

PROPORTION AND APPORTIONMENT:

A Study in Homeric Values

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For my parents

### **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to elucidate Homeric aesthetical, ethical, and political values; the relation between these values and those of the polis; and what this relation tells us about the place of Homeric society in our account of the development of the polis. I argue that the system of value that we find in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is predicated on the ideas of portion, proportion, and proper distribution. These ideas, I contend, animate the Homeric conception of justice and of appropriateness. Further, I argue that this system shares much ground with the middling ideology of the polis, but is different from this ideology in respect of the discourse of *sōphrosunē* and of being *mesos/metrios*. From this, I maintain that the Homeric worldview reflects the social and material conditions of a world that shares the basic values of the polis but is not as sociologically complex as the polis.

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### **Declaration of Academic Achievement**

The author declares that the content of this thesis has been completed by Owen Peter Phillips, with recognition of the contributions of his supervisory committee consisting of Prof. Sean Corner, Prof. Claude Eilers, and Prof. Kathryn Mattison during the research and writing process.

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## Introduction

The historical interpretation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* remains a point of scholarly contention. Specifically, there is little agreement on how we should understand Homeric ethical and political values, both in and of themselves and especially in relation to those of the polis. This is patent when one briefly surveys recent historical scholarship on the Homeric epics. Donlan argues that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* stand at the beginning of an aristocratic ideological tradition, which, in contrast to the dominant system of value in the polis, prizes personal over communal glory and which defines status in terms of qualities that are the preserve of an elite, primarily martial prowess.<sup>1</sup> Yet he also observes that in Homer there are no birth or class terms, that ancestry is not a criterion of status, and that Homeric society is not stratified.<sup>2</sup> In a similar vein, van Wees contends that the seemingly egalitarian nature of Homeric society in respect of status actually reflects the mystifications of an aristocratic ideology that conceals behind a discourse of merit a social system in which wealth and good birth are the real determinants of excellence.<sup>3</sup> In regard to competition for status, van Wees concludes that the world of Homer is similar to that of Archaic and Classical Greece, but he also concedes that the Homeric value system may belong to an earlier stage in the development of Greek society.<sup>4</sup> Morris makes a comparable argument, claiming that the Homeric poems are polemical texts that legitimize an aristocratic social structure by passing over the claims of ordinary people

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<sup>1</sup> Donlan (1999) *passim*, esp. pp.23-24, 40.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* pp. 2, 16, 19.

<sup>3</sup> van Wees (1993) pp. 70-72, 83, 99.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.* pp.160-162.

and, further, that the middling ideology – the system of thought that is characteristic of the polis – is absent in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; indeed, he argues that these poems are a part of an elitist discourse that is antithetical to the middling ideology.<sup>5</sup> However, he also contends that the essential institutions of the polis are present in the world of Homer, thereby leaving unresolved the question of how precisely the Homeric poems relate to the world of the polis.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, there is little consensus as to how we are to fit Homeric society into our picture of the origins and development of the polis.

The particular aim of this thesis is to shed some light on Homeric aesthetical, ethical, and political values, with a view to revealing the extent to which these values share ground with those that obtained in later Greek history. I argue that the Homeric value system turns on the ideas of portion, proportion, and proper distribution and, further, that these ideas animate all judgements of appropriateness and justness. In my first chapter, I analyse the Homeric conception of justice. I explicate the prescriptions regarding fair treatment that this conception of justice entails and the degree to which these prescriptions inform the judgements and behaviour of the characters. In my second chapter, I examine how the conception of justice outlined in the previous chapter fits into Homeric ethical thought more broadly. I draw attention in this chapter to concepts in Homeric ethical thought that imply an ethic of moderation and self-control. In my final chapter, I provide an account of Homeric political culture in relation to that of the polis by examining what Homeric ethical and political values, analysed in the previous chapters, have in common with the values constitutive of the middling ideology of the

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<sup>5</sup> Morris (1986) p.124, 126-127; (2000) p.176.

<sup>6</sup> Morris (1986) pp.96-104.

polis. I review the similarities and differences between the world of Homer and the world of the polis in respect of the claims of community and the discourse of the middle, and close with a discussion of how we are to understand the worldview of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in relation to the social and material conditions in which these poems were composed.

## **Chapter One: Homeric justice**

### **I: Introduction**

In this chapter, I examine justice in the world of Homer: how it is conceived and the extent to which it operates as a motivating value. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, I argue, justice is understood as the equitable distribution of shares. At base, this conception of justice requires that one's share of honour (*timē*), given by one's community, be in proportion to one's excellence (*aretē*) in some domain. Further, it requires that one neither fall short of the obligations to others that come with and are commensurate with one's share of honour nor exceed the limit of what one's share of honour permits one to do in relation to others. As we shall see, this conception of justice is observed in many contexts and informs how individuals in Homer evaluate the behaviour of others. This in and of itself points to my central thesis – that is, that the Homeric value system turns on the ideas of distribution and portion, and that an outgrowth of this is the centrality of distributive justice.

### **II: Distributive justice**

As I have claimed, justice in the world of Homer consists in apportionment – that is, in distributing shares equitably. Integral to this conception of justice are two views of equality: arithmetic (or absolute) equality, where each member of the collective receives a share of the same size, and geometric (or proportional) equality, where an individual is given a share that is greater than others' but is in proportion to the individual's moral

desert, which is judged in terms of the individual's *aretē*.<sup>1</sup> Both of these conceptions of equality pertain in the division and distribution of food, loot, and land; in these contexts, the apportioner is either the collective or the individual who has the authority to distribute these goods.<sup>2</sup>

There are many passages in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that bear out these claims concerning arithmetic equality and the distribution of goods among the collective. Odysseus relates that after he and his men sacked the city of the Cicones, they distributed among themselves (*dassameth'*) the possessions (*ktēmata*) of the Cicones, in order that not one of his men might depart having been deprived of an equal share (*hōs mē tis moi atembomenos kioi isēs: Od. 9.39-41*). We find this same purpose clause in two other passages: *Od. 9.548-9*, where Odysseus and his men distribute among themselves (*dassameth'*) the sheep that they stole from Polyphemus' cave, and *Il. 11.703-705*, where the *dēmos* of Pylos divvies up (*daitreuein*) the horses, sheep, and goats stolen by Nestor from the Eleans and given to the *dēmos* by Nestor's father, Neleus. Feasts in Homer also display arithmetic equality. At a feast, the apportionment of meat among the collective is

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of arithmetic and geometric equality in the early polis, see Corner (forthcoming) chapter 2. For clarification of the difference between arithmetic and geometric equality, see Arist. *NE* 1131a-1132b. See also Pojman (1995) for a discussion of the different kinds of equality and of the requirements of each kind of equality in respect to justice. See also Ostwald (1996) pp.56-57 for a discussion of the Greek conception of equality in terms of shares. Morris ([1996] p.20) contends that there exists in Homer a notion that the interests of all members of the community should be considered equally. We shall see, however, that Ostwald ([1996] p.54) is right to claim that in Greek (and Homeric) thought equality flows from freedom (that is, from free status), not freedom from equality, and so Morris' argument is wrong insofar as it suggests that the equal consideration of interests is the foundational principle of the Greek conception of justice. On the relation between the agent of redistribution and the level of societal complexity – understood in terms of Sahlins' ([1972] esp. pp.130-148) schema – and what this relation tells us about the society that the Homeric poems represent, see Donlan (1982) *passim*, pp. 158-163.

<sup>2</sup> The verb *dateasthai* ('to distribute') is used to denote the distribution of portions of a feast (e.g., *Od. 3.66*), of land (*Od. 6.10*), of patrimony (*Od. 17.80*), and of possessions generally (*Od. 3.316*). As Borecký ([1963] pp.44-47, 48-50) has demonstrated, the verb *daiein* connotes the division and distribution of common property by a collective, whereas *nemein* signifies the distribution of property by an individual, where this property belongs to either the individual or the collective.

conducted by the host of the meal, the host's servants, or one of the host's *hetairoi*; the phrase 'and not one heart lacked [a share of] the equal feast/an equal share' (*oude ti thumos edeueto daitos eīsēs*) is typical of feast scenes.<sup>3</sup> In view of the frequency of feast scenes, the emphasis on the equal distribution of portions in such scenes, and the fact that the language of distribution revolves around the word *dais*<sup>4</sup>, which means both 'portion' and 'feast', we might say that in Homer the feast is the primary instantiation of arithmetic equality.<sup>5</sup>

For a clear articulation of this view of equality and the prescriptions it entails regarding fair treatment, however, we have to turn to the dispute between Poseidon and Zeus in book 15 of the *Iliad*. Here Zeus bids Iris to command Poseidon to cease fighting the Trojans and to remind him that he is superior to Poseidon in strength (*biēi polu pherteros einai*) and is Poseidon's elder (*geneēi proteros*), in light of which Poseidon is mistaken to claim that he is Zeus' equal (*ison emoi*: *Il.* 15.158-167). Poseidon protests that Zeus speaks insolently (*hyperoplon eeipen*) when he claims that he will restrain Poseidon by force, as he has a share of honour equal to Zeus' (*m' homotimon*: 185-186). In what respect he and Zeus are *homotimoi* Poseidon then proceeds to spell out: the whole

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<sup>3</sup> *Dais eīsē* scenes: *Il.* 1.458-468, 2.421-431, 7.313-320, 9.205-225, 15.95, 23.53-56; *Od.* 8.97-99, 11.181-187, 16.478-479, 19.418-427.

<sup>4</sup> The language of distribution that I refer to consists of *dais*, *daiein*, *dateasthai*, *daitreuein* ('to cut up' or 'to divvy up'), *daitros* ('portioner' or 'carver [of meat]'), *daitron* ('one's portion'), *dainuntai* ('to divide up' or 'to feast/give a banquet') and *dasmos* ('distribution'); see Cunliffe (2012 [1924]) and Autenrieth (1960 [1877]) s.v. ditto. Donlan ([1999 {=1970}] p.225), drawing on Frisk (1960 [1954] s.v. *dēmos*), notes that even the word *dēmos* might be etymologically related to *daiein*.

<sup>5</sup> Corner ([forthcoming] chapter two) holds that the *dais eīsē* is the central motif around which the *Iliad* and especially the *Odyssey* are structured, and that this motif underscores, among other things, the importance of commensality in Homeric society for building community. It is important to also note here Corner's comment about the Homeric feast: "As expressed in the word *dais*, the social significance of a feast inhered primarily in its being an occasion of division and distribution, as represented in the apportionment of wine and, above all, meat." ([forthcoming] chapter one).

universe was divided into three portions (*trikhtha de panta dedastai*), and each of the sons of Cronus received a share of honour (*hekastos d' emmore timēs*), with Poseidon obtaining by lot (*elakhon*) the sea, Hades the underworld, and Zeus the heavens, but with the earth and Olympus remaining the common possessions of all (*gaia d' eti xunē pantōn kai makros Olumpos*: 187-193).<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, he does not obey Zeus' will and insists that Zeus stay within the bounds of his share of the world (*menetō tritatēi eni moirēi*: 195). Reminded by Iris of the fact that the Furies favour the eldest, Poseidon relents, but also claims that he will become enraged whenever someone wishes to reproach (*hoppot' an...neikeiein ethelēsi*) one who has a share equal to his own (*isomoron kai homēi*

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to note here that the cosmos itself is viewed as something that can be parceled out and distributed. This is in keeping with the nexus of concepts in Homer that comprises fate, proportionality, and the order of the cosmos. One can discern this nexus by surveying the language of shares in Homer. *Moros*, for instance, can signify both 'due measure' and 'one's destiny' (hence the adjective *dusmoros*, 'ill-fated', and the abstract noun *ammoriē*, 'misfortune' or 'fatelessness'; vid. *Od.* 20.75-76), and *moira*, which at base means 'portion', also connotes one's fate (*Od.* 2.100), as well the divine personification (*Il.* 24.209) or personifications (*Il.* 24.49) of fate (Cunliffe [2012 {1924}] and Autenrieth [1960 {1877}] s.v. ditto; see also Chantraine [1999] s.v. *meiromai*, n.3). Similarly, *aisa* ('share') can refer to fate and a decree pronounced by the gods (*Il.* 9.608), and its adjectival derivate, *aisimon*, can mean both 'decreed by fate' and 'appropriate' (Cunliffe and Autenrieth s.v. *aisa*, *aisimon*). On the relation between the different senses of *moira* and *aisa*, see Yamagata (1994) pp.105-120. Zeus himself is also seen as a principle of distributive justice, inasmuch as he is described as the distributor of *olbos* (*Od.* 6.188-9; cf. *Il.* 22.208-213, where Zeus weighs the fates [*kēre*] of Achilles and Hector, whose fate is also called here *aisimon ēmar* ['destined day']). Cf. also Hes. *Th. passim*, esp. 395-6, where Zeus is the distributor of *timai*; in this connection, see Brock [2013] p.3, 84). We should note that Hesychius equates *moira* with *aisa* and *kēr*, which means either 'one's doom' or 'the goddess Death' (Hsch. 192, 3148, 3158). Further, the verb *nemein* is the etymological root of *nemesis*, which means both 'distribution' and 'indignation', and of the post-Homeric word *nomos*, 'law' or 'custom' (Cunliffe and Autenrieth s.v. *nemesis*; *LSJ* s.v. *nomos*). Similarly, *themis*, 'law' or 'that which is established', is also related to the language of distributive justice, inasmuch as the verb from which it derives, *tithenai* ('to put') can, as Borecký has shown, signify the placement of a portion before one who stands outside the collective, such as a god or a beggar. ([1963] pp.49-50). *Daimōn*, 'divinity' or 'divine spirit', is also etymologically related to *daiein*, and therefore is a part of the group of words centered on *dais* (*LSJ* s.v. *daimōn*). We might say, then, that in Homer, and in Greek thought generally, the order of the cosmos is understood in terms of distributive justice. This claim, to the extent that it concerns post-Homeric thought, is supported by Borecký's observation that the words *isomoireō*, *isomoiria*, and *isomoiros*, as well as the phrase *isē moira*, figure in pre-Socratic cosmology and in Hippocratic medical theory ([1963] pp.55-56). For a discussion of this view of the cosmos and its relation to the term *dikē* in Greek thought, see Palmer (1950). We should also note that the word *kosmos* itself has ethical connotations; this is evident in the common phrase *kata kosmon* ('according to order', i.e., 'becomingly'; see Cunliffe and Autenrieth s.v. *kosmos*).

*peprōmenon aisēi*: 208-210).<sup>7</sup> We might say in more general terms that Poseidon argues that one has no just claim to authority over another whose share of society is equal to one's own. This brings out an important aspect of the Homeric conception of justice: one's share of society sets the boundaries of what one may do in relation to others.

