land, and did not have me there to protect him from destruction. So now, since I shall not return to my dear native land, since I have not been a saving light to Patroclus or my many other companions who have been brought down by godlike Hector, but sit here by the ships, a useless burden on the earth—I, a man without equal among the bronze-clad Achaeans in war . . .⁴⁸

It can be seen that Nestor's words 'Achilles will be the only one to profit from his *aretē*', Patroclus' words 'nobody will profit from Achilles', and Achilles' own 'I am a useless burden on the earth' (ἐτώσιον ἄχθος ἀρούρης) amount to much the same. Thus, what follows from Achilles' case as presented in *Iliad* 11, 16, and 18 is first of all the conclusion that by keeping his *aretē* to himself Achilles has made it non-existent and thus has annihilated his own worth as 'a man without equal among the bronze-clad Achaeans in war'.

Characteristically, Plato's Socrates found it appropriate to account for his behaviour at his trial by paraphrasing Achilles' speech in *Iliad* 18, that is, the very speech in which the crisis of Achilles' virtue comes to a climax:

He, if you remember, made light of danger in comparison with incurring disgrace when his goddess mother warned him, eager as he was to kill Hector, you will die yourself—'Next after Hector is thy fate prepared.' When he heard this warning, he made light of his death and danger, being much more afraid of living as an unworthy man and of failing to avenge his friends. 'Let me die forthwith,' said he, 'when I have requited the villain, rather than remain here by the beaked ships to be mocked, a burden on the ground.' Do you suppose that he gave a thought to death and danger?⁴⁹

The adjective *kakos* in the phrase 'living as an unworthy man' (τὸ ζῆν κακὸς ὄν) is a regular antonym of *agathos* and thus can be interpreted as 'one deprived of *aretē*'. Just as Achilles' abstention from participating in the war makes his virtue fall into disuse and almost annihilates it, so also Socrates' abstention from the life of philosophical inquiry would annihilate his intellectual virtue, a situation in which life is not worth living.⁵⁰

As far as I can see, this is the attitude expressed by Aristotle in his discussion of virtue in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.8, the very discussion which concludes with the comparison of life to the Olympian Games quoted above:

With those who identify happiness with virtue or some one virtue our account is in harmony; for to virtue belongs virtuous activity. But it makes, perhaps, no small difference whether we place the chief good in possession or in use, in state of mind or in activity. For the state of mind may exist without producing any good result, as in a man who is asleep or in some other way quite inactive, but the activity cannot; for one who has the activity will of necessity be acting, and acting well.⁵¹

Like Homer's Nestor, Aristotle draws a distinction between the possession (κτῆσις) of *aretē* and the actual use (χρησις) of it. It can easily be discerned from this and

⁴⁸ *Il.* 18.98–106. According to Gill (n. 19), p. 124 and n. 95, the widespread interpretation of Achilles' situation in the *Iliad* in terms of 'crime and punishment' would be inappropriate and misleading. However, Gill's interpretation, which is almost exclusively based on *Iliad* 9, fails to acknowledge what Zanker (n. 4), p. 9, aptly defined as 'the change in moral temper between Achilles before and after the conflict with Agamemnon and the death of Patroclus'.

⁴⁹ *Ap.* 28cd; tr. H. Tredennick, with slight changes. Cf. *Symp.* 179e.

⁵⁰ This theme emerges also in *Ap.* 37c–38a; *Crito* 53b–54b.

⁵¹ *Eth. Nic.* 1.8 1098b30–1099a7.

similar passages in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that Aristotle entertains a concept of virtue according to which it is regarded as an activity, or actualization (*ἐνέργεια*), of the virtuous state of mind, rather than, to use his own category, as a mere potentiality by which the state of mind (*εἶς*) itself, as long as it has not been supported by action, would be characterized.⁵² As far as I can see, this is to put into philosophical language the attitude expressed in Nestor's 'Achilles will be the only one to profit from his *aretē*'.

It follows from the aforesaid that, in conformity with the later Greek view, in his treatment of the theme of Achilles' wrath in Books 11, 16, and 18 of the *Iliad* Homer introduces the idea that *aretē* cannot be enjoyed in private.⁵³ In view of this, it seems to be more than a mere coincidence that one of the two occurrences of the fixed line 'always to be the best and excel over others', on which, as we saw, the view of the competitive character of Homer's values is mainly based, is that same speech by Nestor in *Iliad* 11 which treats the issue of Achilles' *aretē*: 'The old man Peleus instructed his son Achilles always to be the best and excel over others.'⁵⁴ The context of the passage leaves no doubt that Nestor's implication is that Achilles did not follow his father's advice. That is to say, by not exercising the competitive value of *aretē* Achilles failed to fulfil it. The only value that he did fulfil up to the moment of hearing of Patroclus' death is the distributive value of *timē*.

