IV.—*The* Ἁμαρτία *of Achilles*

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Most scholars hold that Achilles was to some extent blameworthy in his quarrel with Agamemnon, that he was at fault in refusing the atonement offered by the latter, and that in rejecting the pleas of Odysseus and Phoenix he was utterly in the wrong. The writer presents evidence in support of the opposite view, and concludes that the "tragic" error of the hero of the *Iliad* was only his refusal, after the plea of Ajax, to reenter the fighting *at once*.

The fate of Achilles, who, as presented in the *Iliad*, became the ideal hero of Greek legend, was, by universal admission, "tragic," that is, it came about δι' ἁμαρτίαν τινά (Arist. *Poet.* 1453a, 10). The "tragic guilt" of Achilles has been variously defined in modern times, but the generally prevailing view may be stated thus: Achilles' ideal of knighthood was higher than that of most or all of the other Homeric heroes, but his imperious and passionate nature led him to unknightly excesses. These were (1) his conduct in the Quarrel, which was to some extent blameworthy, (2) his rejection of the "ample atonement" of Agamemnon, (3) his refusal of the plea of the leaders of the Greeks, and (4) his treatment of Hector's body and the slaughter of the twelve Trojan youths. With regard to the last point the present writer has presented evidence from the Homeric poems (*T.A.P.A.* LXIV, 41–65) to show that this view is the result of judging "an invented world by a modern experience"; that to say that the poet himself condemns the conduct of Achilles begs the question, since Homer applies the same words to acts which are manifestly justifiable; that Achilles is exonerated by the code of the Heroic Age in Greece, and that only his continued outraging of Hector's body after the burial of Patroclus can be regarded as unknightly. In reaching this conclusion it was necessary to touch upon the other three points. The present paper will discuss these more fully.

I

The conduct of Achilles in the Quarrel, and his rejection of the gifts, must be judged largely by our estimate of the actions and character of Agamemnon. Hence we must examine first Homer's portrait of the commander-in-chief.

In this portrait evil traits are universally recognized, yet scholars, almost without exception, find redeeming features in Agamemnon both as general and as soldier. Many years ago Colonel Mure (*Hist. of Grecian Lit.*[2] [London, 1854] I, 277) remarked: "the poet has managed to put both chiefs in the wrong, yet without any real sacrifice of their heroic dignity." The same feeling has been expressed recently by Bowra (*Tradition and Design in the Iliad* [Oxford, Clarendon, 1930], 19): "So the poem begins with two good men in the wrong, though Achilles is less in the wrong." One must confess a certain diffidence in expressing an opinion ἐπίφθονον πρὸς τῶν πλεόνων ἀνθρώπων—καὶ ταῦτα τῶν μεγίστων τε καὶ καλλίστων —nevertheless one cannot refrain from setting forth what seems to be the truth. A careful examination of the evidence in the *Iliad* appears to indicate unmistakably that Homer despises Agamemnon as a knight and a general, and that with a single exception—his love for Menelaus—he finds no good trait in his character as a man. By Agamemnon's own words and acts, by the words of other characters, and by innuendo and occasional sarcasm or irony, the poet represents the "king of men" as the very antipodes of his hero in all that constitutes the ideal knight of the Greek Heroic Age. Let us follow the poet's presentation of this "good" man in its briefest outline, with an occasional contrasting picture of other heroes.

The scene in which Agamemnon makes his first appearance (A 24–32) is an excellent προάγων for the Quarrel, and shows the poet's conception both of the latter episode and of the unkingly and unknightly character of the commander-in-chief. The "good" man reveals the following qualities: (1) lack of αἰδώς, both for age,[1] and for the sacred fillets of Apollo; (2) utter

[1] Heinrich Spiess, *Menschenart und Heldentum in Homers Ilias*, (Paderborn, Schöningh, 1913), 153.

repudiation of the unanimous will of the assembly (22–23); (3) lack of royal dignity, and needless discourtesy to an humble suppliant who has been courteous and gentle (26–28, 32, 18 f.), (4) disregard of the interests of the army and the expedition in ignoring the harm that a grossly insulted Olympian might do (28), and (5) a point recognized by Aeschylus (Ag. 1439 f.): in saying that Chryseis will share his couch *in Argos* he gives Clytemnestra some justification for her own infidelity. This is made still clearer in the Quarrel (A 112–115): "I much prefer to have her *in my home* (οἴκοι); I prize her above my wedded wife, Clytemnestra; she is her superior in charm of both body and mind." Imagine a great king and the commander of a great army in a public assembly thus grossly insulting the proudest queen in Greece! Concubinage at home is not mentioned of any other great hero in Homer: Amyntor (I 448–453) is neither great nor admirable, as Laertes is, whose respect for his wife kept him from treating Eurycleia as a concubine (α 430–433). Abroad it was a different matter. With the words of Agamemnon contrast the reply of Odysseus to Calypso, who offers him not only herself, but immortality (ε 215–220): "Goddess, be not angry! I know well that you are more beautiful"—he does not add, "and more wise"—"than prudent Penelope. But even so, I yearn for my home." Here are courtesy, tact, wisdom, and, above all, constancy, qualities rarely displayed by Agamemnon.

His next failure as commander-in-chief is in letting the plague rage for nine days, until someone else takes measures to stop it. This waiting for others to tell him what to do is seen throughout the *Iliad*. It is Nestor who advises the marshaling of the troops in B, and Menelaus, the summoning of Priam in Γ. When Hector challenges in H, Agamemnon has not a word to say; he volunteers only after Nestor has shamed the leaders into accepting the challenge. It is Nestor who bids the volunteers cast lots (H 171–174), and who suggests the burial of the dead and the building of the wall (H 327–343). Agamemnon waits for Diomede to suggest the

reply to Idaeus (H 398–402), and when the assembly approves, he says to the Trojan herald, "You hear what they say; this is also my pleasure" (H 403–407, in striking contrast to his reply, under similar circumstances, to Chryses, when the question concerned his personal interests). In I, when Agamemnon has utterly lost his nerve and is ready to abandon the expedition, it is again Nestor who suggests the attempt to conciliate Achilles, and who selects and instructs the envoys. In K it is noticeable that as soon as Nestor is awakened and joins Agamemnon, the latter fades from the picture, like any insignificant individual when a more forceful personality is present (K 136–193). It is again Nestor who plans the reconnoitre. Surely in all these instances Nestor has somewhat overstepped the office of "military adviser," assigned him by Shewan.[2]

Agamemnon's next failure to plan for his army in a crisis is at Ξ 41–81, of which more later. In T, where Achilles calls the assembly, naturally this time, a "good king" would have been consulted. And Agamemnon comes to the assembly reluctantly, *δεύτατος ἦλθεν* (T 51). Finally at the games (Ψ 482–498), after Idomeneus has offered to wager Ajax Oileus that he is right and to leave the decision to Agamemnon, it is not the proposed judge—who is also commander-in-chief—who stops the quarrel, but Achilles.