In this connection it is apposite to consider the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, as it is fundamentally concerned with distributive justice and just action. When Agamemnon, deprived of his *geras* ('prize of honour', 'special portion'), threatens to take another's *geras* for himself, Achilles rebukes him for shamelessness (*anaideiēn*: *Il.* 1.149).<sup>8</sup> Why Agamemnon's actions warrant reproach Achilles then makes clear. First, Agamemnon disregards the fact that the Achaeans fight the Trojans for no other reason than to win a share of honour for Menelaus and him (*ophra su khairēis, / timēn arnumenoi Menelaōi soi te*: *Il.* 1.158-159). Second, he thinks nothing of the fact that Achilles laboured much for his *geras* and that this *geras* was given to Achilles by the Achaeans (*Il.* 1.161-162). We can understand Achilles' first criticism as a claim founded on reciprocity, inasmuch as it suggests that Agamemnon should not dishonour those who honour him. The basis of Achilles' second criticism, on the other hand, is geometric equality: he is entitled to *geras* by virtue of his effort, which the collective recognizes. Achilles then adds to this criticism the view that one's *geras* should be in proportion to

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<sup>7</sup> A similar thought is expressed by Achilles at *Il.* 16.52-53.

<sup>8</sup> It is significant that Achilles' rebuke follows Agamemnon's claim that he will take away *someone's* prize of honour: Achilles becomes outraged (that is, feels *nemesis*) in response to a general statement that he finds shameless (that is, without *aidōs*) and therefore shameful, not in response to a threat aimed exclusively at him. This reflects the dynamics of *aidōs* and *nemesis*, as explicated by Williams (2008 [1993]): one internalizes views about shameful acts that are shared among one's community, and one generalizes these views such that one becomes outraged whenever someone acts shamefully towards another, not just towards oneself (pp.82-85). We can understand Poseidon's (*Il.* 15.208-210) and Achilles' (*Il.* 16.52-53) statements that they will become outraged *whenever someone* diminishes the shares of others in this light.



one's contribution to the collective. This is apparent when he says that the *geras* that is given to him whenever a distribution occurs (*pote dasmos hikētai*) is always lesser than Agamemnon's, in spite of the fact that his share of the fighting is greater than Agamemnon's (*alla to men pleion poluaïkos polemoio / kheires emai diepous*: *Il.* 1.165-167) and that Agamemnon never fights among the *laos* or participates in ambushes (*Il.* 1.226-228).<sup>9</sup>

The principle that one's *geras* should be proportionate to one's contribution is also evident in the Embassy to Achilles, where Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax beseech Achilles to rejoin the Achaean war effort. Achilles maintains here that he will not be persuaded to accept Agamemnon's gifts of recompense and return to the Achaean camp, since it is wrong that one who fights and one who does not fight receive the same portion (*isē moira*), and that accordingly the bad man (*kakos*) and the good man (*esthlos*) are held in one and the same honour (*iēi timēi*: *Il.* 9.315-319). This inequity leads Achilles to question the meaning of being *esthlos*; this is evident when he says 'he who does nothing and he who does much die all the same' (*katthan' homōs ho t' aergos anēr ho te polla eorgōs*: *Il.* 9.320).<sup>10</sup> Thus we have here a nexus comprising three elements: one's excellence (*aretē*) (implied by the term *esthlos*)<sup>11</sup>, one's contribution to the collective, and

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<sup>9</sup> *Il.* 1.166 is the only instance of the word *dasmos*, the abstract noun that signifies 'distribution', in the Homeric epics. This perhaps underscores the centrality of distributive justice in the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon.

<sup>10</sup> The aspect of the main verb, *katthan'*, makes this statement gnomic, and thereby gives Achilles' claim force: what he says is generally true. We might compare this statement to *Il.* 9.401-409, where Achilles claims that raiding cannot bring back a man's life once his life has 'passed the barrier of his teeth'.

<sup>11</sup> Donlan observes that in Homer *esthlos* and *agathos* refer mainly to proficiency in warcraft ([1999] p.4). We can, on the basis of lexical evidence, understand being *aristos* as equivalent to possessing *aretē*, being *agathos* as involving the possession of *aretē*, and being *esthlos* as equivalent to being *agathos*. See Cunliffe (2012 [1924]) and Autenrieth (1960 [1877]) s.v. *aretē*, *aristos*, *agathos*, *esthlos*. See also Yamagata (1994) pp.192-198 for a discussion of the relation between *agathos* and *esthlos* in Homer.

one's share of honour (*timē*). Let us briefly examine the relation between these. As I have said, in Homer one's *aretē* is a matter of the abilities in respect of which one excels others. To have *timē* is to have distinction in one's community, where distinction involves recognition of one's achievements, which in principle both require and display ability. Thus, to the extent that distinction concerns achievements, we can say that one's *timē* is proportionate to one's *aretē*. The achievements that bring one the highest distinction are those that benefit one's community in some respect, and accordingly it is the abilities that especially enable one to contribute to one's community that are valued most.<sup>12</sup> *Aretē*, then, is realised in one's contribution to one's community.<sup>13</sup> This is clear in what Achilles says here: the man who does the lion's share of the community's fighting is *esthlos* – that is, he possesses *aretē* in battle – and accordingly this man's *timē* should be greater than that of the man who does not fight at all, who is *kakos* (i.e., without *aretē*).<sup>14</sup> Consequently, we can say that, in Achilles' view at least, those who possess *aretē* in some domain merit a special share, insofar as such shares are given to those who demonstrate excellence and contribute to their community.

Achilles also claims that he and Agamemnon will never be reconciled, as he becomes wroth whenever he remembers that Agamemnon treated him (sc. when he took away his *geras*) as a vagrant without a share of honour (*tin' atimēton metanastēn: Il.*

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<sup>12</sup> We shall discuss the exercise of *aretē* and how it relates to the pursuit of *timē* in more detail below.

<sup>13</sup> We should, however, qualify this claim: one can be honoured for displaying an excellence that does not contribute to the community, and so the community does value certain excellences that do not benefit it. I have in mind here the distribution of prizes in an athletic contest, which I discuss in detail below.

<sup>14</sup> In Finkelberg's view, *kakos* in Homer usually signifies one who does not have *aretē* ([1998] p.23). This view seems tenable, given that *agathos* and *esthlos* – terms that, as we have seen, relate to the possession of *aretē* – are often juxtaposed with *kakos*; see Cunliffe (2012 [1924]) and Autenrieth (1960 [1877]) s.v. *agathos, esthlos, kakos*.

9.648, 16.59; cf. 1.356). Understanding this statement requires close analysis. It is clear that a consequence of being deprived of one's *geras* is loss of *timē*. This suggests that one's share of, say, plunder serves as a concrete symbol of one's *timē*; one's portion is a token of one's share of honour, and so a special portion represents distinction.<sup>15</sup> But here Achilles does not just mean that the distinction due to him was symbolically taken away or reduced. At a deeper level, he also means that since he was deprived of the *timē* that his *geras* represented, he was treated as a person who does not belong to any community. He emphasises this point with the term *metanastēs* – i.e., 'vagrant', 'wanderer', or 'migrant', someone who stands outside the collective. Here, we encounter another aspect of the concept of *timē*: to have *timē* is not only to be recognized as distinguished in one's community but also to be recognized as a part of one's community.<sup>16</sup> We can understand these two senses of *timē* as interrelated. As we have seen, one wins high distinction by exercising one's abilities in such a way as contributes to one's community; contribution, we can say, involves participation, where to participate is to have a part in a community

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<sup>15</sup> With reference to the dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon in book 1, Lloyd-Jones ([1971] p.11) remarks that "[c]oncern over property, even human property, would hardly have troubled the antagonists so much were it not that in their society one's share in booty reflected one's degree of *timē*. Their quarrel is over *timē* and only secondarily over property."

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle's comments (*Rh.* 1378b) on this passage with regard to *hybris* suggest that *timē*, in its broadest sense, is one's worth or value: ὅβρεως δὲ ἀτιμία, ὁ δ' ἀτιμάζων ὀλιγορεῖ: τὸ γὰρ μηδενὸς ἄξιον οὐδεμίαν ἔχει τιμὴν, οὔτε ἀγαθοῦ οὔτε κακοῦ: διὸ λέγει ὀργιζόμενος ὁ Ἀχιλλεὺς "ἠτίμησεν: ἐλὼν γὰρ ἔχει γέρας αὐτὸς" καὶ "ὥς εἴ τιν' ἀτίμητον μετανάστην". "And dishonour is characteristic of *hybris*, and the one dishonouring another slights him; for that which is worthless has no *timē*, neither good nor bad; for this reason Achilles, being angry, says 'He dishonoured me; for he holds my *geras*, having taken it away' and '[he treated me] as if I were a vagrant without a share of honour'." To not be recognized as a member of one's community, we can say, is to be regarded as worthless in the eyes of one's community. To the extent that I see *atimēton* as referring to not being a part of a community, I agree with Donlan's ([1982] p.162) rendering of *atimēton metanastēn* as "rightless migrant". On *atimia* and its relation to exile, see Forsdyke (2005) pp.10-11, with relevant scholarship cited.

and to play one's part in this community.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in Homer, as in Hesiod and later Greek thought, *timē* signifies both one's honour in society, one's status, and one's function in society, one's role, where to have a share of honour is to have and play a part in society.<sup>18</sup> This throws light on Achilles' claim that he would be called *outidanos* ('good-for-nothing', 'worthless') if he were to yield to Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.293-294). On the basis of Achilles' view, then, we can say that one's *timē* is negatively affected when one is deprived of one's portion of a good and, further, that to have one's *timē* taken away is to be treated as if one has no right or title in the community.<sup>19</sup> It is because Agamemnon

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<sup>17</sup> We might say that contribution involves partaking of one's community and partaking in one's community.

<sup>18</sup> In Hesiod, a god's or goddess' *timē* refers at once to his or her distinction in Olympian society and his or her specific function in the Olympian pantheon. This notion is most clearly expressed at Hes. *Th.* 383-403: Στυξ δ' ἔτεκ' Ὀκεανοῦ θυγάτηρ Πάλλαντι μιγεῖσα /Ζῆλον καὶ Νίκην καλλίσφυρον ἐν μεγάροισιν: /385καὶ Κράτος ἡδὲ Βίην ἀριδείκετα γείνατο τέκνα, /τῶν οὐκ ἔστ' ἀπάνευθε Διὸς δόμος, οὐδέ τις ἔδρη, /οὐδ' ὁδός, ὅππῃ μὴ κείνοις θεὸς ἡγεμονεύῃ, /ἀλλ' αἰεὶ παρ Ζηνὶ βαρυκτύπῳ ἐδριόωνται. /ὥς γὰρ ἐβούλευσεν Στυξ ἄφθιτος Ὀκεανίνῃ 390ἥματι τῷ, ὅτε πάντας Ὀλύμπιος ἀστεροπητῆς /ἀθανάτους ἐκάλεσσε θεοὺς ἐς μακρὸν Ὀλύμπον, /εἶπε δ', ὅς ἂν μετὰ εἶο θεῶν Τιτῆσι μάχοιτο, /μὴ τιν' ἀπορραΐσειν γεράων, τιμὴν δὲ ἕκαστον /ἐξέμεν, ἦν τὸ πάρος γε μετ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν /395τὸν δ' ἔφαθ', ὅστις ἄτιμος ὑπὸ Κρόνου ἡδ' ἀγέραςτος, /τιμῆς καὶ γεράων ἐπιβησέμεν, ἣ θέμις ἐστίν. /ἦλθε δ' ἄρα πρώτη Στυξ ἄφθιτος Οὐλυμπόνδε /σὺν σφοῖσιν παίδεσσι φίλου διὰ μήδεα πατρός. /τὴν δὲ Ζεὺς τίμησε, περισσὰ δὲ δῶρα δέδωκεν. /400αὐτὴν μὲν γὰρ ἔθηκε θεῶν μέγαν ἔμμεναι ὄρκον, /παῖδας δ' ἥματα πάντα ἐοῦ μεταναιέτας εἶναι. /ὥς δ' αὐτῶς πάντεσσι διαμπερές, ὥς περ ὑπέστη, /ἐξετέλεσσ': αὐτὸς δὲ μέγα κρατεῖ ἡδὲ ἀνάσσει. "Styx, Ocean's daughter, mingling with Pallas, bore Zelus (Rivalry) and beautiful-ankled Nike (Victory)/in her house, and she gave birth to Cratos (Supremacy) and Bia (Force), eminent children. These have no house apart/from Zeus nor any seat, nor any path except that on which/the god leads them, but they are always seated next to/deep-thundering Zeus. For this is what Styx, Ocean's eternal/daughter, planned on the day when the Olympian/lightener summoned all the immortal gods to high Olympus/and said that, whoever of the gods would fight together/with him against the Titans, him he would not strip of his/privileges, but that everyone would have the honor he had/had before among the immortal gods; and that whoever/had been without honor and without privilege because of/Cronus, him he would raise to honor and privileges, as is/established right. So eternal Styx came first of all to Olympus/with her own children, through the plans of her dear/father; and Zeus honored her and gave her exceptional/gifts. For he set her to be the great oath of the gods, and/her sons to dwell with him for all their days. Just as he/promised, so too he fulfilled for all, through and through;/and he himself rules mightily and reigns." (trans. Most [2006])

In this connection, see also Hes. *Th.* 76, 112, 201-206, 885. One can see how the pursuit of *aretē* fits with this conception of *timē*: they both involve participation in social life. For a discussion of *timē* in Greek political thought, see Ostwald (1996).

<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the condition of having no share in society is seen as extremely wretched. This is evident in what Achilles' shade says to Odysseus in the underworld in book 11 of the *Odyssey*. He bewails his being

does this without just cause that he is ‘clothed in shamelessness’ (*anaideiēn epieimene*: *Il.* 1.149; cf. 9.372), which is to say that he has no reverence (*aidōs*) for the claims of distributive justice; it is this lack that elicits Achilles’ indignation, his *nemesis*, and drives him to withdraw from participation.<sup>20</sup>

Having examined *geras* in relation to distributive justice, let us consider specifically what the receipt of *geras* entails in regard to communal obligations. As I have claimed, geometric equality in Homer requires that one’s share of honour, one’s *timē*, be in proportion to one’s *aretē*. We have seen that this is consistent with the principle that one’s share of honour should correspond to one’s contribution to the collective. Further, we have seen that to have *timē* is also to have membership in one’s community. As with the distribution of goods according to arithmetic equality, the distribution of *gera* is conducted by either the collective or an individual.<sup>21</sup> In return for this *geras*, it is expected that the honoured individual reciprocate – that is, that he benefit the giver of his *geras* in

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dead, saying that he would rather be a hired labourer (*thēteuemen*) of a man who has no share of land (*andri...aklērōi*) and few means (*hōi mē biotos polus eiē*) than rule over all the dead (*ē pasin nekuessi kataphthimenoisin anassein*: *Od.* 11.487-491). To live as a man who lacks his own means and who therefore does menial tasks for another (even if he is landless) in order to subsist is, we might say, to live like a slave. We can say that slaves, by virtue of not being of free status, have absolutely no share in society. Thus, it would seem the implication here is that lacking a share in society is a state preferable but nevertheless comparable to being dead. See Corner (2013a) pp.48-50 and Corner (2013b) pp.226-229 for a discussion of the *ptōkhos* (‘beggar’) in Homer and what this figure tells us about Homeric thought concerning labour, heteronomy, and servility. See also Corner (2010) esp. pp.360-361 for the relations between self-mastery, autonomy, and freedom.