Indeed, judging by the magnificent compensation proposed to Achilles by Agamemnon, abstaining from fighting not only did not diminish Achilles' *timē* but in fact even enhanced it. However, as we have seen, as far as his *aretē* was concerned the situation was completely different. Again, it is hard to imagine that both *timē* and *aretē* thus understood could be held as the supreme values at one and the same time: he who receives the tribute of honour without doing anything to earn it can hardly be a possessor of *aretē*, which can only be achieved by proving one's worth in action.⁵⁵ If we take into consideration that the action in accordance with *aretē* is invariably envisaged as based on the mutual emulation of equals, the inference must be that the pursuit of *aretē* emerging in *Iliad* 11, 16, and 18 and the pursuit of *timē* as found in the rest of the poem are mutually irreconcilable. That both nevertheless coexist in the *Iliad* seems to indicate that the inconsistency can only be properly accounted for by turning to the historical background of the Homeric poems.

Within recent decades a radical shift has taken place in evaluation of Homer's historical background: today, 100 years after Schliemann's discovery of Troy, the issue of 'Homer and Mycenae' is no longer considered substantial by the majority of scholars. More than one factor has been responsible for this development. The picture of Mycenaean society that emerged after the decipherment of Linear B has led to an increasing understanding that the Homeric poems cannot be interpreted as a direct reflection of that society; the study of the Homeric formulae has shown that, contrary

⁵² Cf. M. C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness. Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 324.

⁵³ Although keeping the conventional translation of the *aretē* in Nestor's speech as 'prowess', Hainsworth in his commentary on *Il.* 11.763 gives a similar interpretation of the general idea that underlies Nestor's message to Achilles: 'Prowess in Nestor's world is not a private virtue; it must be displayed publicly and for public purposes.' See Hainsworth (n. 20), p. 306.

⁵⁴ *Il.* 11.784; see above, n. 36.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1.5 1095b26–30: 'Men seem to pursue honour in order that they may be assured of their merit (*ἀγαθὸς εἶναι*); at least it is by men of practical wisdom (*ὅτι πάντων φρονίμων*) that they seek to be honoured, and among those who know them, and on the ground of their virtue (*ἐπ' ἀρετῇ*); clearly, then, according to them, at any rate, virtue is better.'

to what was believed in the 1950s, the traditional language is characterized by a high degree of flexibility and adaptation, so that it is absolutely out of the question that everything we find in Homer could have arrived untouched from the Bronze Age; finally, it has been shown that the picture of the society arising from the Homeric poems belongs to a later period than the Bronze Age. This last conclusion is almost entirely due to the studies of M. I. Finley, whose articles of the 1950s and especially the book *The World of Odysseus* (1954) opened a new era in the historical study of Homer. As a result, a new consensus has arisen, which locates the historical background suitable to Homer in the first rather than in the second millennium B.C.

The two historical periods studied today in connection with Homer are the so-called 'Dark Ages' (1100–800 B.C.) and the eighth century B.C. Yet, the same argument of the changeability of oral tradition that made it impossible to see in the Homeric poems a direct representative of Mycenaean epic poetry also holds good as regards the hypothesis that the poet who presumably lived in the eighth century B.C. described a society which preceded him by 200 years, and this is what follows from Finley's placing of the formative stage of the Greek epic tradition in the Dark Ages. As Ian Morris put it, 'Trying to find tenth- and ninth-century societies in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is just as misguided as looking for the Mycenaeans'.⁵⁶ That is to say, if the Homeric epics do allow for reconstruction of a consistent social picture, this picture would rather belong to the time of the poet himself. This is why contemporary scholarly opinion tends to see the eighth century B.C. as providing the suitable historical background for the Homeric poems. Thus, according to F. Gschnitzer, the tendency stimulated by Finley's work to regard Homer's as a primitive tribal society bearing no resemblance whatever to any form of society known to us from Greek history has gradually become outdated, and the time has arrived to return to the classical syntheses of G. Busolt and G. Glotz, who placed Homeric society at the beginning of the archaic period of the history of Greece, while in R. Seaford's view the presence of the city-state values in the Homeric poems 'forms a picture of an early stage of state-formation'.⁵⁷

This is not to say that everything we find in Homer must necessarily be regarded as contributing to the consistent picture of a historical Greek society which can supposedly be reconstructed on the basis of the Homeric poems. Thus, according to A. M. Snodgrass' thesis, contradictions in Homer's depiction of social institutions show that, rather than reflecting a concrete historical society, the Homeric poems offer an amalgam which was created as a result of their centuries-long circulation in oral tradition.⁵⁸ Ian Morris tried to prove Snodgrass wrong by explaining away the inconsistencies in Homer's representation of the institution of marriage and of the devolution of property which Snodgrass studied.⁵⁹ The problem, however, is that, even if Morris is right on this specific point, it would hardly be possible to dispose of numerous other inconsistencies which abound in the Homeric poems.