On the two occasions when Agamemnon himself calls the assembly, he reveals his futility: (1) B 50 f. The *διάπειρα* has been explained in various ways, none of them acceptable to

[2] Alexander Shewan, *The Lay of Dolon* (London, Macmillan, 1911), 163. Shewan (186) puts forward too cautiously his illuminating suggestion to explain the offer of the black ewe from each leader as the reward of the scout, K 213–216, a passage which Leaf gives up, and which many scholars regard as an interpolation. A comparison of *δόσις ἐσθλή* (213) with *πυκινὴν βουλήν* (392) hints unmistakably, it would seem, at the poet's sarcasm. Leaf is undoubtedly on the right track when he points out (*Iliad* 1^2, 424) the striking contrasts in the episode: Nestor's view of Menelaus and what the latter is actually doing; the despondency at the beginning and the exultation at the end, and Hector's promise of the horses of Achilles and the resulting loss of the horses of Rhesus. The *δόσις ἐσθλή* of a ba-ba-black sheep is in "striking contrast" with the reward offered by Hector, the immortal steeds of Achilles!

all. Perhaps the writer may be pardoned for suggesting another possible interpretation. Before Agamemnon lays the διάπειρα before the council the poet narrates: "After he had convened the council he laid before it a πυκινὴν βουλήν" (B 55). The poet uses this phrase elsewhere only of Hector's plan to send out a spy (K 302). Are not both uses ironical?[3] Nestor's silence (B 83) is as damning[4] as it is with reference to Agamemnon's offer to Achilles (I 164, see below, p. 59). (2) I 10–15. The second, and last, assembly called by Agamemnon is on the evening of the first defeat of the Greeks, when the Trojans camp on the field and Hector is confident that on the morrow he will drive the hated enemy from his land. Agamemnon rises to his feet weeping like a Niobe, and proposes again, this time in earnest, to give up the expedition and "flee with the ships" while there is yet time. In Ξ, when the wall is down, and the Trojans are still nearer the camp, Agamemnon once more makes the same proposal to Nestor (74–81).[5] The only plan which the generalissimo offers in the whole *Iliad* is shameful abandonment of the enterprise, thrice proposed. The Q.E.D. of the Bellman was "The proof is complete if only I've stated it thrice." Homer uses this demonstration repeatedly. Can there be any doubt of Homer's opinion of Agamemnon as a general?

We notice here the first sharp contrast between Agamemnon and Achilles, whose conduct is marked by instant decision, strong and tenacious purpose, and readiness to meet every occasion. It is Achilles who calls the assemblies in A and T. True, he does so at the command of a goddess in both instances, but a divinity selects suitable agents. His will prevails with his mother in A, and in Σ, too, in spite of her warning. He decides instantly to obey Athena in A and Zeus in Ω. He

[3] H. Spiess, *op. cit.* in note 1, 147, points out another instance of the poet's irony with reference to Agamemnon.

[4] Miss Stawell, *Homer and the Iliad* (London, Dent, 1909), 17, uses the silence of Nestor in arguing for the rejection of the Διάπειρα.

[5] This proposal is shown by Odysseus to be not only shameful, but also impossible to carry out, and likely to result in the destruction of the army (Ξ 84 f., 99–102).

wisely weighs the command of Iris in Σ, and obeys only when he finds that he can do so without disobedience to Thetis. He confidently tells Priam in Ω that he will keep the Greeks from fighting during the funeral of Hector. Finally, in I he makes up his mind instantly and definitely. He changes it, to be sure, after the speeches of Phoenix and Ajax, and after that of Patroclus in Π, but only the weak-minded man will refuse to do so when the circumstances change, or new evidence is presented.

A second contrast between Achilles and Agamemnon is in straightforwardness of utterance. Achilles never fails to live up to his principle,

> ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κεῖνος ὁμῶς Ἀίδαο πύλῃσιν
> ὅς χ' ἕτερον μὲν κεύθῃ ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἴπῃ.

Agamemnon is both crooked in his thinking and regardless of truth in his words. He cannot put the terms of the truce ("If Menelaus shall prove victorious," Γ 71, 92, 138, 255) correctly; he says, Γ 284, "If Menelaus shall *slay* Alexander," and thereby, as schol. BT reminds us, gives the Trojans some justification for the violation of the truce! He lies to the assembly, B 114 f., "Zeus bids me return in ignominy to Argos." He tells Menelaus that Achilles feared to face Hector in battle (H 113 f.). Achilles says the contrary (I 352–355). In view of the poet's narrative in Υ and X, and the words of Hera (E 780–790) we do not hesitate in deciding which tells the truth. Sthenelus (Δ 404–409) calls Agamemnon a liar, and proves it. Again the Bellman's Q.E.D.

Akin to this contrast with regard to the truth is the difference between the two heroes in the admission of a serious fault. Achilles sincerely and honestly recognizes that he might have prevented the death of Patroclus and of many other comrades (Σ 98–103). But Agamemnon is prone to an alibi, which he uses three times (still another Bellman's Q.E.D.): Τ 86 f., ἐγὼ δ' οὐκ αἴτιός εἰμι/ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς κτλ.; Δ 381, ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς ἔτρεψε παραίσια σήματα φαίνων; Λ 278 f., οὐκ ἐμὲ μητίετα Ζεὺς/εἴασε Τρώεσσι πανημέριον πολεμίζειν.