<sup>20</sup> Recall that Achilles becomes wroth in response to Agamemnon’s statement that he will take away *someone’s* share; this implies that Achilles thinks Agamemnon should not deprive anyone of his share without just cause. But Achilles also feels indignation towards Agamemnon because Agamemnon took away his *geras*, his special share. We might say, then, that in Achilles’ view Agamemnon has *aidōs* for neither arithmetic nor geometric equality. For a discussion of the Embassy to Achilles in terms of the equitable distribution of shares and the claims of *timē*, see Allan and Cairns (2011).

<sup>21</sup> Instances of the *dēmos*, the Achaeans collectively, or a smaller collective (e.g., Odysseus’ crew) giving *gera* to individuals: *Il.* 1.123, 1.161, 1.276, 1.392, 2.228, 2.255, 10.215, 11.624-627, 13.378, 18.444, 23.537; *Od.* 7.8-11, 7.150, 9.160, 23.357-358. For *geras* as the special portion given by a host to a guest of honour, see Corner (forthcoming) chapter 1.

such a way as is proportionate to his *geras*. Consequently, in the context of the collective distribution of *gera*, one's *geras* usually comes with obligations to the collective.

The Cyclops episode illustrates the dynamics of *geras* exchange well. When Odysseus and his men enter Polyphemus' cave, they distribute by lot (*langkhanon*) Polyphemus' goats among themselves, but to Odysseus alone they give ten goats (*Od.* 9.159-160). Later, when the crew decides to blind Polyphemus, only Odysseus does not draw a lot to determine whether he will participate in the blinding; instead, he takes on the principal role in the endeavour (*Od.* 9.318-333). Then, having escaped from Polyphemus by following Odysseus' plan, the crew distribute among themselves the Cyclops' sheep, but give to Odysseus a ram as a mark of pre-eminence (*exokha: Od.* 9.548-551). Odysseus' first *geras*, we might say, came with the obligation to assume the role of leader when the safety of the collective required leadership; for fulfilling this obligation, Odysseus then received a second *geras*.<sup>22</sup>

The distribution of land in the Homeric political economy is similar to the distribution of *gera*. As Donlan has demonstrated, in Homer *temenē* – that is, portions of land – are given by the community to *basileis* as a reward for benefiting the community in some respect.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, according to Donlan, *temenē* are cut out not from land already occupied by the community but rather from marginal land, which is difficult to cultivate but potentially fruitful.<sup>24</sup> Since the *basileus* alone possesses the resources necessary for

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<sup>22</sup> In Donlan's ([1998] p.62) words, "[t]he leader is both inside and outside the allotment, of course; just as he may claim a *geras*, he is expected to take an extra portion of the danger." Donlan, however, reads this scene not in terms of distributive justice but rather in terms of generalized and balanced reciprocity (pp.60-61), using Sahlins' (1972) definition of those terms.

<sup>23</sup> Donlan (1999) pp. 304-305. Here, Donlan (1999) = Donlan (1989).

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* p.307, 311.

making this land productive, the community gives this land to the *basileus* not simply to possess but rather to cultivate; the *basileus* then both enjoys the produce of this land and is expected to redistribute this produce among the community.<sup>25</sup> Thus we can say that *temenē*, like *gera*, tie the honoured individual to his community in bonds of equitable reciprocity.

The *locus classicus* of this notion is Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus in book 12 of the *Iliad*. It is worth quoting the first portion of this passage in full:

310 Γλαῦκε τί ἦ δὴ νῶϊ τετιμήμεσθα μάλιστα  
ἔδρη τε κρέασιν τε ἰδὲ πλείοις δεπάεσσιν  
ἐν Λυκίῃ, πάντες δὲ θεοὺς ὥς εἰσορόωσι,  
καὶ τέμενος νεμόμεσθα μέγα Ξάνθοιο παρ' ὄχθας  
καλὸν φυταλιῆς καὶ ἀρούρης πυροφόροιο;  
315 τῷ νῦν χρὴ Λυκίοισι μέτα πρώτοισιν ἐόντας  
ἐστάμεν ἡδὲ μάχης καυστείρης ἀντιβολῆσαι,  
ὄφρα τις ὧδ' εἴπῃ Λυκίων πύκα θωρηκτάων:  
'οὐ μὰν ἀκλεέες Λυκίην κάτα κοιρανέουσιν  
ἡμέτεροι βασιλῆες, ἔδουσί τε πίονα μῆλα  
320 οἶνόν τ' ἔξαιτον μελιγδέα: ἀλλ' ἄρα καὶ ἴς  
ἐσθλή, ἐπεὶ Λυκίοισι μέτα πρώτοισι μάχονται.'

310 Glaucus, why are<sup>26</sup> we both especially honoured  
with seats and portions of meat and full cups  
in Lycia, and why does everyone gaze upon us as gods,  
and why do we both own a great tract of land by the banks of the  
Xanthus  
as well as a fair portion of orchard and wheat-bearing plough-land?  
315 Therefore it is now necessary that we stand among the foremost  
Lycians  
and take part in the fiery battle  
in order that one of the armoured Lycians may wisely say thus:  
'Indeed not inglorious are our *basileis* who rule throughout Lycia,

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* p.313.

<sup>26</sup> I have taken *tetimēmestha* as an empiric perfect, for which see Smyth (1920) n.1948. Given that the main verb here is an empiric perfect, and that such a perfect expresses a general truth based on experience, we can say that what Sarpedon says here is true of *basileis* generally, not just of himself and Glaucus. Havelock (1978) comes to a similar conclusion, claiming that "[w]hile in appearance Sarpedon's statement is spontaneous and personal, a reaction to a unique situation in the narrative and therefore itself unique, it is in fact a generic statement, a compendium of commonplaces reporting and also recommending certain institutions and attitudes which are normative for the audience to which the poem is addressed." (pp.109-110) In support of this argument he adduces other passages that are similar to Sarpedon's speech in both content and form (pp. 110-117; these passages are *Il.* 4.257-264, *Il.* 4.341-347, *Il.* 8.161-163, *Il.* 6.193-195, *Il.* 8.538-541, and *Il.* 13.825-828).

and they eat fat sheep  
320 and drink excellent honey-sweet wine; indeed, their strength too  
is good, since they fight among the foremost Lycians.’

Several conclusions can be drawn from this speech. Lines 310-316 make it clear that a necessary consequence (*tō...khrē*) of Sarpedon’s and Glaucus’ being given special portions of food (which we might call *gera*) and land (*temenos...mega*) is that they contribute to the Lycian community in such a way as matches the scale of their portions: since they are especially (*malista*) honoured, they must fight especially hard, in the frontlines. Further, the speech of the imagined Lycian suggests that in return for Sarpedon’s and Glaucus’ service on the battlefield the Lycians (so Sarpedon hopes) will continue to honour them as *basileis* – that is, they will grant them the privileges that come with being a *basileus*, including the privilege to rule as a *basileus*. This explains why elsewhere the rule of a *basileus* is itself called a *geras*.<sup>27</sup> We can say, then, that in Homer special portions come with commensurate prerogatives and obligations, and, more broadly, that one’s share determines what one may do and what one must do in relation to others.<sup>28</sup> This passage also makes it clear that were Sarpedon not to fight among the foremost Lycians – that is, were he not to reciprocate – he would suffer in respect of his *kleos* (‘glory’, ‘repute’); recall that the imagined Lycian, upon seeing Sarpedon and Glaucus in the frontlines, says that these *basileis* are *ou aklees* (‘not without *kleos*’).

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<sup>27</sup> *Geras* as rule of a *basileus*: *Od.* 11.184. Given what we have said about *geras*, it is not surprising that *geras* also refers to the prerogative of elders to make announcements to the *aristeis* (‘best men’) of the Achaeans: *Il.* 9.422.

<sup>28</sup> My reading of this passage is consonant with Havelock’s (1978). He remarks that Sarpedon and Glaucus “in return for performing military service for the society are rewarded, first, with public respect, second, with good and drink furnished free, and third, with property. They have the return obligation to give military leadership, presumably in the protection and service of the society. These privileges are conferred: they are neither appropriated by conquest nor gained by birth and inheritance.” (p.108) He sees the norms evident in this passage as similar to the institution of *euergetism* (pp.108-109), and therefore concludes that here “in embryo are institutions of the city-state both described and prescribed...” (p.109)



Performing these roles, in which excellence is demonstrated, is itself constitutive of glory—to demonstrate strength and fight in the front ranks is to appear glorious—as is the possession of the *geras* that one accrues by virtue of and as a token of doing so. Thus, on the basis of this passage, we can say that one maintains one's *kleos* by fulfilling the obligations that one owes by virtue of one's social and material relations with others. This ties in with the notion that to have *timē* is to have and play a part in society; to be a *basileus* is at once to be distinguished and to have a role that comes with privileges and obligations in regard to one's community. It is clear, then, that a *basileus* who does not contribute to his community puts his status as *basileus* in jeopardy. This squares with Achilles' rebuke of Agamemnon: a *basileus* who does not revere distributive justice does not deserve to be revered as a *basileus*.

### III: Distributive justice and Thersites

One might object to this latter claim – and, more broadly, my argument about the Homeric conception of justice – on the basis of the Thersites episode, since this scene seems to suggest that the claims of status – specifically, the status of a *basileus* – trump the claims of distributive justice. Let us, then, turn our attention to this scene. Here, Thersites asks Agamemnon what he craves (*khatizeis*), reminding him that he possesses much wealth and that the Achaeans gave this wealth to him (*Il.* 2.225-232). He then states that it is unseemly (*ou...eoiken*) for a ruler (*arkhon eonta*) to lead his men into misfortunes, and accordingly that the Achaeans should leave Agamemnon in Troy to 'digest his prizes' (*pessemen gera: Il.* 2.233-237). He also suggests that Agamemnon

acted disgracefully (*lōbēsaio*) when he deprived Achilles of his share of honor (*ētimēsen*) by taking away his *geras* (*Il.* 2.239-242). These claims are clearly grounded in reciprocity and distributive justice. Indeed, they are quite similar to the criticisms made by Achilles, who decried Agamemnon as a *basileus* who ‘devours his people’ (*dēmoboros*: *Il.* 1.231). However, unlike Achilles, Thersites is reprimanded and beaten by Odysseus, who asserts that Thersites should not quarrel with, speak ill of, or cast reproaches at *basileis* (*Il.* 2.246-266). Thus, one might say that Thersites criticizes Agamemnon for not acting in accordance with distributive justice, but is punished for speaking critically of Agamemnon, in spite of the justness of his criticism. If this reading is true, then my contention that distributive justice is central in the Homeric value system must be brought into question, or at least considerably qualified.

In my view, however, the key to understanding this scene from the perspective of the agents within the narrative is not status.<sup>29</sup> I contend that the disapprobation directed towards Thersites is best understood in light of the tone and context of his speech. We noted that in respect of content Thersites’ speech resembles Achilles’ own tirade against Agamemnon; in respect of motivation, however, it is markedly different. In the passage

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<sup>29</sup> Nagy (1999 [1979]) and Martin (1989) have demonstrated that we can provide an account of this scene from the vantage of poetics. In Nagy’s view, the altercation between Thersites and Odysseus represents at the metapoetic level a confrontation between blame poetry, *iambos*, and epic itself, *epos*, which is “here actually presenting itself as parallel to praise poetry by being an institutional opposite of blame poetry.” (p.260) That Thersites is a figure of *iambos* is evident in how he is characterized: he aims at making others laugh (*Il.* 2.214-215) and is himself laughed at (*Il.* 2.270); he is the most disgraceful of the Achaeans (*aiskhistos*: *Il.* 2.216); and the language of blame poetry (e.g., *neikos*, *oneidos*) pervades his speech (pp.262-264). In a similar vein, Martin observes that Thersites’ speech is the opposite of the ideal form of discourse in the Homeric poems: the hero’s proportionate speech, whereby one’s words match one’s deeds; one’s words are chosen carefully with regard to one’s audience; and one’s sentences are measured even at the level of rhythm and structure (pp.110-113). In this way the poem presents Thersites as the diametric opposite of Nestor, whose speech is the epitome of proportionate speech and, by extension, the diction of epic itself (p.113).

that introduces Thersites, we read that he quarrels with *basileis* (*erizemenai basileusin*) in a manner that he thinks will make the Achaeans laugh (*all' ho ti hoi eisaito geloïion Argeioisin / emmenai*) and that he is wont to reproach Achilles and Odysseus (*tō...neikeieske: Il. 2.214-221*).<sup>30</sup> Whereas Achilles employed abusive language out of a sense that Agamemnon had acted unjustly, Thersites uses this same language out of a desire to make others laugh. In Halliwell's words, Thersites is presented as a "mock orator, a parodist of the discourse of army councils": he attempts to make the assembled Achaeans laugh by mimicking the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon.<sup>31</sup> This in part explains why Thersites' and Achilles' claims are received differently. Nevertheless, one might still hold that status is what is at issue here. In this view, Thersites' mockery is deemed inappropriate by Odysseus simply because Thersites, with respect to status, is inferior to Agamemnon.

Yet, as Halliwell has noted, Thersites' status is ambiguous, as his role in the Achaean camp and his relation to the *basileis* are not clear.<sup>32</sup> It is therefore dubious to

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<sup>30</sup> *Neikeieske* has an iterative aspect, for which see Smyth (1920) n.495.

<sup>31</sup> Halliwell (2008) pp.75-76.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* pp.73-74. Halliwell also notes that in the *Aethiopis* Thersites' death at the hands of Achilles brings about factional conflict, *stasis*, in the Achaean camp, which perhaps suggests that Thersites is of high status. He mentions in this connection the post-Iliadic tradition in which Thersites is referred to as a relative of Diomedes (p.74). van Wees (1992) argues against the view that Thersites' status is ambiguous, contending that because the 'man of the *dēmos*' and Thersites are reprimanded in a similar fashion by Odysseus, Thersites is likely of low status (pp.353-354, n.58). He appeals in support of his position to the fact that there is no mention of Thersites' kin relation to Diomedes in Homer and that Thersites lacks a patronymic (*ibid.*). But, as we shall see, Odysseus acts out of consideration of the particular circumstances of this scene, not out of consideration of what status entails in regard to fair treatment. That Odysseus' reasons for his actions here are particular to the context prevents us from generalising about status in Homer on the basis of this scene. Nevertheless, one might, following van Wees (p.80; pp.351-352, n.46), argue that Odysseus does make a status distinction between *basileis*, to whom he speaks 'gentle words' (*aganois epeessin: Il. 2.189*), and 'men of the *dēmos*', whom he beats, commands to obey their betters (*pherteroi*), and whom he calls of no account in war or in council (*en polemōi enarithmios out' eni boulēi: Il. 2.198-20*). We should, however, pay attention to exactly what *Il. 2.198* says: 'But on the other hand whatsoever man of the *dēmos* he saw and found shouting' (*hon d' au dēmou t' andra idoi booōnta t' epheuroi*); this suggests that Odysseus does

assume that Thersites is of low status.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the view that sees status as central to the explanation of this episode overlooks the significance of Thersites' abusive language. Here, we need to consider briefly the dynamics of shameful speech (*aiskhrologia*). As Halliwell has demonstrated, in Greek thought speech that concerns shameful acts is a double-edged sword: it has the ability to shame others but can also bring shame upon its user. This is because one can incur shame for merely speaking about shameful acts, even if these acts are not one's own; with regard to certain topics, one

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not simply reprimand everyone who was not a *basileus*. We shall discuss in more detail below what Odysseus' speeches tell us about evaluative terms in Homer. In connection with Thersites' status, we should also note Fisher's ([1992] p.171) observation that the only individual of low status in the Homeric poems who is described as committing *hybris* – that is, as treating another who is one's equal or superior in respect of *timē* as one's inferior – is Melanthius, Odysseus' goatherd (*Od.* 17. 244-246). If Thersites were of low status, would we not expect his tirade against Agamemnon to be reproached as an act of *hybris*? On *hybris* and its relation to the claims of distributive justice, see below.