⁵⁶ CA 5 (1986), 127. Cf. K. A. Raafaub, in J. Latacz (ed.), *Zweihundert Jahre Homer-Forschung* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1991), p. 212: 'Finleys Argumente sind aus historischen Gründen nicht zwingend, und seine Datierung ist schlecht mit den Charakteristika von *oral tradition* im allgemeinen und *oral poetry* im speziellen zu vereinbaren.'

⁵⁷ F. Gschnitzer, in Latacz (n. 56), pp. 183–4; R. Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual. Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford, 1994), p. 10.

⁵⁸ A. M. Snodgrass, 'An historical Homeric society?', *JHS* 94 (1974), 114–25.

⁵⁹ CA 5 (1986), 105–15.

If, as was shown long ago, the language of Homer is a *Kunstsprache*, and his formulae for weapons exhibit an impossible combination of military technologies used at different historical periods,⁶⁰ why should the situation with institutions and values be any different? In fact, this is what has recently been argued by Robin Osborne, according to whom 'if the material world and the institutions described in *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are an unhistorical composite, the values which the poems explore have to be relevant to, and illuminative of, the values of the audience'.⁶¹ It would be difficult, however, to envisage a concrete audience to whom the mutually exclusive claims of *timē* and *aretē* could have been of equal relevance. Rather, these mutually exclusive claims reflect what Richard Seaford defined as Homer's 'ideological contradiction', namely that 'aristocratic individualism is on the one hand vital to the community and on the other hand a danger to be controlled by the community'.⁶² Seaford in his turn tends to see this contradiction as reflecting a transitional stage within a single society and thus allows for a 'degree of historicity' in the Homeric poems as we have them. Yet, in acknowledging that the Homeric poems in their entirety arose at the unique historical moment of the birth of the city-state, Seaford's theory, attractive as it certainly is, in fact amounts to denying to these poems their long history in the epic tradition. In view of this, it seems wiser to admit that, more than they reflect the state of a concrete historical society, contradictions in Homer's account of values and institutions reflect the state of the Homeric text itself.

As in any traditional poetry, the old and the new exist in Homer side by side, for the simple reason that each successive generation of poets retold anew in the vein of their own age what had been bequeathed to them by their tradition. Since the traditional subjects dealing with the Heroic Age were not only universally known but also accepted as historical truth, the poets were not allowed to mould them in a free and independent way: the Trojan war will end with the Trojan rather than the Achaean defeat, Hector will be killed by Achilles and not vice versa, Odysseus will eventually return home, and so on.⁶³ This is why dissonances between the plot of the poems and what is expressed in the speeches are so important: while the plot is fixed in tradition, the content of the speeches is not; accordingly, the speeches are fit to express the poets' reaction to what they received from their tradition.⁶⁴ This can naturally result in one and the same episode being simultaneously delivered in two perspectives, the traditional and the poet's own.⁶⁵ To take one additional

⁶⁰ D. Gray, 'Homeric epithets for things', *CQ* 41 (1947), 109–21 = G. S. Kirk (ed.), *The Language and Background of Homer* (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 55–67.

⁶¹ R. Osborne, *Greece in the Making, 1200–479 B.C.* (London and New York, 1996), p. 153.

⁶² Seaford (n. 57), pp. 5–6.

⁶³ On the traditional poets' individual creativity within the fixed framework of their plots see M. Finkelberg, 'A creative oral poet and the Muse', *AJP* 111 (1990), 293–303, and *The Birth of Literary Fiction in Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 151–60.

⁶⁴ Cf. W. Nicolai, 'Rezeptionssteuerung in der Ilias', *Philologus* 127 (1983), 1–12. Characteristically, it is first of all in direct speech that such anomalies of language as nonformulaic and metrically faulty expressions, linguistic innovations, etc. are concentrated in Homer. See further G. P. Shipp, *Studies in the Language of Homer*² (Cambridge, 1973); J. Griffin, 'Homer's words and speakers', *JHS* 106 (1986), 36–57, and *Homer, Iliad Book Nine* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 32–5; M. Finkelberg, 'Formulaic and nonformulaic elements in Homer', *CP* 84 (1989), 179–97, and 'Homer, a poet of an individual style', *SCI* 16 (1997), 1–8.