Again, notice the contrast in courtesy and tact. Agamemnon forgets his manners in addressing his heralds (A 322);[6] Achilles shows them extreme consideration (A 334–336). In the Epipolesis Agamemnon grossly and needlessly insults Odysseus (Δ 339, *καὶ σύ, κακοῖσι δόλοισι κεκασμένε*—the insult is in the adjective). It is generally cited as a mark of his good breeding that he apologizes to Odysseus. But what are we to think of a commander who uses such language in addressing one of his best champions? Consider also his words to the brave Teucer (Θ 284), in which he refers, quite unnecessarily, to the illegitimacy of his birth.[7] In Ψ Nestor accepts with courteous words the prize given him by Achilles (647–650), but the poet does not put into Agamemnon's lips any acknowledgment of a similar prize or of Achilles' tactful words of reconciliation.[8]

We think the cumulative evidence thus far presented shows clearly that Homer does not regard Agamemnon as a "good" king or general or man. We hear the objection, "But Homer calls Agamemnon 'both a good king and a mighty spearman'" (Γ 179). But does he? He puts these words into the lips of Helen, Agamemnon's sister-in-law, who, moreover, is speaking to Priam, king of the enemy. Of course the words are properly uttered by her at this moment. Similarly, Homer must describe Agamemnon as kingly in mien when he marshals

[6] S. E. Bassett, *A.J.P.* LV (1934), 145 f. Agamemnon can of course be courteous at times, but it is when a man is off his guard that his true character is revealed.

[7] Athetized by the Alexandrians, partly as *ἄκαιρον*. It is to be noticed that the scholiasts elsewhere find Agamemnon's words *ἀπρεπεῖς* (A 29–31, Δ 345 f.) or *ἀστρατήγους* (Ξ 75–84).

[8] Achilles' words are entirely appropriate and sound well, but their concealed irony is unmistakable: Ψ 890 f.,

ἴδμεν ὅσσον προβέβηκας ἁπάντων
ἠδ' ὅσσον δυνάμει τε καὶ ἤμασιν ἔπλευ ἄριστος.

With the first statement compare the words of Achilles to Patroclus (Π 53 f.),

ὁππότε δὴ τὸν ὁμοῖον ἀνὴρ ἐθέλῃσιν ἀμέρσαι
καὶ γέρας ἂψ ἀφελέσθαι, ὃ τε κράτεϊ προβεβήκῃ,

and for Agamemnon's proved excellence(?) in throwing the spear, see below, p. 56.

the host on the first day of battle, which is to result in complete victory for the Greeks (B 477–483).[9] But as judge of kingly qualities we prefer Odysseus to Helen. Odysseus says (Ξ 84–94): "Wretch, you should have been commander of some miserable rabble, not of us. . . . Be still! Let no other Achaean hear such words, which would never pass the lips of a man who knew what he ought to say, a scepter-bearer who commanded as many men as you command." And the words to which Odysseus refers, it must be remembered, are a repetition of the only strategic plan that Agamemnon originates in the entire *Iliad.*

But is not Helen right at least in describing Agamemnon as "a mighty spearman"? Even a scholar like Spiess (*op. cit.* 142), who finds difficulty in recognizing in Agamemnon the good king, admits that his *aristeia* in Λ prove Helen to be right in this respect. Other eminent scholars agree. The *aristeia* in Λ is "im ganzen und grossen alte Poesie. Sowohl der Gedanke . . . die persönliche Tapferkeit des obersten Führers zu verherrlichen, als auch die Ausführung" is worthy of the poet of the *Iliad* (Bergk, *Gr. Literaturgesch.* [Berlin, Weidmann, 1872] I, 599). "Hier ist er"(Agamemnon) "wirklich König" (Wilamowitz, *Die Ilias und Homer* [Berlin, Weidmann, 1916], 195). "We have here a different Agamemnon from the Agamemnon of Α, Ξ, and Τ" (p. 188). A close examination of the narrative, Λ 15–180, 214–283, will convince any reader, we think, that the poet's attitude towards the king is the same as elsewhere in the *Iliad.* He gives him a magnificent appearance, the acclaim of Hera and Athena, and temporary success, but at the same time he has contrived to belittle his claim to the titles alike of "mighty spearman" and Heroic knight.

The first *aristeia* (91–147) consist of victory over three pairs of Trojans: the "herrliche Tapferkeit" of the king suffers a diminution with each successive pair. The first two

[9] It must be remembered, however, that Paris, too, was in external appearance an ἀριστεὺς πρόμος (Γ 44).

Trojans attack him, are slain, and are left on the ground *after he has rent off their tunics.* This act is quite in keeping with Agamemnon's expressed ideal as a spearman (B 416), but is not related of any other knight in the *Iliad.*[10] The second pair, sons of Priam, had been captured by Achilles as they were tending their flocks on the foothills of Mt. Ida, and had been released for ransom. Neither the fact that they offered no resistance to Agamemnon, nor the simile, in which they are compared to fawns, nor the inability of their comrades to come to their assistance contributes greatly to the *kudos* of Agamemnon (101–121).[11] The third pair, Pisander and Hippolochus, sons of Antimachus, are suppliants, defenceless because their steeds had become unmanageable. Agamemnon refuses their plea for life, slays them, and cuts off the head and both the hands of Hippolochus.[12] This treatment of the dead, although permitted by the code of the times, is not very pleasant, and is actually carried out in the *Iliad* by only one other warrior, the lesser Ajax, whom the poet plainly does not admire. Agamemnon repeats this atrocity upon the body of Coön, who had wounded him (261). The code hardly justified this. Neither Coön nor Iphidamas, his brother,

[10] Gilbert Murray (*The Rise of the Greek Epic* [3] [Oxford, Clarendon, 1924], 127) holds that in the "unexpurgated" version Idomeneus treated Alcathous in the same way (N 439), and that later, to conceal the outrage, "a line" (440) was added which makes the tunic to be of bronze, that is, a part of the armor. There are several objections to this view: (1) ῥηγνύναι means "make a rent in," not "rend off," and even in this sense is applied to garments first by Aeschylus; (2) not one, but five lines must have been added (440–444), for αὐον ἄυσεν (441) can refer only to the bronze breastplate, and the fall of the body still transfixed with the spear is impossible *after* the rending off of the cloth tunic; (3) some lines must have been removed, or else the body of Alcathous—still standing (in the "unexpurgated" version) while Idomeneus rends his tunic about him"—never fell to the ground. Furthermore, it is difficult to see any reason for regarding 440 as a later addition—except the hypothesis which its addition is cited to support—in a poem which often refers to warriors as χαλκοχίτωνες.