<sup>33</sup> Some scholars have argued that Thersites' speech represents the ideology of commoners, 'the view from below', in contrast to the dominant ideology of the Homeric poems, which supposedly is aristocratic. Finley ([1988 {1954}] pp.111-112) holds this view. Donlan (1999) argues that Thersites' speech is "non-heroic" in its tenor and that his speech "reflects the sentiments of the non-aristocratic host", in spite of his observation that Thersites' speech shares ground with Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus in book 12 of the *Iliad* (pp.21-22). He also assumes that Thersites is an ordinary soldier (p.22). Detienne (1996 [1967]), seeing deliberative speech (or, in his terms, 'dialogue-speech', the diametric opposite of magicoreligious speech) in early Greece as a preserve of a warrior-elite, claims that "Odysseus' treatment of Thersites, the epitome of the man of the *dēmos*, reflects the limits of egalitarian speech. When Thersites raises his voice in dissent, Odysseus does not bother to attempt to win him over but simply belabors him with blows of the sceptre. Thersites is a common man, lacking the right to speak because he is not a fighting man." (p.103). In my view, we can find a better explanation, in which status does not figure, for why Thersites is reprimanded elsewhere in Detienne's argument. He has demonstrated that the *skēptron* symbolizes the right to address the assembly and that he who holds the *skēptron* is expected to speak on behalf of all (pp.95-96). If we take into account the fact that Thersites both speaks in the assembly without holding the *skēptron* and does not speak on behalf of all – to the extent that, as Nagy has noted ([1999 {1979}] p.263), he misrepresents the anger of Achilles – we can say, drawing on Detienne, that Thersites also warrants reproach by virtue of contravening the norms of public speaking. Thalmann (1988) criticizes the view that Thersites is rebuked simply because he forgets his place, but he nevertheless also sees Thersites as a commoner and as a marginal and comic figure who, by virtue of his status as such a figure, blurs class distinctions (pp.16-17). In his view, Thersites and Achilles are treated differently, despite the fact that they say similar things, because they are different with respect to class (*ibid.*). I find this latter claim unconvincing for several reasons. First, as we have seen, Thersites' status is ambiguous. Second, we do not have evidence in this passage of class *stricto sensu*: never is it said that Thersites is poor. Third, Thersites ridicules, whereas Achilles inveighs; their speeches may be similar at the level of utterances, but they are decidedly different as speech-acts. I might add that it is quite difficult to imagine anyone treating Achilles in a manner that is similar to how Odysseus treats Thersites, simply given who Achilles is: an individual who possesses godlike wrath and who surpasses all others in martial prowess.

cannot distance oneself from the shamefulness to which one's words refer.<sup>34</sup> But *aiskhrologia* is not just about discussing shameful things; more fundamentally, it is about speaking in a shameful manner.<sup>35</sup> According to Halliwell, *aiskhrologia* encompasses "language that causes...individual or social offense by obtrusively breaching norms of acceptable speech."<sup>36</sup> It is germane to our inquiry concerning Thersites to note three kinds of speech that fall under this category: vituperation; scurrilous ridicule; and speech that refers to sexual acts in a non-technical manner.<sup>37</sup> In view of this, we can say that Thersites is a practitioner of *aiskhrologia*: as we have seen, he uses abusive language in his mockery of Agamemnon.<sup>38</sup> We can also detect *aiskhrologia* when Thersites asks Agamemnon – in whose huts, he says, are many women (*pollai de gunaikes / eisin eni klisiēis*) – whether he is still in need of (*eti...epideueai*) a young woman (*gunaika neēn*) to have sex with (*misgeai en philotēti*: *Il.* 2.226-232).<sup>39</sup> Thus, what Thersites says and how

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<sup>34</sup> Halliwell (2008) pp.222-223.

<sup>35</sup> That is, *aiskhrologia* is understood as shameful in virtue of its form: it is ugly or foul (*aiskh[r]os*), and therefore is disgraceful (also *aiskh[r]os*) even when the objects to which it refers are not shameful *per se* (ibid; see also p.221 and n.13). We can understand the relation in Greek thought between the aesthetic and the ethical, as evidenced by the term *aiskhos/aiskhros*, in terms of the dynamics of shame (*aidōs*), in which, as Williams (2008 [1993] *passim*, esp. pp.73-74, pp.75-101) has shown, how the way one appears not only to others but also to oneself (specifically, to a generalized other that one imagines) figures in one's moral decisions. On the aesthetic and ethical significance of the terms *aiskhos*, *aiskhros*, and *aiskhunē* ('disfigurement', 'disgrace'), as well as the relation between ugliness and disgracefulness, see Cairns (1993) pp.54-60.

<sup>36</sup> ibid. pp.219-220. In light of this, we can say that my contention, which draws on Detienne's argument (see above), that Thersites is reprimanded for not observing the norms of public speaking is consonant with the broader claim that Thersites is reproached because he speaks aiskhrologically.

<sup>37</sup> ibid. pp.219-220.

<sup>38</sup> We might also say that Thersites is presented as the embodiment of *aiskhrologia*, inasmuch as he is called the most *aiskhros* of the Achaeans (*aiskhistos*: *Il.* 2.216) and accordingly is described as ugly: he is bowlegged (*pholkos*); is lame in one foot (*khōlos...poda*); has rounded shoulders that stoop over his chest (*tō de hoi ōmō / kurtō, epi stēthos sunokhōkote*); has a pointy head (*phoxos eēn kephalēn*); and is balding (*psednē d' epenēnothe lakhnē*: *Il.* 2.216-219). It is important in this connection to note Cairns' ([1993] p.58) observation that *Il.* 2.216 is the only instance in Homer of *aiskhros* as an adjective with a person as its referent.

<sup>39</sup> For the sexual connotations of the verb *misgemenai* and the noun *philotēs*, see Autenrieth (1960 [1877]) s.v. ditto. See also *Od.* 8. 250ff. (i.e., Ares' and Aphrodite's affair).

he says it are decidedly shameful; this, I contend, gives us better purchase on why Thersites and Achilles are treated differently than does the argument that Thersites is reprimanded simply for speaking beyond his station.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, the broader context of this episode suggests that Odysseus punishes Thersites for his ridicule ultimately with a view to preserving the political order of the Achaean camp. In the previous scene, Agamemnon's authority as the paramount *basileus* is severely diminished. He attempts to test the mettle of the Achaeans by observing how they respond to the statement that it is Zeus' will that they leave Troy (*Il.* 2.72-75). His plan, however, goes awry: all the Achaeans, even the *basileis* who were privy to his intentions, rush to the ships (*Il.* 2.142-154).<sup>41</sup> It is only because Odysseus, at the exhortation of Athena, persuades the *basileis* not to flee and chides the rank-and-file for

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<sup>40</sup> One might contend that Achilles' speech, to the extent that it vilifies Agamemnon and employs abusive speech, is also an instance of *aiskhrologia*, and therefore that the dynamics of shameful speech do not explain why Thersites is reprimanded. But I would argue that the shameful speech is underscored by the fact that he does not speak in accordance with the norms of public speaking (see above), which Achilles, to the extent that he speaks while holding the *skēptron*, does adhere to. I might add that Thersites' speech also falls short of the conventions of flyting that heroes are expected to observe. On these conventions, see Martin (1989) pp.66-77. I disagree, however, with Martin's claim that Thersites is treated as a "commoner" (if he means by this term 'non-aristocratic') inasmuch as Odysseus does not engage in flyting with him but merely rebukes him (p.66). As Martin himself has demonstrated, Homeric heroes evaluate each other's speech in terms of style (*passim*), and Thersites' discourse is, as he notes (pp.110-113), evaluated in this way. With reference to Thersites' epithet *akritomuthos*, Martin claims (p.111) that "Thersites' style deserves no respect because he does not have the heroic martial performance record needed to back up his words: again, style for the hero is a total notion, a proportion of words and deeds...The verbal idea contained in the first part of [*akritomuthos*] is one of careful selection...in a word, critical ability. The term, then, underscores a performance value, the capacity to judge one's own acts and be judged for them." In light of this, we can say that Thersites is taken to task not because of his (alleged) status as a commoner but rather because of the deficiency of his speech in respect of *heroic*, not aristocratic, rhetorical ideals. See also Martin's interpretation (pp.112-113) of the epithet *ametroepēs*, which, in his view, refers to how Thersites' speech sounds: "without meter". We can, then, understand *ametroepēs* as a term that underlines the ugliness, and so disgracefulness, of Thersites' speech.

<sup>41</sup> It is not just the *basileis* who did not attend the council in which Agamemnon revealed his plan whom Odysseus persuades to return to the assembly. This is evident in the speech that Odysseus makes to each *basileus*, in which he says 'did we all not hear what he [i.e., Agamemnon] said in council?' (*en boulēi d'ou pantes akousamen hoion eeipe: Il.* 2.194).

fleeing that the Achaeans do not sail home.<sup>42</sup> This leaves Agamemnon looking powerless.

In this connection we should note how Odysseus restrains the Achaeans: he takes from Agamemnon<sup>43</sup> the very symbol of his authority, the *skēptron* ('sceptre', 'staff') that was passed down from Zeus to the house of Atreus (*Il.* 2.102-108; cf. *Il.* 2.186); he reminds the *basileis* he encounters that Agamemnon's share of honour is from Zeus (*timē d' ek Dios esti: Il.* 2.197); and he asserts, in his coercion of the rank-and-file, that the rule of many lords is not good (*ouk agathon polukoironiē*) and that there should be one *basileus* (*heis koiranos estō, / heis basileus: Il.* 2.204-205). Here, Odysseus is not just taking the initiative but rather is acting as the paramount *basileus* on behalf of Agamemnon; although his intention is to preserve Agamemnon's authority, by acting in this way Odysseus in effect shows Agamemnon to be an incapable ruler.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the political order of the Achaean camp here hangs by a thread. In view of these circumstances, we can say that Odysseus punishes Thersites in order to save face for Agamemnon, and thereby maintain his position as the leader of the Achaean host, by heading off the ridicule directed at him. Understood in this way, the Thersites episode does not demonstrate that

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<sup>42</sup> As the poet says, without the intervention of Hera, 'a return home beyond what was ordained would have then happened for the Argives' (*Entha ken Argeioisin hypermora nostos etukhē: Il.* 2.155). The chain of events is thus: Hera commands Athena to restrain the Achaeans with gentle words (*Il.* 2.157-165); Athena gives this command to Odysseus (*Il.* 2.166-181); Odysseus decides to persuade *basileis* and preeminent men with gentle words (*Il.* 2.188-189) and to chide and beat with the *skēptron* every 'man of the *dēmos*' whom he finds shouting (*Il.* 2.198-199).

<sup>43</sup> One might contend that the Greek at *Il.* 2.186 allows for the possibility that Agamemnon gives the *skēptron* to Odysseus (the verb, *dexato*, of which Odysseus is the subject, can signify the act of receiving: see Autenrieth [1960 {1877} s.v. *dekhthai*), and therefore might claim that Odysseus is not taking the initiative here. In my view, however, the narrative makes it clear that it is Odysseus' plan to take the *skēptron*. First, Agamemnon does not say in his speech to the *basileis* in council that any one of them should use his *skēptron*; he merely says that the *basileis* should restrain the Achaeans with words (*erētuein epeessin: Il.* 2.75). Second, Agamemnon does not say anything to Odysseus as he takes the *skēptron*; we are meant, I think, to imagine Agamemnon here as stunned and rendered speechless by the Achaeans' flight to the ships.

<sup>44</sup> On the ironies evident in this scene in regard to Agamemnon's political authority, see Thalmann (1988) pp.7-14 and Hammer (2002) pp.88-89.

where the claims of status pertain, the claims of distributive justice do not carry weight, or, more broadly, that status is superordinate in the Homeric value system. Rather, it shows, at the level of narrative, that in Homer agents act out of consideration of the circumstances that they find themselves in. We shall return to this point shortly.

#### IV: Distributive justice and the funeral games for Patroclus

I have argued thus far that the Homeric conception of justice pertains in many contexts and that its claims are taken quite seriously. One can test this argument best by examining how in the world of Homer prizes are distributed in athletic contests, since one would expect distributive justice to be most rigorously observed in this context: a contest is fair – indeed, is a genuine contest – only when contestants receive prizes by virtue of their placing, which in principle should correspond to their athletic excellence. The funeral games held in honour of Patroclus, however, do not present a neat correlation between one's prize and one's athletic performance. In spite of the fact that Eumelus came last in the chariot race, Achilles decides to give the prize (*aethlion*) for second place to him, on the grounds that Eumelus is the best man (*ōristos* – i.e., *ho aristos*: *Il.* 23.536-538). Antilochus, the second-place charioteer, then protests, arguing that Eumelus should not be given this prize, since he did not win it (*Il.* 23.543-554). In turn, Menelaus disputes Antilochus' claim to this prize, contending that he, not Antilochus, deserves this prize, as Antilochus bested him through deceitful means (*Il.* 23.570-585). Antilochus then concedes and gives the second place prize to Menelaus (*Il.* 23.587-595). The fifth place prize, unclaimed by Eumelus, Achilles gives to Nestor as a piece of treasure (*keimēlion*)



and as a memento of Patroclus' burial (*Patrokloio taphou mnēm'*), since Nestor, he claims, will never again participate in athletic contests, due to his old age (*Il.* 23.618-623). Having received this prize, Nestor recounts his past athletic achievements and then remarks that he is pleased (*khairei*) that Achilles always remembers his share of honour (*aei memnēsai...timēs*), for which, he says, it is fitting that he is honoured among the Achaeans (*hēs te m' eoike tetimēsthai met' Akhaiois: Il.* 23.626-649).<sup>45</sup> Lastly, when Agamemnon and Meriones elect to compete with one another in a contest of throwing spears, Achilles gives the first place prize to Agamemnon before the contest even begins; he explains his decision by saying that the Achaeans know (*idmen*) that Agamemnon surpasses all others (*probebēkas hapantōn*) and is the best (*aristos*) with respect to strength (*dunamei*) and the throwing of spears (*ēmasin: Il.* 23.891-894). Although it is not clear here in what respect Eumelus is *aristos* or *esthlos*, it is said earlier that Eumelus is skilled in horsemanship (*hos hipposunēi ekekasto: Il.* 23.289), and so we can assume that Eumelus is called *esthlos* and *aristos* by reason of this skill, despite the fact that his performance in the race did not display this skill.