⁶⁵ Homer's famous comment on the inequality of exchange in the Glaucus–Diomedes episode in *Iliad* 6 provides a good example. Seaford (n. 57), p. 15, sees in it 'the implicit criticism of the increasingly dangerous institution of gift-exchange from the new perspective of commodity-exchange, in which inequality is more surprising'.

example, in *Iliad* 14 the disguised Poseidon says in his exhortation to the heavily pressed Greeks:

Argives, are we once more to yield the victory to Hector, son of Priam, so he can take our ships and win glory for himself? That is what he thinks and prays, because Achilles is staying back by the hollow ships in his heart's anger. But we will not feel his loss too strongly, if the rest of us stir ourselves to support each other (*ἀμυνέμεν ἀλλήλοισιν*).⁶⁶

The very concept of the *Iliad* is rooted in the premise that without Achilles' individual contribution the Achaean victory is impossible, and the weight the poem places on the individual *aristeiai* of the other Achaean leaders shows that this is indeed the prevailing attitude. Poseidon's words, in that they give equal weight to the value of the ordinary soldiers' mutual effort, contradict this attitude, and this is why they leave no trace on the successive development of the poem's action. But the same idea of the importance of mutual effort occasionally emerges again, as, for example, in a description of the Greek army on the march at the beginning of Book 3: 'But the Achaeans came on in silence, breathing boldness, their hearts intent on supporting each other (*ἀλεξέμεν ἀλλήλοισιν*).'⁶⁷ This description is closer to the spirit of the hoplite phalanx as celebrated in the poems of Tyrtaeus (characteristically, this is how it was taken by the scholiast) than to the standard behaviour of the Homeric warrior.⁶⁸

Consider again Achilles' words of self-reproach in *Iliad* 18: 'I have not been a saving light to Patroclus or my many other companions who have been brought down by godlike Hector, but sit here by the ships, a useless burden on the earth': whereas Achilles' obligations to Patroclus, Achilles' 'own' man, are among those cooperative values which, as we saw above, are seen in terms of *timē*,⁶⁹ the very design of the *Iliad* shows that no such terms could originally be applied to Achilles' attitude to the rest of the Greeks. The clash between the old aristocratic value of *timē* and the more egalitarian values of the city-state produced by this and similar Homeric usages, showing that the Homeric poems as we have them are relatively late heirs to a centuries-long tradition, justifies in my opinion Snodgrass's caution against approaching these poems as consistent historical evidence. Indeed, considering the social changes Greece underwent in the first half of the first millennium B.C., it is not surprising that more often than not a breach would be produced between the traditional values and those which both the poet and his audience held valid. The situation could well stimulate the poets to an overall reinterpretation of their traditional subjects along the lines of their own and their audiences' values.⁷⁰ As far as I can see, Homer's criticism of Achilles' behaviour by applying to it the criteria of the city-state value of *aretē* in the very books of the *Iliad* that treat its main theme of Achilles' wrath, and the incongruity thus produced between these criteria and the

⁶⁶ *Il.* 14.364–9.

⁶⁷ *Il.* 3.8–9.

⁶⁸ On the relevance of hoplite tactics to Homer see J. Latacz, *Kampfparanäse, Kampfdarstellung und Kampfwirklichkeit in der Ilias, bei Kallinos und Tyrtaios* (Munich, 1977); H. van Wees, 'The Homeric way of war', *Greece and Rome* 41 (1994), 1–18, 131–55, and 'Homeric warfare', in I. Morris and B. Powell (edd.), *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden, 1997), pp. 668–93.

⁶⁹ On Achilles' 'institutional obligations' to Patroclus and the feeling of shame and guilt issuing from his failure in fulfilling these obligations see especially Zanker (n. 4), pp. 16–17, 100.

⁷⁰ Cf. Nicolai's distinction between the 'affirmative' and the 'kritische Wirkungsabsicht' in the *Iliad* in *Philologus* 127 (1983), 9.

demands of *timē* which prevail in the rest of the poem, expresses an attempt at such overall reinterpretation of the traditional subject of the *Iliad*.⁷¹ Whether this reinterpretation should be accounted for as the work of a single poet or as resulting from the multiple authorship of the Homeric poems is beyond the scope of the present paper.

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⁷¹ A somewhat different line of interpretation of the same theme seems to be pursued in Books 9 and 24, where Achilles' behaviour is criticized, by Ajax and Apollo respectively, as not answering to the accepted social standards of mutual reconciliation; see *Il.* 9.628–38, 24.46–9.