[11] Hermann Grimm (*Homers Ilias* [2] [Stuttgart u. Berlin, Cotta, 1907], 255 f.) comments on the extreme youth of these and the following opponents of Agamemnon, which might have justified him in taking them captive.

[12] The writer was guilty of oscitancy in saying that it was Pisander who was treated in this way (*T.A.P.A.* LXIV (1933), 53).

whose death he was trying to avenge when he wounded Agamemnon, had injured a kinsman or a friend of the latter. More than this, they were both sons of Antenor, a member of the anti-Paris party (H 348–360), to whom Agamemnon was under obligation for hospitality shown to Menelaus (Γ 207). The slaying of the suppliant, too, shocks the modern reader: Achilles is held to be without justification in slaying the suppliant Lycaon,[13] although Odysseus is not criticized for refusing the plea of Leiodes (χ 321–325). But, aside from these two heroes, Agamemnon is the only character in Homer who kills the suppliant, and he slays three,[14] with far less cause than either Achilles or Odysseus.

The second part of Agamemnon's *aristeia* (216–283) includes the single combat. In the other *aristeia* a worthy foe adds glory to the fame of the Greek hero: Achilles slays Hector; Patroclus, Sarpedon; Diomede slays Pandarus and wounds Aeneas, Aphrodite, and Ares; Idomeneus has to the credit of his spear Asius, a division commander, and Alcathous, "the best man in wide Troy"; even Menelaus slays Euphorbus, the young champion who made his début on the field by dismounting twenty warriors. But Agamemnon's opponent, Iphidamas, is a nonentity, a younger son of Antenor, and not even one of the three already mentioned (Λ 59 f.) as prominent warriors.

In this combat there is a singular occurrence. Scholiast A remarks, and modern commentators repeat the remark without noticing its implication,[15] that this is the only monomachy in the *Iliad* in which the warrior who emerges victor is the first to cast his spear.[16] In other words, Agamemnon, the "mighty spearman," makes the first clean miss[17] recorded of a Greek hero in the *Iliad*, and the poet takes pains to make this

[13] *E.g.* by Bowra, *op. cit.* 20.

[14] The third is Adrastus (Z 63 f.).

[15] *E.g.* Leaf and van Leeuwen.

[16] The scholiast is wrong: in X Achilles casts first (273); cf. also N 605.

[17] By "clean miss" is meant (1) that the opponent did not dodge, (2) that the spear which missed its intended victim did not find a mark in the body of another enemy.

clear, 233, παραὶ δέ οἱ ἔτραπετ' ἔγχος. It was at close range, too: 234 f., 'Ιφιδάμας δὲ . . . νύξ'. This passage seems unmistakable evidence of the poet's sarcasm in making Achilles say (Ψ 890 f.), "We know . . . how well you have proved yourself to be the champion spear-thrower," ὅσσον . . . ἤμασιν ἔπλεν ἄριστος.[18]

Agamemnon's retirement from the field (Λ 248–283) adds no lustre to his *aristeia,* if one reads between the lines. While he is carrying away the armor of Iphidamas, the latter's brother, Coön, wounds him in the (left) [19] arm below the elbow. He fights on for a time, but when the wound becomes inflamed he retires, laying the blame on Zeus (278 f.). The real cause is the pain, which is represented as excruciating (269–272). No other warrior, Greek or Trojan, in the *Iliad* leaves the field because of the pain from a wound which does not disable him.[20] The wounded Diomede fights on in E. Glaucus, wounded in the *right* arm (M 389), so that he cannot fight, remains on the field; he protects the wounded Hector with his *shield* (Ξ 426–428),[21] and when Sarpedon is slain, prays to

[18] H. Grimm, *op. cit.* 440, points out Agamemnon's lack of sportsmanship in this scene. The only other entrant in the contest in throwing the spear is Meriones; it would be an awkward situation if the latter should prove victor over the commander-in-chief, and Achilles suggests a way to avoid this possible outcome. But he leaves Agamemnon the chance to show the spirit of a sportsman (894), εἰ σύ γε σῷ θυμῷ ἐθέλοις. This the king refuses to do, preferring to take the cash, and let honor go. His exit from the tale is as unmanly as was his entrance.

[19] This arm must have been unprotected, since he was carrying the spoils. In spite of the wound he fights for a time, "with sword, with spear, and with great stones" (265); Glaucus, wounded in the right arm, cannot fight (M 389, Π 520). Schol. A argues that Agamemnon was wounded in the left arm, because he enters the spear-throwing contest in Ψ!

[20] Diomede was certainly disabled by the arrow that pinned his foot to the ground (Λ 377 f.: Nilsson cannot be right in saying that Diomede was wounded in the heel, *Homer and Mycenae* [London, Methuen, 1933], 258 f.). Our text describes his retirement with the verses already used of Agamemnon (399 f. =273 f.), which end with ἤχθετο γὰρ κῆρ. But a few MSS. and schol. A preserve the variant, in 400 only, ὠκέας ἵππους. If the present writer's interpretation of the poet's representation of Agamemnon is essentially correct, there is something to be said for the variant reading.

[21] See van Leeuwen's note, which eliminates the assumed "contradiction" between these verses and Π 520–526.

Apollo to lull the pain, heal the wound, and give him strength, since he cannot wield his spear (Π 524 f., 520).