It is clear, then, that one's performance is not all that is taken into account in the distribution of prizes, at least in this particular competition. What follows from this? Finkelberg argues that these funeral games demonstrate that in Homer the criterion according to which prizes are distributed is *timē*: the distribution of prizes, in her view, merely reflects the social hierarchy of the contestants.<sup>46</sup> According to van Wees, this scene belies the historical reality in which the Homeric epics were composed – that is, a

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<sup>45</sup> Again, I have taken this perfect as an empiric perfect.

<sup>46</sup> Finkelberg (1998) p.17.

society in which the determinants of status were wealth and birth, and accordingly in which one did not – indeed, could not – obtain status through open competition.<sup>47</sup> In his view, scenes in Homer that bespeak egalitarianism in respect of status can be explained away as a pretense of the poet; this (allegedly) rigged athletic contest, on the other hand, gives the game away – a fundamentally aristocratic ideology of status underlies the Homeric value system.<sup>48</sup> Adkins sees the apparent confusion here in regard to the distribution of prizes as arising from a conflict between two incompatible value systems; as he sees it, this conflict concerns whether rewards should be distributed on the basis of one's actions or of some other moral quality that one possesses.<sup>49</sup> It seems, then, that these arguments cast doubt on my view of the Homeric conception of justice and my contention that this conception of justice is central in the Homeric value system.

These arguments, however, stand to be criticised. In my view, Achilles, here the allocator of prizes, cleaves to distributive justice while also weighing other moral and prudential imperatives. He seeks to arbitrate between different claims to fair treatment, with a view to avoiding the kind of conflict that arises when shares are not distributed equitably – that is, the kind of conflict that played out between Agamemnon and himself. We should note first that Eumelus lost the race because he was thrown from his chariot by accident (*Il.* 23.391-397).<sup>50</sup> The sight of Eumelus coming in last causes Achilles to feel pity (*ōikteire*: *Il.* 23.534), because, one assumes, Achilles esteems Eumelus, and therefore believes that he did not merit suffering that accident. Since the word *ōikteire* occurs in the

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<sup>47</sup> van Wees (1992) pp. 82-83, 94-95, 99-100.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Adkins (1960) pp.55-56.

<sup>50</sup> That is, Athena destroyed his chariot.

text immediately before Achilles' decision, we can say that pity impels Achilles to give Eumelus the second-place prize. That the Achaeans assent to his decision (*Il.* 23.539-540) suggests that they all feel similarly with respect to Eumelus and that they, following Achilles, think that it is right (*hōs epieikes: Il.* 23.537) to reward Eumelus in this way. We should also note how Antilochus frames his claim to justice. He begins his argument by saying that he will become wroth (*kekholōsomai*) if Achilles takes away his prize (*aphairēsesthai aethlon: Il.* 23.543-544); this should remind us of Achilles' own arguments against Agamemnon. In response to Antilochus' claims, Achilles adjusts his decision, giving Antilochus his due share while at the same time providing Eumelus with a consolatory prize (*Il.* 23.558-562). He attempts, it seems, to negotiate between the sentiments of pity and the claims of distributive justice, aiming not to elicit Antilochus' righteous anger.<sup>51</sup>

How does this compare to what Achilles does in relation to Nestor? It is important to note that by giving the unclaimed prize to Nestor Achilles did not deprive another of his due share; he therefore does not violate arithmetic or geometric equality. Further, given that this prize was unclaimed and that it was originally one of Achilles' own possessions, we can say that Achilles maintains ownership of this prize, and so can

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<sup>51</sup> Like Achilles and Antilochus, Menelaus is concerned with distributive justice in this scene. Although Menelaus does assert that his *aretē* is superior to Antilochus', he does not argue that he merits the second-place prize only by reason of his superior *aretē*. Rather, he argues that he would have come in second place had Antilochus not used unfair racing tactics. Significantly, he also exhorts the leaders of the Argives to judge his argument, lest someone say (*mē pote tis eipēisin*) that he received the second place prize only by virtue of his *aretē* and his *biē* (*Il.* 23.570-578). Thus, we can say that Menelaus grounds his argument primarily in distributive justice.

allocate this prize as a gift to whomever he wishes.<sup>52</sup> We can also say, on the basis of what Achilles says to Nestor and what Nestor says in turn, that Achilles decides to give Nestor a gift out of pity and out of a sense that Nestor should have a share of honour, which, in Nestor's view, he merits by virtue of the athletic excellence that he displayed in the past (and, one assumes, the excellence in counsel that he continues to display). Thus, the motivations that impelled Achilles to reward Nestor are similar to those that informed his decision to give Eumleus a prize.

For what reasons does Achilles reward Agamemnon? In my view, we can answer this question by considering the broader context of the funeral games. At this point in the narrative of the *Iliad*, Agamemnon's political authority has been brought into question on multiple occasions. Hammer remarks that "[t]hrough the first nine books, the *Iliad* traces the consequences of Agamemnon's leadership, revealing a seemingly paradoxical situation in which Agamemnon's exercise of authority leaves him without power."<sup>53</sup> This we witnessed in the Thersites episode. Moreover, in book 19, Agamemnon admits that he acted out of *atē* ('madness') when he deprived Achilles of his due share and gives gifts of recompense to Achilles in front of the assembled Achaeans (*Il.* 19.78-183). Thus, by book 23, Agamemnon appears quite diminished with respect to his status as the paramount *basileus*. One might say, then, that by exempting Agamemnon from the spear-throwing competition, Achilles saves face for Agamemnon: he prevents Agamemnon's honour from being further degraded by defeat at the hands of Meriones. In this way Achilles'

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<sup>52</sup> For a discussion of this scene in relation to collective and individual ownership, see Detienne (1996 [1967]) pp. 92-95.

<sup>53</sup> Hammer (2002) p.86.

actions resemble Odysseus' in the Thersites episode, to the extent that Agamemnon's *timē* is bound up with the political order of the Achaean camp.<sup>54</sup>

In the case of the chariot race, we can see that Achilles does not disregard distributive justice but rather attempts to adhere to it and at the same time to take into account other claims upon his moral sentiments. It is true, however, that Achilles' decision to reward Agamemnon does not accord with distributive at all. But this does not show *ipso facto* that in Homer the claims of distributive justice do not carry weight, or that competitions are rigged to favour those of high status. We must remember here that the Homeric epics are literary representations of the world, and as such they picture the complexity of human life. Homer presents us with agents who, like Achilles, at times find themselves torn between general principles and particular circumstances, between the requirements of, say, justice and practical expediency. In my view, Achilles' actions at Patroclus' funeral games and Odysseus' treatment of Thersites do not constitute evidence against my claims about the Homeric conception of justice; rather, they reflect how agents are at times impelled by the demands particular to the context in which these agents find themselves. Here, we see that in the world of Homer, as in the real world, individuals have complex reasons for their actions. As we shall see, this point is amply demonstrated by the complexity of the ethical concepts that we find in Homer.

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Allan and Cairns (2011) p.136: "...Achilles refuses to allow Agamemnon a chance to compete and thus prove his worth among the leaders, so that this exemption from competition, though perhaps superficially 'gracious', and no doubt capable of being seen as an attempt to protect Agamemnon's face, can also be regarded as a means of bolstering Achilles' own superiority." In my view, however, we should qualify this claim: Achilles surely does not want to bring about another quarrel by slighting Agamemnon's honour, since, as I have argued, this is precisely what he is trying to avoid in this scene.

## V: Conclusion

We have seen that distributive justice in the world of Homer turns on two conceptions of equality, and that the fundamental difference between these two conceptions concerns how shares should be distributed. Arithmetic and geometric equality, we noted, pertain in the distribution of food, plunder, and land. It was shown that one's share of these goods is a token of one's share of honour, one's *timē*. We then noted that to have a share of honour is not only to have distinction in one's community but also to be a member of one's community. We later expanded on this thought, saying that to have a share of honour is to have a share in society – that is, to have a part in a community and to play one's part in this community. Further, it was shown that special shares of goods – *gera* and *temenē* – are distributed according to one's contribution to one's community. To be rewarded for one's contribution, we observed, is to be rewarded for one's *aretē*, since it is necessary to possess some sort of *aretē* to make a contribution and, further, the *aretai* for which one wins the highest distinction are those that make one especially able to contribute. We have also seen that special shares come with commensurate prerogatives and obligations in regard to one's community. This is consonant with the notion that what one may do in relation to others is delimited by one's share in society – that is, one's station. Accordingly, just action is understood fundamentally in terms of the equitable distribution of shares. As we shall now see, this deeply affects how appropriate behaviour is understood in the world of Homer.

## Chapter Two: Homeric ethical thought

### I: Introduction

In the preceding chapter, we saw that great opprobrium attends the violation of distributive justice. Indeed, we observed that the equitable distribution of shares is at the heart of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, around which the *Iliad* is structured. This in and of itself illustrates the importance of distributive justice in the Homeric value system. My primary aim in this chapter is to demonstrate that this conception of justice emerges as central in a system of value predicated on the ideas of portion and proportion. In Homeric thought, I shall argue, appropriateness and justness are predicated on the notion that each and every individual should act in accordance with his *moira* or *aisa* – that is, his portion, his place in the arrangement (*kosmos*) of shares: the order of actors in a given context; the order of society; and the order of the world. This means, first and foremost, that when one acts in such a way as does not overstep the bounds of what one's share is in a given situation, such that one does not upset the order of shares, one is understood to be acting decorously and appropriately and, if the situation concerns the distribution of goods, justly. Further, I suggest that one who is concerned with propriety and/or justness has reverence (*aidōs*) for the order of shares, and accordingly feels shame (*aidōs*, *aiskhunē*) at the prospect of depriving others of their due shares. The appropriate and/or just person, then, has a certain disposition, the mark of which is a concern for proper distribution, and so for others' shares and not just one's own. But to develop this disposition, one must, in the Homeric view, be moderate with regard to one's wants. This is because, as we shall see, Homeric ethical thought sees one

who is possessed of excessive desire as one who is mindful only of one's own pleasures, and therefore as wont to disregard the claims that others have upon one. In this thought, excessive desire makes one want to have more than one's share; it drives one to greed and thus to injustice. This complex of values concerning appropriateness, justness, and desire is most clearly expressed through the representation of individuals who are explicitly contrasted with *enaisimoi* ('measured', 'proper', 'just', 'right-minded') and *dikaioi* ('right', 'righteous', 'just', 'observant of custom') persons and who are characterized by excess in respect of their wants. In exploring this representation, we will also see that individuals across the social spectrum of Homeric society are held to account in terms of the proper order of shares. Altogether, then, I contend that this view of appropriateness and justness is the fundamental standard according to which one's behaviour is evaluated.

## II: *Kosmos*, *moira*, and *aisa*

As I have said, one's behaviour in the world of Homer is judged as appropriate and just on the basis of one's portion in the order of shares and the degree to which one comports oneself in accordance with one's portion. To clarify this claim, let us first consider the significance of the term *kosmos*. In Homer, as in Greek thought generally, *kosmos* at base signifies 'order', 'array', or 'arrangement'.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, *kosm*-stem terms occur in diverse contexts: the verb *kosmein*, 'to set in order', is applied to the marshalling of men (e.g., *Il.* 12.87) and the preparation of food (*Od.* 7.13); the noun *kosmētōr*, 'orderer', denotes a military leader (*Il.* 1.16); the adjective *kosmētos*, 'ordered',

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<sup>1</sup> See Cunliffe 2012 (1924) and *LSJ* s.v. *kosmos*. See also Cartledge (1998) esp. pp.3-4 for a discussion of *kosmos* in Greek thought.



is used of gardens (*Od.* 7.127); and the approbative *eukosmos* ('well-ordered') is used adverbially at *Od.* 21. 123, where Telemachus impresses the suitors by his orderly (*eukosmōs*) setting up of the axes for the archery contest. All this suggests that in Homer *kosmos* signifies a systematic arrangement – 'order' – and, further, the aesthetically pleasing (or 'cosmetic') nature of such an arrangement.

It is not surprising, then, that in Homer the phrase *kata kosmon* ('according to order', 'orderly') is used when arms and armour are laid out (*Il.* 10.472), when chariots are drawn up in formation (*Il.* 11.48), and when meat is prepared (*Il.* 24.622). In some instances, however, *kata kosmon* conveys not just regularity but also propriety. Specifically, it connotes both a system of values, norms, and practices that undergird relations between members of a community ('a social order') and the communal stability ('social order') that this system generates.<sup>2</sup> At *Od.* 3.136-138, for instance, Nestor relates that after Athena brought about *eris* ('strife') between Agamemnon and Menelaus, they recklessly (*maps*) and not in accordance with *kosmos* (*ou kata kosmon*) summoned an assembly of the Achaeans, which was held at sunset. The timing of the assembly explains why this action is viewed as contrary to *kosmos*: elsewhere, it is said that a man usually<sup>3</sup> leaves the *agora* before supper (*Od.* 12.439); here, the Achaeans are described as arriving

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<sup>2</sup> Thus, the concept of *kosmos* is at once social, ethical, and aesthetic. This is to be expected, given the close connection between the aesthetic and the ethical in Greek thought, as evidenced by the language of disgrace and, above all, the evaluative term *kalos* ('fine', 'noble', 'beautiful'). For the relation between the aesthetic and ethical, and how this relation is explicable in terms of the dynamics of shame and disgrace, see above, ch.1 n.35. The Homeric view of *kosmos* is in keeping with that of the lexicographer Hesychius, who defines the phrase *kata kosmon* as *kata tropon* ('according to manner/habit'), *en taxeī* ('in an arrangement'), *kata to deon* ('according to what is right/obligatory'), and *kata to kathēkon* ('according to what is established') (Hsch. K.1180). Similarly, the *Suda* defines *ou kata kosmon* as *ou kata to prepon* ('not in accordance with what is proper': O.860).

<sup>3</sup> The main verb at *Od.* 12.439 is a gnomic aorist (*anestē*), and therefore renders this statement generally true, and so in this way normative.

to the assembly drunk (*Od.* 3.139). This gathering of troops results in factionalism, in part, one assumes, because of the quarrelsomeness that attends drunkenness. We might say, then, that the decision to hold an assembly in the evening was not consonant with *kosmos* on the grounds that it was a disorderly procedure, giving rise to social discord.