We are willing to rest the case at this point,[22] and to claim as proven the disfavor in which the poet consistently holds Agamemnon throughout the poem. If this is granted, we must admit the utter improbability that Homer intended to represent Achilles as in the slightest degree blameworthy in the Quarrel.[23] And there is no convincing evidence against this view. To Shewan's generous attempt to save Agamemnon's "face" at the expense of Achilles (*op. cit.* 211, "Did not the first taunt that lit the conflagration come from Achilles [A 90 f.]?"), schol. A (on A 90 f.) is a sufficient answer: the fear of Agamemnon, which Calchas expressed guardedly (A 78–82) Achilles must banish by plain words. Agamemnon's refusal of the plea of Nestor (A 286–291), aside from his objection to the abusive language—which had been uttered at the command of Athena (A 211)—is based solely on the charge that Achilles has usurped the prerogatives of the commander-in-chief (compare A 287–289 with Ξ 85). This consisted perhaps in calling the assembly and in getting the secret of Calchas "incorporated in the minutes," and certainly in bidding the king restore Chryseis and wait for indemnification. But the many occasions on which afterwards Agamemnon permits the same sort of thing to go unchallenged robs this charge of all weight: something must be done to stop the plague, and Agamemnon was never capable of doing it.[24]

[22] Undoubtedly there is much more evidence. Scholars have so long approached the Homeric poems expecting to find the Interpolator, the Redactor, Vorlagen crudely used, and Dichter without number and of all degrees of ability, that their gaze has been out of focus for much that is visible to the eye of any serious student who has discarded these, largely modern, inventions.

[23] So also Miss Stawell, *op. cit.* 13; Spiess, *op. cit.* 106. Most scholars, including even H. Grimm, *op. cit.* 11 f., hold the contrary view.

[24] Bowra, *op. cit.* 18, finds Achilles guilty of a lack of αἰδώς to his superior lord: "In heroic morality a king was owed αἰδώς by his vassals and subjects, and so Homer makes it plain (*e.g.* K 238, O 129, υ 171)."

There are two points at issue here. (1) The αἰδώς owed to an overlord. The references cited by Bowra are singularly unconvincing: K 238, not Homer, but Agamemnon speaks, and he refers only to higher rank, on which he sets so

II

As the poet relieves Achilles from all responsibility for the immediate results of the Quarrel, so we think the evidence shows that he is equally guiltless in rejecting the gifts offered by Agamemnon. Nestor advised the conciliation of Achilles *δώροισίν τ' ἀγανοῖσιν ἔπεσσί τε μειλίχιοισιν* (I 113). In commenting on Agamemnon's offer he is silent about the "gentle words" (164 f.). In Homer there are three passages which show clearly that even for a minor breach of propriety "gentle words" precede or accompany the "gifts." Both Agamemnon and Hector take back the words of insult spoken to Odysseus and Paris, respectively, and promise atonement later (Δ 360–363, Z 521–529). At the Phaeacian games the "gentle word" accompanies the "gift" (*θ* 406–409). To Achilles Agamemnon offers material atonement and then (I 157–161), far from taking back any of his words, practically repeats the charge he made in the Quarrel (A 287–289). This fact, which is of vital importance for a true estimate of the character of Homer's hero, is ignored by scholars who hold that Agamemnon "repented" of his insult: "Nobody blames Achilles for his mutiny . . . till he . . . exceeds his rights by refusing

much store, for certainly Menelaus is not an overlord; O 129, the context seems to make it clear that as *νόος* refers to the fate which Ares is bringing on himself, so *αἰδώς* means the respect due the other members of the Olympian family, and at all events the words which Athena says Ares has failed to heed (104–109) refer, not to the suzerainty of Zeus, but to his "might and strength," *κάρτεΐ τε σθένεΐ τε* (108); *υ* 171, the reference is certainly to the outraged rights of hospitality, as is shown by the words *οἴκῳ ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ* at the beginning of the verse. (2) The extent of Agamemnon's suzerainty. This extended over "many islands and all Argos" (B 108). That *Ἄργος* means "Greece," as Nilsson translates it (*op. cit.* 218), and therefore included the realm of Peleus, seems to be contradicted by the reference of Nestor to "covenants," "oaths," and "pledges" (B 339, 341), and by his words to Achilles in the Quarrel, *ἀλλ' ὅδε φέρτερός ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ πλεόνεσσιν ἀνάσσει* (A 281). The words *σκηπτοῦχος βασιλεύς* (A 279) cannot imply suzerainty over the other princes, since all the members of the *Βουλή* are given this title (B 86). Agamemnon is represented in the *Ilias* as the "great king" because of the preëminence of his family and the size and power of his inherited kingdom. His words to Achilles, *οὐδέ σ' ἐγώ γε/λίσσομαι εἵνεκ' ἐμεῖο μένειν* (A 173 f.), imply that Achilles joined the expedition voluntarily. See also below (p. 61).

atonement *and apology*" (italics mine). "It was because Achilles refused to accept the *penitence* (italics mine) of Agamemnon that *he* 'paid the price'" (Andrew Lang, *The World of Homer* [London, Longmans, 1910], 24, 123). "If he persists after Agamemnon *has sued for forgiveness* (italics mine), then there will be nemesis. . . . He will know he is doing wrong" (Gilbert Murray, *op. cit.* 84). "The . . . *repentance* (italics mine) of Agamemnon removes what excuse he had before, and now he alone is to blame" (Bowra, *op. cit.* 19). Yet Homer has given the clearest proof that Agamemnon neither repented nor apologized, when he makes Odysseus say to Achilles (I 260 f., 299),

σοὶ δ' Ἀγαμέμνων
ἄξια δῶρα δίδωσι μεταλλήξαντι χόλοιο.
ταῦτά κέ τοι τελέσειε μεταλλήξαντι χόλοιο.

This is the only intimation given to Achilles by the official envoy of Agamemnon's recognition of his error, and it contains not the slightest hint of either repentance or apology. It is nothing more than the offer of a *quid pro quo* for the renewed assistance of the man who was "worth a dozen armies" (I 116 f., ἀντί νυ πολλῶν/λαῶν). The commander who could twice propose seriously the disgraceful abandonment of the expedition when the battle was going against him would of course offer "the half of his kingdom" to the champion who alone could avert disaster. "Yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." That this is Agamemnon's own view of his offer is proven not only by 158–161, already cited, but by 120,

ἅψ ἐθέλω ἀρέσαι δόμεναί τ' ἀπερείσι' ἄποινα.

That the verb ἀρέσκω when used alone means only material indemnification is clear from Δ 362, Z 526: the words ὄπισθεν ἀρεσσόμεθα are uttered by Agamemnon and Hector, respectively, *after* an apology has been made, and from θ 402 f., where the asyndeton excludes the apology; when the latter is included, the word ἐπέεσσιν is added, θ 396, 415. It is in keeping

with the character of Agamemnon to think material wealth the true measure of worth.[25] His offer of gifts alone, without an apology, is as futile as are his other proposals, especially to a man like Achilles. The latter's contempt for mere idemnification is shown three times (I 378, T 147 f., X 349–352). Of course Achilles recognizes that material recompense is desirable and indispensable (cf. T 200, ὀφέλλετε ταῦτα πένεσθαι; also Π 85 f.) as the "outward and visible sign" of an injury acknowledged and regretted. But acknowledgment and regret are to Achilles the essential prerequisites for forgiveness and reconciliation; cf. Π 72 f.

The reply of Achilles to Odysseus makes clear why the offer is futile. This speech Finsler (*Homer* II² [Leipzig u. Berlin, Teubner, 1918], 90) regards as "ganz temperament," but the argument for rejecting the gifts is worthy of an able lawyer. From B 339–341 and other corroborative passages where division of the booty is mentioned it is clear that the kings who joined the expedition were to receive in return a part of the spoils. This was a solemn contract (B 339–341). Agamemnon, Achilles argues, has broken this contract; he has defrauded (ἀπάτησεν) him of booty which was his due and had been given to him (I 344, 375). What is the guarantee that he will not do so again (345, 375 f., cf. 371)?

Finally, Odysseus, the chief envoy, tacitly admits that Agamemnon has not made an acceptable offer. No "master of diplomacy" would suggest that the gifts are likely to be rejected, if he had any case whatsoever for urging their acceptance (I 300 f., εἰ δέ τοι Ἀτρεΐδης μὲν ἀπήχθετο κηρόθι μᾶλλον,| αὐτὸς καὶ τοῦ δῶρα): Odysseus begins with the dire need of the "sons of the Achaeans," and ends with a plea to pity "the other Panachaeans." Thus Odysseus and Nestor implicitly hold Agamemnon to be still in the wrong; Agamemnon's own words prove the king unrepentant, and contain no hint of apology, and the poet's portrait of Agamemnon reveals him,

[25] "Sein Selbstbewusstsein . . . schöpft seine Kraft . . . aus dem, was er hat, nicht aus dem, was er ist" (Spiess, *op. cit.* 147).

as king, leader, and soldier, lacking all the true ideals of the knight, which Achilles holds. It seems impossible, therefore, that Homer could have intended to give the impression that Achilles erred in rejecting Agamemnon's offer.[26]

III

In Achilles' answer to Odysseus, which he wishes to be regarded as final (I 308–313), he says he will not yield to the plea of the Danaans, because of their ingratitude (316, *οὔτ' ἄλλους Δαναούς, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄρα τις χάρις ἦεν* κτλ.). Is this his *ἁμαρτία*? Roemer (*Homerische Aufsätze* [Leipzig-Berlin, 1914], 32 f.) thinks it is, although he does not differentiate the attitude of Achilles as seen in his replies to Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax, respectively. Finsler (*op. cit.* 91) finds 346 f.,

> *ἀλλ', Ὀδυσσεῦ, σὺν σοί τε καὶ ἄλλοισιν βασιλεῦσιν*
> *φραζέσθω νήεσσιν ἀλεξέμεναι δήιον πῦρ,*

unfriendly and discourteous, showing lack of the consideration due envoys, in whom Achilles sees only the messengers of Agamemnon. To this it must be answered (1) that Odysseus virtually said that they came from Agamemnon (226, 260 f.), (2) that the rejection of a proposal of envoys is not in itself discourteous, and (3) that the language used here is justifiable if the speech of Odysseus has left Achilles in doubt whether the kings are really his friends. The two passages that we have just cited from Achilles' speech show plainly his feeling that the king's envoys and "the rest of the Danaans" sided with Agamemnon against him.[27] A careful reading of the preceding narrative furnishes strong evidence that he is justified. Certainly the poet has shown clearly that Achilles felt the lack of support in his quarrel, from the very beginning: (1) A 231 f., *οὐτιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις·| ἦ γὰρ ἄν, Ἀτρεΐδη, νῦν ὕστατα*

[26] Cf. also V. Terret, *Homère* (Paris, Fontemoing, 1899), 227: Achilles would have been conciliated si une *franche confession de l'injustice et une juste réparation de l'insulte* lui avaient été offertes au IX^e^ livre.

[27] L'armée entière par son consentement tacite devient moralement responsable, Terret, *op. cit.* 226.

λωβήσαιο, "If the Greeks were men, they would violently resent this insult to me," (2) A 299, ἐπεί μ' ἀφέλεσθέ γε δόντες, implying that the assembly has not shown its disapproval of Agamemnon's threat, (3) A 410 (to Thetis), ἵνα πάντες ἀπαύρωνται βασιλῆος, a clear indication that he has received no support in the assembly, (4) A 422, Thetis bids him, μήνι' Ἀχαιοῖς; the plural is significant. The poet, too, has given hints that there were grounds for Achilles' resentment. In his narrative of the Quarrel he refrains from all mention of the men in the assembly, why, we can only conjecture. But in B, when Thersites has reviled Agamemnon for his treatment of Achilles, and Odysseus has rebuked and punished him, the crowd approves (270–277). They do not say, "What he has said about the king's conduct towards Achilles is true, but . . ." This is evidence that the poet at least does not call our attention to the army's support of Achilles. In Γ–H only two Greeks mention or refer to Achilles, Agamemnon (H 113), who belittles him even at the expense of the truth (see above, p. 52), and Ajax (H 228–230), who tells Hector that Achilles, the greatest Greek champion, has withdrawn from the field because of his anger at Agamemnon. All this plainly implies that the other Greeks, far from taking the part of Achilles, have ignored him—as long as the battle was in their favor; when the tide turned, and they were threatened with disaster, they begged for his aid. Achilles must have felt this. When Odysseus and Ajax entered his quarters, he suffered a revulsion of feeling, as his warm words of greeting show (197 f.). But the speech of Odysseus showed him that he had wrongly interpreted their coming: it contained not the slightest hint of the loyalty of his friends, and it concludes with the argument that Achilles has an opportunity to gain glory in the eyes of the Greeks by killing Hector! The offer of Odysseus reduced to lowest terms is this: restitution of the prize of war—but with no assurance that the caprice of the commander may not cause him to repeat the offence, since the king has neither expressed regret nor offered an apology;