That *kosmos* connotes a social order is particularly evident at *Il.* 5.757-763. Here, Hera asks Zeus whether he feels indignation (*nemesizēi*) in regard to the oppressive deeds (*kartera erga*) committed by Ares, who, she says, has destroyed a host of Achaeans *ou kata kosmon* and does not know any *themistes* ('established laws', 'customs', 'pronouncements of justice'). The presence of *nemesis* and *themis* in this passage points up the moral significance of *kosmos*: Ares does not just slay Achaeans in a chaotic fashion; his actions are beyond the pale, the sphere of *themis*, and accordingly constitute a breach of *aidōs* and therefore warrant *nemesis*. The moral force of *kosmos* is also suggested by the poet's description of Thersites, where it is said that, among other things, Thersites quarrels with *basileis ou kata kosmon* (*Il.* 2.213-214). As we observed in the previous chapter, Thersites is punished by Odysseus for two reasons: first, because his employment of *aiskhrologia* violated the norms of public speaking; and second, because his scurrilous ridicule of Agamemnon threatened to upend the political order of the Achaean camp. In view of this, we can say that *ou kata kosmon* here refers to Thersites' wont to speak abusively and, further, to the socially disruptive nature of Thersites' speech.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, when Euryalus, a Phaeacian, insults Odysseus by claiming that he is a

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<sup>4</sup> See above, pp.17-24. In my view, the term *akosmos* ('disordered'), a *hapax legomenon* that describes Thersites' words (*Il.* 2.213), likely refers to the 'ugliness/shamefulness' (*aiskhos*) of Thersites' slurring, not only in the sense of insulting another but also in the sense of muddling one's words. See Martin (1989)

greedy merchant who does not possess athletic excellence, Odysseus responds by saying that he has spoken *ou kata kosmon* (*Od.* 8.179). Given that Odysseus is the guest of the Phaeacian king Alcinous, one can say that Odysseus judges Euryalus' speech as dissonant with *kosmos* on the grounds that Euryalus is a member of the host's party, and so is expected to observe the norms of hospitality, which require first and foremost that one honour one's guests.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, when Odysseus, disguised as a beggar from Crete, tells Eumaeus, his host, that he heard that Odysseus was entertained by the king of the Thesprotians, Eumaeus accuses Odysseus of speaking *ou kata kosmon*, since, in his view, he is lying (*Od.* 14.361-389). Again, the norms of hospitality are implied: a guest should not disrespect his host, and so Odysseus should not lie to Eumaeus.<sup>6</sup> Taken together, these passages suggest that the phrase *ou kata kosmon* signifies an action that in some way violates the social order and accordingly threatens to bring about discord, either within a community (as in the case of Thersites) or between individuals from different communities (as in the case of Odysseus and Euryalus).

We can, however, understand the phrase *ou kata kosmon* in relation to a particular sort of behaviour. In Homer, disorderliness, as conveyed by this phrase, is associated specifically with behaviour that is marked by the lack of self-restraint, born either of one's temporary or permanent ethical condition. In other words, disorderliness is understood in connection with wantonness. A closer reading of these passages shows that

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pp.112-113 for an analysis of Thersites' diction, which, he notes, is marked by correption, and therefore slurring, and, further, is evaluated as deficient with regard to the heroic style of speech.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the norms of hospitality in Homeric society, specifically with reference to the crimes of the suitors, see Fisher (1992) pp.156-175. See also Konstan (1997) pp.33-37 for a discussion of the term *xenos* and its relation to *philos* in Homer.

<sup>6</sup> This is in keeping with the injunction, which we find throughout the *Odyssey*, that a guest speak precisely (*atrekeōs*) to his host (e.g., *Od.* 1.169).

this is the case. Recall that Agamemnon and Menelaus are pitted against one another by Athena and are described as acting recklessly (*maps*). This suggests that they act out of temporary *atē* ('madness', 'folly', or 'infatuation').<sup>7</sup> Ares, both in book 5 and elsewhere in the *Iliad*, is called *atos polemoio* (*Il.* 5.388, 5.863, 6.203) – i.e., 'insatiate of war' – and in Hera's speech to Zeus he is also described as acting recklessly (*maps*: *Il.* 5.759). He is, in short, portrayed as a figure of wantonness. Thersites is likewise characterized: Odysseus decries Thersites as *aphrainonta* ('foolish', 'mad': *Il.* 2.258), and the Achaeans, witnessing Thersites being punished by Odysseus, exclaim that Thersites' *thumos agēnōr* ('manly/arrogant spirit') will never again drive him to quarrel with *basileis* (*Il.* 2.276-277), which, in light of *Il.* 2.221, the reader knows is his wont. In response to Euryalus' insult, Odysseus claims that Euryalus resembles a wanton man (*atasthalōi andri eoikas*) and that his mind is *apophōlios* ('empty', 'useless': *Od.* 8.166-177). Lastly, before Odysseus relates his wanderings, Eumaeus asserts that vagabonds, since they are in need of sustenance, tell lies and do not desire to speak the truth (*Od.* 14.125-126), and upon hearing Odysseus' tale, he claims that Odysseus lies recklessly (*mapsidiōs*: *Od.* 14.365). In Eumaeus' view, we can say, Odysseus is incontinent insofar as he cannot, by virtue of his material condition as a beggar, observe the norms of hospitality: for want of food, he is compelled to invent stories. Thus, behaviour that is contrary to *kosmos* not only transgresses the social order, and thereby produces disorder, but also springs from a lack

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<sup>7</sup> There is perhaps a connection in Greek thought between the terms *atē* and *atasthalos*: as Fisher notes, *atasthalos* is "frequently found...in close connection with *hybris*-words, and often indicat[es] rash, outrageous acts leading to disaster: the link with *atē*, if etymologically doubtful, seems to be felt by Greek authors." ([1992] p.155).

of self-restraint; acting in accordance with *kosmos*, then, implies being in control of oneself.

This conception of ‘orderly’ behaviour is consistent with the view that appropriateness and justness are, as I have claimed, predicated on the notion that one should comport oneself in accordance with one’s *moira* (‘divided portion’) or *aisa* (‘measured portion’).<sup>8</sup> An examination of the language of propriety that revolves around these terms bears out this claim. While in some passages one’s *moira* or *aisa* is one’s lot in life, one’s doom, in others these terms do not have a cosmological or eschatological significance. According to Yamagata, in these passages the phrase *kata moiran* (‘according to portion’) “means either ‘with every portion in its proper place’, i.e., ‘orderly’ or ‘within one’s lot’, i.e., ‘behaving suitably according to one’s position or status’”.<sup>9</sup> In view of the prevalence of phrases such as *kata moiran* in Homer, she concludes that “*moira* and *aisa* determine the patterns of behaviour of both men and gods.” She continues:

Everyone acts according to his given portion, *kata moiran* or *kat’ aisan* – that is the fundamental moral logic we see in the usage of the two words and their derivatives. At the same time, it requires that everyone should be given his own portion, for if not, it disturbs the universal order. Although the ‘portion’ can be as amoral as one’s birth as a mortal or god, or a moral ‘common sense’ to tell you how to speak and act properly, the gods and men do share the same moral criterion – that is, we all must act within the limit of our share, within measure.<sup>10</sup>

On this view, then, propriety is conceived fundamentally in terms of orderliness, or, more precisely, orderly distribution, whereby each and every person is given a portion and is

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<sup>8</sup> For the semantic differences between *moira* and *aisa*, see Yamagata (1994) p.116, with relevant scholarship cited. See also *ibid.* pp.112-115 for a discussion of the phrase *huper moron*, which, in Yamagata’s view, signifies either “more than necessary” and/or “before [one’s] appointed time”.

<sup>9</sup> Yamagata (1994) p.114. See also *ibid.* p.107 for an exhaustive list of instances of the phrases *kata moiran*, *en moirēi*, etc. in Homer.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* pp.119-120.

expected to not step outside the bounds of this portion. This accords with the Homeric conception of justice, insofar as this conception stipulates that one's share in society delimits what one must do and what one may do in relation to others. We can say that behaviour that is *kata moiran/kat' aisan* is measured with respect to the order of society – that is, the arrangement of shares in society, of *timai*. This means that an action that does not accord with one's *moira/aisa* is a transgression: it goes beyond the limits of acceptable conduct that are set by one's *moira/aisa* and thereby either disrupts the distribution of *timai* and/or impinges on another's *timē*. Behaviour that is contrary to *moira/aisa* is therefore both dishonourable and unjust, to the extent that such behaviour constitutes a failure to pay deference that is due in virtue of the proper distribution of shares.

Certain passages in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* support this interpretation of *kata moiran* and related phrases. As we have seen, Achilles feels that Nestor should receive a gift at Patroclus' funeral games because he pities Nestor and thinks that he deserves this gift by virtue of his past achievements. Upon receiving this gift, and being told that he will never again compete in athletic contests because of his old age, Nestor claims that Achilles has spoken *kata moiran* (*Il.* 23.626), remarking that it is fitting that he is honoured in this way among the Achaeans (*Il.* 23.649). We might say, then, that with this phrase Nestor signals that Achilles has spoken in such a way as is consonant with the distribution of honour in the Achaean camp in two respects. First, his speech does not dishonour Nestor but rather accords him honour, which both Achilles and Nestor believe he merits by reason of his displays of excellence. Second, his speech is in keeping with

his position in the context of the funeral games – i.e., the allocator of prizes, and so the dispenser of distributive justice. In other words, Achilles’ speech accords with his and Nestor’s *moirai*. Similarly, when Poseidon refuses to obey Zeus’ command that he withdraw from battle, Iris, the messenger goddess, who has delivered this command to Poseidon, remarks that Poseidon’s reply is harsh (*apēnea*) and stern (*krateron*), adding that the Furies favour the elder-born (*Il.* 15.201-204). Although, as we noted in the previous chapter, Poseidon maintains that Zeus has acted unjustly, he does praise Iris’ speech, saying that she speaks *kata moiran* and that it is a good thing (*esthlon kai to tetuktai*) when a messenger knows ‘measured things’ (*hot’ angelos aisima eidēi*: *Il.* 15.206-207). One might say that Poseidon is here praising Iris’ speech for its practical wisdom: he sees the sense in avoiding the wrath of the Furies by yielding to Zeus, and accordingly approves of Iris’ advice. But we may also read Poseidon’s statement as an evaluation of Iris *qua* messenger, as a judgement of her speech with reference to her place in (Olympian) society and its relation to Poseidon’s. In my view, this explains Poseidon’s use of the phrase *aisima eidēi*: Iris is mindful of things that are ‘measured’ in regard to her *aisa*, her role as an *angelos*. The passage in which the relation of phrases such as *kata moiran* to the distribution of shares is clearest is *Il.* 19.186. Here, Agamemnon lauds Odysseus’ speech, saying that he has explicated and expounded everything ‘in [due] portion’ (*en moirēi gar panta diikeo kai katelexas*). In that speech, which concerns how Achilles and Agamemnon should make amends, Odysseus proposes that Agamemnon should bring gifts of reparation into the middle of the assembly (*Il.* 19.172-174) and that he should provide Achilles with a feast, so that Achilles ‘may not have anything lacking

justice' (*hina mē ti dikēs epideues ekhēistha: Il. 19.180*). His speech is therefore a pronouncement of distributive justice, a judgement as to what is just in this context. Thus, the phrase *en moirēi* here concerns not just Odysseus' portion – that is, his place in the context of this assembly – but the distribution of portions that his speech recommends and that will, in his view, restore order in respect of honour between Achilles and Agamemnon.<sup>11</sup>

Instances of behaviour that is deemed not *kata moiran* also corroborate this reading. At *Od. 9.351-352*, Odysseus asks Polyphemus how he can expect anyone to come to him again as a suppliant (*hikoito*), since he has acted contrary to *moira* (*epei ou kata moiran erexas*). The transgression of *moira* to which Odysseus refers is twofold: by feasting on Odysseus' men, Polyphemus has exceeded the bounds of the portion that has fallen to him – i.e., his role as host – and has deprived his guests of their due portions – which they deserve precisely because they are guests and suppliants – as well as of life and limb.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Odysseus denounces Polyphemus' actions as *ou kata moiran* on the grounds that he has grotesquely violated the norms of hospitality, throwing into disarray the distribution of honour that obtains in the context of guest-host relations. Similarly, when Mentor, speaking in the assembly of the Ithacans, chides most of the audience for remaining silent in spite of the suitors' outrageous conduct with regard to Odysseus' household, Leocritus claims that Mentor is mischievous (*atartēre*), that he is crazed in respect to his wits (*phrenas ēlee*), and that he has spoken *ou kata moiran* (*Od. 2.251*). For

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Od. 16.385*, where Antinous suggests that he and the rest of the suitors should divide up Odysseus' property *kata moiran* among themselves. Here, this phrase must mean 'fairly' or 'equitably'.

<sup>12</sup> In this connection we should note the perversity of Polyphemus' comment at *Od. 9.369-370*, where he says that his guest-gift to Odysseus will be that he eats Odysseus last. Here, the norms of hospitality are inverted: rather than providing his guest with a feast, Polyphemus feasts on his guest.



what reasons Mentor is reprehensible in these terms Leocritus specifies: first, it is difficult to fight against many men over a feast (*argaleon de / andrasi kai pleonessi makhēsthai peri daiti*: *Od.* 2.244-245); second, even if Odysseus were to return to Ithaca, he would not be able to drive the suitors from his halls, as he would be outnumbered (*Od.* 2.246-251). He thus implies that the course of action that Mentor suggests the masses should take against the suitors is both implausible and imprudent: in view of the power of the suitors, the silent majority to which Mentor appeals for support would in fact not side with Odysseus. One might think, then, that Mentor's speech is deemed *ou kata moiran* simply because it is wanting in foresight. But given that Mentor is the steward of Odysseus' household, charged with the protection of all his property (*Od.* 2.226-227), we can say that the *moira* to which Leocritus refers is this particular position of Mentor's. On this view, his advice is *ou kata moiran* because it is not in the interest of the *oikos* of Odysseus, and therefore is not in accordance with his role. In this respect the disapprobation levelled at Mentor is similar to that which is directed towards Polyphemus. We might also say that Mentor's speech is decried as contrary to *moira* on the grounds that it is an incitement to violence against the suitors, and as such it threatens to give rise to factional conflict in Ithaca. This view, though not explicitly articulated by Leocritus, is in keeping with the concerns that operate in the context of an assembly and that we noted in connection with Menelaus and Agamemnon: their decision to hold an assembly at sunset, we observed, was judged as *ou kata kosmon* ultimately because it engendered social disorder. Further, this view accords with the notion that behaviour that is *kata moiran* does not upset the proper distribution of portions, insofar as factionalism

does violence to the apportionment of shares in society. Accordingly, in view of these passages, one can say that behaviour that is *kata moiran* is within the limits of one's portion and thereby does not impinge on the portions of others.

Having examined the significance of phrases such as *kata moiran*, let us take stock of the parallels between the concepts of *moira* and *kosmos*, particularly in respect to appropriate deportment. We have seen that when one acts in such a way as is consonant with *kosmos*, one comports oneself in accordance with the social order, with the result that one does not bring about social discord. Behaviour that is *kata moiran*, we noted, stays within the bounds of what one's share is in a given context, and therefore does not encroach upon the due shares of others. Such behaviour thus accords with the order of society, understood as an arrangement of shares of honour, and, further, does not give rise to conflict, since it is appropriate and/or just. Thus, both concepts concern conduct that maintains social order. We can, moreover, understand these concepts as consistent with one another in two further respects. First, while the foregoing analysis has shown that phrases such as *kata moiran* do have a social and ethical force, it is also the case that *kata moiran*, like *kata kosmon*, conveys aesthetic approbation, inasmuch as it connotes orderliness, a property that inheres in a proportioned arrangement. Martin has amply demonstrated this point from the vantage of poetics, showing that in Homer the phrase *kata moiran* can also signal that one's diction exhibits proportionality at the level of form.<sup>13</sup> These two senses of *kata moiran* and *kata kosmon* are best understood in terms of the close connection between the aesthetic and the ethical that is present in Greek thought

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<sup>13</sup> Martin (1989) p.97, 102, 110-113, 119, 123, 134. See also above, ch.1 n.29.

generally and that is particularly evident in the terms *kalos* ('beautiful', 'noble', 'good'), *kakos* ('ugly', 'vile', 'bad') and *aiskhros* ('disfigured', 'disgraceful').<sup>14</sup> Second, both *kata kosmon* and *kata moiran* express an ethic of moderation. As we have seen, acting in accordance with *kosmos* involves being in control of oneself; we came to this conclusion in light of the fact that the phrase *ou kata kosmon* is specifically associated with wantonness. One can say, then, that 'orderly' behaviour is characterised by self-restraint and temperance. This idea is implicit in instances of the phrase *kata moiran* inasmuch as one who acts *kata moiran* keeps oneself within the limits of one's portion, exercises self-control, and thinks, speaks, and acts in a measured way. Thus, when one acts *kata kosmon* or *kata moiran*, one keeps one's emotions in check, such that one does not act in a 'disorderly' way, in violation of the proper distribution of shares and due proportion. As we shall now see, this ethic is most clearly expressed by the last of the three concepts to be considered in this section: *aisa*.

The term *aisa* and its adjectival derivatives – i.e., *aisimos*, *enaisimos*, and *exaisios* – revolve around the notion of measuredness, conceived either in relation to one's fate or one's disposition and one's behaviour.<sup>15</sup> Thus, we find in Homer the phrase *aisimon ēmar*, 'one's measured day' – that is, that time, measured out by some divinity, when one will suffer a calamity that is proportionate to one's *aisa*, one's doom.<sup>16</sup> This is in keeping with Yamagata's observation, noted above, that in some passages the language of

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<sup>14</sup> For the relation between the aesthetic and the ethical, especially in regard to the dynamics of shame, see above, ch.1 n. 35.

<sup>15</sup> See Cunliffe (2012 [1924]) and Autenrieth (1960 [1877]) s.v. *aisa*, Yamagata (1994) pp.116-119.

<sup>16</sup> Instances of the phrase *aisimon ēmar*: *Il.* 8.72, 21.100, 22.212; *Od.* 16.280.

portions concerns cosmology rather than morality.<sup>17</sup> But we also find that *aisa* and related terms figure in the Homeric view of appropriate behaviour, expressing the notion that one should conduct oneself in a moderate manner. In connection with Poseidon's speech to Iris, we observed that the phrase *aisima eidēi* can be understood as signifying thoughts that are measured with respect to one's *aisa* – that is, one's role. However, there are many passages in the Homeric poems where the measuredness conveyed by an *ais*-stem term concerns not only one's place in society but also one's temperament. For instance, at *Od.* 2.229-234, Mentor exclaims that henceforth a *basileus* should not be kind (*aganos*), be gentle (*ēpios*), or have measured thoughts (*phresin aisima eidōs*) but rather should always be harsh (*aiei khalepos*) and should commit unseemly deeds (*aisula rhezoi*), as no one among the Ithacans feels outrage in regard to the suitors' transgressions against the household of Odysseus, who was their ruler and who was like a father in his gentleness (*patēr d' hōs ēpios ēen*). Mentor's remarks, repeated verbatim by Athena (*Od.* 5.7-12), are quite similar to comments made by Penelope, who says that Odysseus never acted or spoke 'beyond measure' (*exaision*) among the *dēmos*; in contrast to most *basileis* – whose custom, in her view, is to hate some men and love others – Odysseus never committed a wanton deed against any man (*ou pote pampan atasthalon andra eōrgei*: *Od.* 4.689-693). Underlying Mentor's and Penelope's statements is a single view regarding what sort of person a *basileus qua* arbitrator should be, which we can specify as follows: a *basileus* should be temperate; specifically, he should be level-headed, not prone to excessive antipathy or affection but capable of compassion and kindness, such that he can make

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<sup>17</sup> See also Borecký (1963) p.49 for a discussion of the cosmological aspect of *moira* and *aisa*.

impartial as well as humane judgements. Read in light of this view, the measuredness expressed by *aisimos* signifies not only a proportionate relation between one's actions and one's role in society but also proportionality in respect of one's psychological constitution, which accordingly is marked by neither an excess nor an absence of emotion.

We find this conception of measuredness most clearly articulated in two speeches in the *Odyssey*. Explaining his decision to not come straightaway to the halls of Alcinous, the father of Nausicaa – whom Odysseus supplicated and who therefore owed him hospitality – Odysseus says that he acted out of fear and shame, as he thought Alcinous, seeing him attending Nausicaa, would feel indignation (*soi thumos episkussaito: Od. 7.303-306*). He provides grounds for this fear by saying that humans in general are 'terribly jealous' (*duszēloi: Od. 7.307*). Alcinous then assures Odysseus that he was mistaken to assume that he would react in this way, since the heart in his chest (*eni stēthessi philon kēr*) does not become wroth for no reason (*mapsidiōs kekholōsthai*); rather, he holds that it is better that all things be in due measure (*ameinō d' aisima panta: Od. 7.309-310*). This dictum is repeated at *Od. 15.67-73*, where Menelaus claims that he should feel indignant (*nemessōmai*) toward a host who exceedingly loves or hates his guests (*hos k' exokha men phileēisin / exokha d' ekhthairēisin*); he then explains his view on these matters with this dictum, adding that it is equally wrong for a host to either speed on a guest who does not wish to leave or to delay a guest who is eager to go home. Both of these statements suggest that being measured involves having a psychological constitution by virtue of which one's emotions are not extreme. Accordingly, we can say

that one who is possessed of measuredness is sensitive to moral sentiments but not susceptible to feeling these sentiments in excess; therefore, such an individual is mindful of the claims of others, and so is concerned with justice and propriety – just as both Alcinous and Menelaus here present themselves as being. Thus, these speeches not only echo Mentor’s and Penelope’s remarks regarding the character of the ideal *basileus*<sup>18</sup> but also anticipate the Platonic view that a virtuous character is the product of orderliness, of harmonious proportions, in one’s soul.<sup>19</sup>

When we turn to other instances of behaviour that is deemed *aisimos*, we see that measuredness is understood as the mark of an understanding as well as just person. At *Od.* 5.190-191, for instance, Calypso assures Odysseus that she is not deceiving him, as her mind is measured (*noos estin enaisimos*) and her heart is not ‘made of iron’ (*thumos...sidēreos*) but instead feels pity (*eleēmōn*). That is to say, she claims that she is not acting in a devious and inhumane manner. The connection between measuredness and a humane concern for the claims that others have upon one is expressed clearly at *Od.* 10.383-385. Here, Odysseus, in response to Circe’s query about why he does not partake of the feast she has provided, asserts that no man who is measured (*enaisimos*) would eat or drink before freeing his comrades and seeing them with his own eyes. We must read this passage closely to understand the force of *enaisimos* here. At one level, Odysseus clearly means that by virtue of his measuredness – of his emotions being arranged in due

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<sup>18</sup> One might also say that since Alcinous and Menelaus are presented in the *Odyssey* as gracious hosts, they are instantiations of the ideal expressed by Mentor and Penelope. It is altogether fitting, then, that they are the speakers of a dictum regarding moderation in respect of one’s emotions and that they apply this dictum to their treatment of their guests.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of Platonic moral psychology and its emphasis on harmonious proportions, see Burnyeat (1997) pp.217-255.

measure – he is concerned more with the well-being of his men than with the sating of his own appetites. He means, in other words, that he cannot bring himself to dine alone because of his other-regarding nature. But we can also understand Odysseus' remarks in terms of the context of this scene. The lines before Circe's question describe the preparation of food and dining service (*Od.* 10.364-372). These activities are typical of feast scenes, where commensality is the theme and where a concern for the equitable distribution of shares operates.<sup>20</sup> Here, however, there is no fellowship of the table: Odysseus is a lone banqueter, the only man in Circe's halls, and his men are not only absent but are here incapable of sharing in commensality, as they are still in the form of pigs (*Od.* 10.390). We might say, then, that Odysseus believes that he should not eat alone on the grounds that in so doing he would take a large portion without ensuring the safety of his companions, to whom he owes leadership by reason of his share of honour.<sup>21</sup> In sum, Odysseus, by virtue of his character, deeply wants to feast with his men and, further, feels that it is wrong to feast without them. Thus, in this passage – and especially in the word *enaisimos*, a part of the language of shares – we can see the convergence of the claims of proper deportment and distributive justice.

This is also evident in three other passages in the *Odyssey*. At *Od.* 14.432-441, Eumaeus, in the capacity of host, divides and distributes the meat, putting aside shares for the gods and giving Odysseus a choice portion, a mark of honour that is his due in virtue of his status as Eumaeus' guest. Thus, Eumaeus acts in accordance with the norms of

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<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of the significance of feast-scenes in Homer, see Corner (forthcoming) chapter one. For a similar scene, cf. *Od.* 1.125-143, where Telemachus entertains Athena, disguised as the Taphian merchant Mentès. See also above, ch.1 n.5, on the *dais eisē*.

<sup>21</sup> See section II of the previous chapter for a discussion of the obligations that come with the special portions given to *basileis*.

hospitality as well as the claims of distributive justice. It is fitting, therefore, that he is described here as knowing ‘measured things in his mind’ (*phresin aisima ēidē*): he comports himself according to his *aisa* as host and, further, is concerned with Odysseus’ *aisa* as guest; accordingly, his actions, reflecting his state of mind, are in due measure. Similarly, Penelope upbraids Telemachus for allowing their guest, the disguised Odysseus, to be maltreated by the suitors, saying that his thoughts (*phrenes*) and intentions (*noēma*) are no longer steadfast (*empedoi*) or measured (*enaisimoi*: *Od.* 18.215-225). Penelope thus suggests that Telemachus, by letting this disgrace, this violation of a guest’s *timē*, go unpunished, shows himself to be sensitive more to the intimidation of the suitors than to the claims that guests have upon their hosts; she implies, in short, that he lacks a robustly righteous character. Again, we see that the approbative *enaisimos* is understood in connection with justness. This is particularly evident in *Od.* 17.360-363, where Athena urges Odysseus to beg for food from the suitors in order that he may find out who among them are measured (*enaisimoi*) and who are lawless (*athemistoi*). The nature of Odysseus’ test suggests that *enaisimos* here refers to humaneness – specifically, a capacity to feel pity toward individuals in a wretched material condition and therefore to be generous to such individuals. The contrast that is signalled by the term *athemistos*, however, implies that being measured also involves having a sense of justice, whereby one feels that one should give guests and suppliants their due shares. In this way, *enaisimos* shares ground with *dikaios*, insofar as both terms may be found in juxtaposition with *athemistos* and, as we shall see in the succeeding section, concern distributive justice.



We can now elucidate the ethical view in which *kosmos*, *moira*, and *aisa* participate. At base, these terms connote an orderly arrangement, conceived in aesthetical, psychological, and social terms. With regard to appropriate conduct, these terms express the notion that one should act in accordance with whatever one's portion is in a given situation and with due measure. In the Homeric view, this notion is not only consistent with but also integral to the maintenance of social order, as conducting oneself in an 'orderly' fashion involves acting in such a way as does not disrupt the proper distribution of shares; it involves, in other words, observing propriety and justice. We have also seen that the phrases *kata kosmon* and *kata moiran* imply an ethic of moderation, inasmuch as the former is contrasted with wanton behaviour and the latter suggests that one should restrain oneself such that one does not overstep the bounds of one's portion. This ethic is most clearly articulated by *ais*-stem terms, which are centered on the notion of measuredness. It was shown that this notion is understood not only as a proportional relation between one's actions and one's *aisa* but also as an ethical condition, whereby one's emotions are properly, proportionately arranged, such that one possesses temperance and can exercise self-restraint, keeping one's own emotions in check while at the same time being sensitive to other-regarding sentiments. Thus, one who is possessed of measuredness is, as we have seen, concerned with the shares of others, and so feels the weight of the claims of distributive justice. Altogether, then, the concepts *kosmos*, *moira*, and *aisa* are closely tied to appropriateness as well as justness. Although we have already seen that these concepts have a relation to *themis*, *dikē*, and associated terms, we have not examined the precise nature of this relation. As we shall now see, an analysis of *themis*

and *dikē* in Homer reveals that the notion of proper distribution constitutes the shared territory of all these concepts.

### III: *Themis* and *dikē*

It is my contention that in the Homeric poems being observant of *themis* and/or *dikē* involves being just – that is, adhering to the prescriptions of distributive justice – and, further, that both *themis* and *dikē* are in certain passages properly understood as denoting the abstract concept of justice. To test this claim – as well as my broader argument regarding the centrality of distributive justice in the Homeric value system – let us first consider the views of scholars who hold either that these terms do not signify ‘justice’ or that Homer lacks the concept of justice altogether. According to Yamagata, at base *dikē* signifies typical behaviour, the usual way in which an agent acts.<sup>22</sup> She adduces in support of her position passages in which the referent of *dikē* is not at all associated with ethical concerns, such as *Od.* 19.43, where Odysseus claims that it is the *dikē* of gods to make objects glow.<sup>23</sup> Where a *dik*-stem clearly has a moral sense, it concerns, she argues, not justice but rather decorum; thus, for instance, with reference to *Od.* 3.52-53, where Peisistratus is called *dikaïos* on the grounds that he gave a golden goblet to his guest first, Yamagata claims that “*dikē* implied in *dikaïos* here is in effect little more than good manners: [Peisistratus] knows what a guest is entitled to.”<sup>24</sup> Similarly, with reference to the contrast commonly drawn in the *Odyssey* between *dikaioi* on the one hand and *hybristai*, *khalepoi* (‘harsh men’), and *agrioi* (‘savage men’) on the other,

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<sup>22</sup> Yamagata (1994) p.72.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.* p.62.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* pp.63-64.

Yamagata argues that persons called *dikaioi* are merely “thoughtful, polite people with the knowledge of social conventions such as the custom of *xeiniē*.”<sup>25</sup> However, although Yamagata contends that *dikē* “does not mean in Homer what we call ‘justice’ in English”<sup>26</sup>, she also holds that *dikē*, as a countable noun and in the context of arbitration, signifies either a claim to fair treatment or a judgement as to what is fair, made with a view to bringing about social harmony.<sup>27</sup> The incoherence in Yamagata’s view is apparent. While it is clear that there are passages in which *dikē* does not have a moral force, it is not at all clear why one should claim that *dikē* does not signify ‘justice’ when one also maintains that knowledge of *dikē* is knowledge of what one is entitled to – that is, what one can justly claim is one’s due – and that a claim made on the basis of *dikē* concerns fairness. This Yamagata herself seems to recognize, inasmuch as she states that *dikē* and *dikaioi* in Odysseus’ speech regarding how Agamemnon and Achilles should make amends (*Il.* 19.155-183) do refer to justice and being just.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Yamagata overlooks how all the senses of *dikē* are intelligible in terms of the complex of ideas concerning portion, proportion, and proper distribution. As Palmer has demonstrated, *dikē*, in virtue of its relation to the verb *deiknunai* (‘to show’, ‘to mark out’, ‘to point out the boundaries of’), means at base ‘[boundary] mark’.<sup>29</sup> This finding, he argues, accounts for all the usages of *dikē* and, further, suggests that *dikē* is understood with reference to the notion of proper distribution.<sup>30</sup> He concludes:

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* p.65.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* p.61. She does not specify what she means by “what we call ‘justice’ in English”.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* pp.66-69.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* p.63.