wealth and increased social position, and the applause of the Greeks when the champion against whom they took sides with his worst enemy, or at least whom they ignored until their need of him was great, should deliver them from the dreaded Hector! Among equals obligation is mutual. The Achilles whom Homer depicts as the ideal hero of the great past could not, and should not, yield to such a plea.

The speech of Phoenix and the reply of Achilles seem to Roemer[28] and others to put Achilles still more in the wrong. We must therefore briefly examine these. The chief points of the old man's plea are these: (1) Phoenix has treated Achilles, and loves him, like the son that has been denied him. (2) As a father he begs Achilles to give up his wrath, and not refuse the Prayers of Supplication, whose rejection is followed by Ate. "Agamemnon has offered generous gifts, which shows that he is no longer angry; he has sent to entreat you the two greatest leaders in the camp, who are also your own best friends." Thus far the old man has made no mistake; we must notice, however, the lack of any mention of an apology by Agamemnon, or any hint of the loyalty of his best friends, or at least of their regret for their temporary disloyalty. But notice the final point (3) "Remember Meleager! He refused the offer of material atonement, and later entered the battle and delivered his city, but received no gifts! So yield *now* or you will be less honored, for the gifts will bring you honor in the eyes of the Greeks." This is clear testimony to the old man's utter inability to understand the springs of conduct in Achilles. We are not surprised, therefore, to find the poet making Phoenix admit conduct towards his father in his youth so ἀπρεπές that two ancient grammarians rewrote the passage (Eust. 763, 9, on I 453). "Yield because the gifts show that technical amends have been made. The Greeks will recognize your worth by the size of the indemnity. If you wait till some other consideration makes you fight, you will lose this honor." If Achilles had yielded now, not only would there

[28] *Op. cit.* 33.

have been no *Iliad*, but Achilles himself would have been false to his own standards. In a sense he was now fighting for the ideal manhood of the Greek Heroic Age.

His reply to Phoenix reveals how great is the gulf between the knightly ideals of the two: "Honor, to my fighting ability, purchased by gifts! I have no need of honor like that. I feel that my true character as a knight has been recognized, by Zeus; this honor will abide with me as long as I live"—the thought of returning to a long inglorious life is already fading from consideration—"by the curved ships." Then the reproof: "You say I am as a son to you. Why, then, do you side with my worst enemy against me" (like the other leaders who claimed to be my friends, but deserted me in the quarrel)? Finally, the recognition of the old man's low estimate of honor: "You say that honor is recognized by the size of gifts. Come, I will honor your devotion to me by giving you 'the half of my kingdom.'" Phoenix has accomplished something by his plea. As Achilles has answered the old man's suggestion that money can weigh against matters of the spirit by balancing what Phoenix has done for him by the offer of "the half of his kingdom," so he responds to the old man's willingness to go home with him, if he must go (434–438), by offering to reconsider his decision in the morning.

It is the blunt and staunch old soldier Ajax who finally shakes the determination of Achilles. Ajax is the fighter *par excellence*, not a moralizer: his famous prayer, "Let me die in the light" (P 647), is the petition of the soldier pure and simple. He cannot appreciate Achilles' finer conception of honor (632–639), but he knows the meaning of loyal friendship: "Achilles heeds not our friendship; as his friends we honored him above all others by the ships." "Achilles, be reconciled! Respect this roof. We represent the whole army, and it is our unswerving purpose to be your best and dearest friends among all the Achaeans."

Those (Bowra among the number) who think Achilles sins against the suppliant and the rights of hospitality in refusing

the plea of Ajax do not define clearly the status of the latter and Odysseus. There are three possibilities. (1) They are envoys. This capacity is indicated by the addition of the two heralds (I 170). If this is their status, Achilles is justified in terminating the interview at his discretion, and the envoys cannot appeal either to their presence under Achilles' roof or to the breaking of bread with him. (2) They are suppliants.[29] This is not true in the sense that their pleas are under divine sanction: they do not sit at the hearth, nor clasp the knees of Achilles, nor use the language of the "suppliant." (3) They come as friends. This cannot be true if they are envoys: the envoy should be *persona grata*, but his status and capacity are official. Yet Ajax certainly speaks only as a friend, for the very simple reason that the envoys have been dismissed (compare 309–311 with 421 f. and 620–625), and he steps out of his official rôle.

Achilles' reception of this plea based solely on the claim of friendship must be considered in the light of his first words to the envoys, 197 f.,

> χαίρετον· ἦ φίλοι ἄνδρες ἱκάνετον· ἦ τι μάλα χρεώ,
> οἵ μοι σκυζομένῳ περ Ἀχαιῶν φίλτατοί ἐστον.

"Welcome! My friends! You have come! Indeed there was great need (of your coming), for you are my dearest friends among the Achaeans, in spite of my anger (against them all),"[30] and his words to Patroclus (204),

[29] Bowra, *op. cit.* 19, "Achilles now violates . . . the law that mercy must be shown to suppliants. The embassy comes with all the appearance of suppliants making a sacred request in the name of the gods."

[30] The usual interpretation of ἦ τι μάλα χρεώ (adopted by the Alexandrians, van Leeuwen and Faesi, and apparently preferred by Leaf), "'Tis some great need (of the Achaeans) that brings you," has no support from the context. And why should Achilles, suddenly confronted by Odysseus and Ajax, think that only some disaster has brought his best friends to visit him? See Ameis-Hentze, *Anhang* on 197. Ahrens' rendering, "You are indeed welcome (φίλοι ἱκάνετον; cf. φίλον ἐλθεῖν, Ω 309, ζ 327). Of course you must be welcome, for you are my best friends," is better supported by the context than the customary interpretation, although it hardly accounts for ἄνδρες.

οἱ γὰρ φίλτατοι ἄνδρες ἐμῷ ὑπέασι μελάθρῳ,
"Our guests are my dearest friends."

There is a gentle reproach in the first words, "My friends"—from whom I heard not a word since the beginning of the quarrel! The words themselves, and the eagerness with which he comes to meet the two chiefs, with the lyre still in his hand (194), justify us, I think, in interpreting his thought thus: "At last my friends have rallied to my side." Then follows the long speech of Odysseus, with not a word to justify the desertion of his friends, no word, in fact, of their loyalty even now. What the speech of Odysseus really means is, by implication, this: "We did not stand by you in the Quarrel; we fought for a day without you, and got along very well; but now we are threatened with destruction, and so we throw ourselves upon your mercy." It is only when Ajax at the end of the interview assures him of their unintermitting loyalty that Achilles feels he was right in his words of greeting. This is all that Ajax can claim by his reference to the rooftree: "We *are* your best friends, and we supplicate you, not as envoys, but by the tie of friendship."

This plea almost wins Achilles, in fact, it is the chief purpose of this article to prove that the ἁμαρτία of Achilles is expressed by one single small word in his reply (645):

πάντα τ ί μοι κατὰ θυμὸν ἐείσαο μυθήσασθαι.

"I agree with you heartily—*almost*, for my heart swells with indignation when the other thought (κείνων) comes back to my mind,"

ὥς μ' ἀσύφηλον[31] ἐν 'Αργείοισιν ἔρεξεν
'Ατρεΐδης ὡς εἴ τ ι ν' ἀ τ ί μ η τ ο ν μ ε τ α ν ά σ τ η ν.

This is the most true and terrible denunciation of an unkingly act to be found in Homer, or perhaps anywhere in literature. The choice is now clear to the hero. He must choose between

[31] In view of Ω 767, the scholiast's ἀπαίδευτον seems the best interpretation, "contrary to the instincts of a gentleman," "as no knight could do."

the claims of honor, grossly outraged by an insult unrepaired, and the plea of friends to save them from disaster and perhaps death. He half yields to this plea: he will fight the destroying Hector, *but not yet*—and when he does, it is too late!

Most Homerists interpret the speeches of Achilles in book IX as those of a man gripped by an overmastering hatred; who struggles to speak calmly, but who, whenever his argument brings him back to the thought of Agamemnon's conduct, bursts out into uncontrolled and passionate denunciation. This is of course altogether possible. If two great tragic actors should play the part of Achilles in a dramatization of this episode—and, as Hermann Grimm remarks, it would be very effective on the stage with little change—undoubtedly the character of the hero might be presented in two quite different ways, yet both convincing. We may compare the Hamlet of Sarah Bernhardt with that of the younger Salvini—to take an extreme case; or the Shylock of Sir Henry Irving with the Shylock of Sir Beerbohm Tree. The reason is that neither Shakespeare nor Homer left stage directions to indicate the actions and emotions of a character during his speeches and his silences. If Homer had found Bernard Shaw among his Vorlagen, and if he had imitated him in extending the scope of his "stage directions," he might have removed much of our uncertainty about the ἁμαρτία of Achilles. As it is, we must rely upon the evidence which we find in our *Iliad*. This evidence may be summarized as follows: Homer is φιλαχιλλεύς. He presents Achilles as the supreme knight in many ways: he is the only son of a divinity among the great Greek chieftains, and he excels them all in physical strength, in beauty, and in skill at arms. In spirit he differs *toto caelo* from Agamemnon[32] in all that makes a true knight. He is contrasted with Odysseus in straightforwardness; with Phoenix in standards of conduct, in giving wealth its duly subordinate

[32] In the Epilogue of the *Odyssey* the shade of Agamemnon contrasts his own fate with that of the hero of the *Iliad* (ω 93–97) and of the hero of the *Odyssey* (ω 192–202).

place, in the conception of honor; with Ajax in understanding the nature of an insult, and even with Hector in many qualities of the true knight.[33] In the *Odyssey* Homer makes Odysseus supreme as the *ἀνὴρ πολύτροπος*, guilty of no serious fault, for the *ὕβρις* against Poseidon in *ι* is only a peccadillo *sub specie aeternitatis*. Is it therefore likely that in the *Iliad* the poet pictured his hero "with a touch of the Maori or Iroquois," or that Homer intended the *Iliad* to be a "moral tragedy," with its basic idea "the *corruptio optimi*"?[34]

It must not be thought that the present writer pictures the Achilles of Homer as perfect. Of course he is no angel! Homer's characters are in no sense types, but living personalities. In Achilles he seems to have painted the portrait of "immortal youth," as Goethe said, always human, yet in all the essential qualities that eternally mark the "high-minded" man, true and unwavering. The age to which Achilles belonged the spade has shown great in many ways; the poetic fancy of bards for generations exalted and glorified it until it became the Age of Heroes; but it was Homer who saw in these demigods of poetic tradition men and women who might have lived in any age, "godlike," yet human.

[33] Hector excels in sweet considerateness for the women of his family and in the ardent patriotism which made all the Trojans admire and trust him—qualities in which Achilles had no chance to shine, and which have endeared Hector to most modern readers, as they did to the poet himself, cf. *T.A.P.A.* LXIV (1933), 41 f., 61.

[34] Andrew Lang, *Homer and the Epic* (London and New York, Longmans, 1893), 137; *The World of Homer*, 249. To Lang, throughout the *Iliad* Odysseus was the "poet's most admired hero," *The World of Homer*, 250.