<sup>29</sup> Palmer (1950) pp.157-161.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

[In the Greek view the order of the world] was the result of an elemental act of apportionment whereby each component of the universe, gods, men, and natural objects had its allotted portion, the boundaries of which might not be transgressed without grave results. This view of the world finds expression in a closely cohering structure of moral terms among which are *aisa*, *moira*, *nemesis*, and *daimōn* are etymologically transparent. What I hope to have shown today is that *dikē* does not mean ‘a path’ or ‘pronouncement’, but in the sense of ‘boundary mark’ forms an integral part of that coherent structure...<sup>31</sup>

It is therefore surprising to read that Yamagata supports Palmer’s argument, since his view of *dikē* is decidedly opposed to hers.<sup>32</sup> Altogether, then, her argument is inconsistent: her observations about *dikē* do not support her thesis but rather bear out the claim that in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* *dikē* concerns the proper distribution of shares, one aspect of which is distributive justice. Indeed, her argument concerning *dikē* is at odds with her own reading of *moira* and *aisa* as concepts that express a view of appropriate behaviour that turns on the notion of proper apportionment.<sup>33</sup>

Havelock makes a similar argument, inasmuch as he contends that in Homer *dikē* is not an abstract concept that comprises a set of general principles regarding right and wrong but rather simply denotes a procedure – specifically, a means of resolving disputes between parties.<sup>34</sup> Further, he specifies the relation between *dikē* and *themis* as follows: whereas *themis* signifies ‘long-established custom’, and a *themis* is a norm (in Havelock’s terms, a ‘formulary’) that derives its force from custom, a *dikē* is an administrative application of *themis*, a judgement, pronounced by a *basileus*, as to what is right in a

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* p.168.

<sup>32</sup> Yamagata’s (1994) support for Palmer’s argument: p.61.

<sup>33</sup> See above, pp. 37-38.

<sup>34</sup> Havelock (1978) *passim*, esp. p.137.

given context in light of the *themis* that operates in that context.<sup>35</sup> Putting these two views together, he comes to this conclusion:

Both epics, however, are very far from identifying ‘justice’ as a principle with a priori foundations, whether conceived as the necessary ‘rule of law’ or as a moral sense in a man. These ‘justices’ [i.e., *dikai*], administered in the plural by kings (archaistically) or by magistrates (realistically), are processes not principles, solving specifics, not applying general laws; they express themselves in negotiated settlement of rival claims. They operate to restore proprieties in human relationships. They are, in fact, ‘proprieties’ administered in given contexts. This kind of ‘justice’ is simply the rule of conservation of existing mores, or the correction of a violation. It does not prescribe what in general the mores ‘ought’ to be.<sup>36</sup>

One can make two objections to this view. First, Havelock is quite mistaken to claim that justice as a ‘moral sense’ – that is, I take it, a sense of fairness and/or of right and wrong – is not evident in the Homeric poems. This claim implies that individuals in Homeric society have a sense or conception of what is right in virtue of decorum or tradition but not what is right *simpliciter*. It is difficult in general, however, to imagine a community

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* p.180.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.* pp.180-181. This is in keeping with Havelock’s central thesis – namely, that justice, as a properly moral idea, does not exist in Greek thought before the philosophical writings of Plato (pp.13-14). This view is similar to an argument that he makes in an earlier work, where he contends that the Greek concept of justice, as expressed by the term *dikaionē*, did not take shape until the middle of the fifth century BCE: see Havelock (1969), esp. pp.50-51. I also take issue with Havelock’s claim that in Homer justice is not identified “as a principle with a priori foundations”. It is of course right to suggest that in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* there is no theoretical formulation of justice, no demonstration from first principles of what justice consists in. But it is wrong, in my view, to infer from the absence in a society of a view of justice as a principle that is grounded in *a priori* reasoning that this society has no concept of justice. This is to suggest that in order to have a conception of justice one must be able to understand what is right in terms of universal moral principles, not in terms of the claims that others have upon one’s moral sentiments. Yet this is to fundamentally misapprehend the nature of Greek as well as Homeric ethical thought. Williams explicates this point: “[The ethical thought of the Greeks] has, and needs, no God...It takes as central and primary questions of character, and of how moral considerations are grounded in human nature: it asks what life it is rational for the individual to live. It makes no use of a blank categorical imperative. In fact – though we have used the word ‘moral’ quite often for the sake of convenience – this system of ideas basically lacks the concept of morality altogether, in the sense of a class of reasons or demands which are vitally different from other kinds of reason or demand...Relatedly, there is not a rift between a world of public ‘moral rules’ and of private personal ideals: the questions of how one’s relations to others are to be regulated, both in the context of society and more privately, are not detached from questions about the kind of life it is worth living, and of what it is worth caring for.” (Williams 2008 [1993] p. xxvii.) We might say that Havelock’s crucial misstep is to use as his standard for what counts as a concept of justice the Kantian view of justice, which understands what is right as what follows from pure reason as opposed to prudential or instrumental reason.

where individuals are concerned with propriety but not with equity, especially but not exclusively in the context of settling disputes. It is also clearly not the case that Homer presents us with agents who have no sense of justice.<sup>37</sup> One need only recall the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon and the degree to which the claims of distributive justice figure in Achilles' arguments against Agamemnon to see that this picture is inaccurate. Second, Havelock's account of Homeric justice leaves out the other ethical and political values in relation to which *themis* and *dikē* are understood; in other words, he examines *themis* and *dikē* in isolation, without reference to the system of ideas of which they are a part. As we shall see in the succeeding section, the concept of *hybris*, present in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, implies that *themis* and *dikē* have a moral significance. In this connection we can also point to *kosmos*, *moira*, and *aisa*, as explicated above: these terms bespeak an ethical view that is centered on the proper distribution of shares, which in some contexts represents a concern for distributive justice. Thus, when Athena urges Odysseus to find out who of the suitors are *enaisimoi* and who are *athemistoi* (*Od.* 17.360-363), she must refer to individuals who do not observe or revere the claims of justice because they have no regard for the laws of society, not to

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<sup>37</sup> Dickie ([1978] p.93) has demonstrated this point with regard to how one should interpret Homeric *dikē* in view of the dynamics of shame (*aidōs*). He notes that in a society where shame – understood simply as a concern for how one appears to others – is operative, there must be individuals who have a sense of right and wrong, as someone in such a society must be capable of providing compelling reasons for why certain actions are shameful and why others are not. Although it is possible, he argues, to imagine an individual whose actions are entirely guided by what others say about him, it is quite difficult to envision a society in which everyone worries about how they appear to others, acting with a view to avoiding the disapprobation of others, but no one thinks that an act which is considered shameful is actually wrong; indeed, it is difficult to see why in such a society any actions would be deemed shameful, or how they could intelligibly be conceived as deserving of disapprobation. Although Dickie's conception of shame is too simplistic, inasmuch as it does not take into account how shame is not just about how one appears to others, his argument about shame cultures is nevertheless tenable. Indeed, his argument agrees with those of Williams ([2008 {1993}] pp.75-102) and Konstan ([2006] pp.92-110) on the psychology of shame in Greek culture. For a thorough investigation of *aidōs* in Homeric society, see Cairns (1993) pp.48-146.

individuals who simply are ignorant of custom. In my view, then, Havelock's argument is untenable, given its theoretically unlikely assumptions about human societies and its incongruence with the ethical thought that is actually found in Homer when we examine any term or concept in the context of the overall system of values.

Lastly, let us consider in detail Detienne's view of the significance of *themis* and *dikē* in Archaic Greek poetry, as this view is in many respects deeply opposed to my claims. According to Detienne, *themis* and *dikē* in early Greek discourse are best understood in terms of a complex of ideas concerned with speech, truth, memory, and the divine. In this complex, he contends, truth is conceived neither as internal coherence – that is, as non-contradiction – nor as correspondence to reality, but rather as divine knowledge about the past, the present, and the future. That is to say that, in mythopoetic thought, one has access to the truth via divine inspiration or revelation and that, accordingly, to speak the truth is to voice or recite the words of the gods, not to make one's own claim or judgment about the truth. Truth-speakers are therefore understood as mantic figures, inasmuch as they are viewed as conduits for divine speech and/or as reservoirs of divine knowledge. This illuminates not only the connection between the Greek word for truth, *alētheia*, and that for forgetfulness, *lēthē*, but also the self-representation of the oral poet, whereby he portrays himself as the medium through which the Muse sings the truth.<sup>38</sup> In Detienne's view, it is in this light that we can understand *themis*. He accounts for the Archaic conception of justice in terms of the role of the *basileus* in early Greece:

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<sup>38</sup> For these views on *alētheia*, as well as how they relate to the self-representation of the oral poet, see Detienne (1996 [1967] pp.43-56).

On this mythical level, justice was in no way differentiated from the all-embracing function of sovereignty; it is inseparable from the sovereign's other activities. When the king forgot about justice or erred in ritual the community became automatically afflicted by calamities, famine, and sterility among women and the herds: the world was consigned to disorder and returned to anarchy. Still, this undifferentiated justice was nevertheless closely associated with certain forms of prophecy. The king held the scepter, the guarantee and instrument of his authority. Through the power of this rod, he announced *themistes*, oracular decrees and judgements. The term *themistes* denoted words of justice as well as the oracular words of Apollo; the power of the goddess Themis extended to the domain of prophecy as well as to justice and political life...For an entire mythical tradition, the exercise of justice was indissociable from certain forms of divination, particular incubatory consultation. When sovereignty as an absolute function disappeared with the decline of the palace system, the *basileus* who succeeded the *anax* retained a number of the latter's privileges. In particular, he remained a master of justice...For an entire tradition, various forms of political power and certain judicial practices were in essence based on prophetic knowledge.<sup>39</sup>

On this view, *themistes* are best understood as performative utterances that are conceived as deriving their authority from the divine. Consequently, we should understand an instance of arbitration, executed by *basileis*, not as a judgement as to what is fair in the context of a particular dispute but rather as a magicoreligious speech-act. In view of his findings on truth and justice, Detienne thus concludes that in Archaic Greek poetry, including the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, there is "no indication of the concept of a real proof".<sup>40</sup>

My criticisms of Detienne's position are similar to my views on Yamagata's and Havelock's arguments. Let us take first the claim that in Archaic Greek thought there is no concept of truth as internal coherence or correspondence to reality. This claim is, in my view, dubious for reasons that are similar to those that lead us to reject Havelock's contention that justice in Homer is not a moral concept. First, this claim requires us to envision a society that is wholly unintelligible: in this society, individuals can neither

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid.* pp.61-63. <sup>39</sup> As Detienne notes (pp.53-56), we can observe the convergence of *alētheia* and *themis* as well as *dikē* in the figure of Nereus, especially as he is represented in Hesiod (*Th.* 233-236): here, he is called unlying (*apseudēs*), unforgetful/truthful (*alēthea*), and unerring (*nēmertēs*), and it is said that he does not forget *themistes* (*oude themisteōn / lēthetai*) but instead knows counsels that are just and gentle (*alla dikaia kai ēpia dēnea oiden*).

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* p.66.



understand contradiction nor indicate that a statement about the world simply does not match how the world appears to them. It is hard to see how such a society, or the individuals that compose it, could function. Second, this claim is not in fact consonant with the society that is depicted in the Homeric poems, inasmuch as the individuals portrayed in these poems clearly do have a conception of truth that is not predicated on divine revelation.<sup>41</sup> When, for instance, Menelaus argues that Antilochus should not receive the second-place prize in the chariot race on the grounds that he cheated (*Il.* 23.570-585), he is making a claim to justice on the basis of his assessment of fairness in respect of what happened in the race, and when Antilochus yields to Menelaus (*Il.* 23.587-595), he recognizes the truthfulness as well as the justness of Menelaus' claims. Mantic knowledge does not figure in the arguments made here; instead, these arguments necessarily imply a conception of truth as agreement between one's statements and the world and, further, a conception of justice as fairness.

This, of course, does not disprove the argument that the words *themis* and *dikē* in particular always have mantic or, more broadly, divine associations. Indeed, it is true that *themis* and *dikē* are a part of the nexus of ideas to which Detienne draws our attention,

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<sup>41</sup> We should, however, note that Detienne does claim that there is a secular conception of truth in Homer, but he holds that this conception pertains only in the context of deliberative speech, which, in his view, is the preserve of a warrior elite (pp.99-106) – that is, of *basileis*. In my view, however, there is no strict demarcation between secular, deliberative speech on the one hand and magicoreligious speech on the other in Homer. We need only turn to the assembly debate in book 2 of the *Odyssey* to see that deliberative speech is exercised by and uttered before individuals who are not *basileis*, and we need only point to Detienne's own arguments concerning the norms of public speaking and the significance of the *skēptron* – a symbol of right speech and a divine object – to demonstrate that there is no impermeable barrier between these two kinds of speech.

insofar as they can signify oracular speech.<sup>42</sup> Yet it is also the case that in many passages in the Homeric epics these terms have a clear and straightforwardly moral significance that concerns the equitable distribution of shares. In the passage just mentioned, Menelaus asks the leaders of the Achaeans to pronounce judgement toward the middle for both of them (*es meson amphotoisī dikassate*), not in favour of either of them (*mēd' ep' arōgēi*), so that no one will say that Menelaus prevailed over Antilochus in this contest by means of lies (*pseudessi*: *Il.* 23.573-576). Here, *dikē*, implied by the verb *dikazein*, clearly signifies a fair judgment, made with a view to enacting an equitable distribution: it is apparent that the aim of Menelaus' speech is that he receive his due share (i.e., the second-place prize) through impartial arbitration.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, when the poet says that Antilochus, before making his case for why Achilles is wrong to give the second-place prize to Eumelus instead of him, 'answered Achilles for his [share of] *dikē*' (*Akhilēa dikēi ēmeipsat'*)<sup>44</sup>, he means that Antilochus is speaking to Achilles with an eye to obtaining what he thinks is his due (Antilochus' speech is, as we noted in the previous chapter, quite similar to Achilles' protests against Agamemnon's seizure of his *geras*). We can compare this statement to *Il.* 19.183, where Odysseus advises that Agamemnon should feast Achilles, so that Achilles 'may not have anything lacking *dikē*' (*hina mē ti dikēs epideues ekhēistha*). The syntax of Odysseus' statement invites the view that here *dikē* signifies either the concept of justice or due process (it is hard to see how one could make

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<sup>42</sup> This is particularly evident in the figure of Nereus (see above). In this connection Detienne also notes the textual and archaeological evidence for the representation of *basileis* as arbitrators and at the same time as diviners ([1996 {1967} p.62]).

<sup>43</sup> We shall return to the significance of the phrase *es meson* in connection with impartiality below.

<sup>44</sup> Alternatively, one might render *Akhilēa dikēi ēmeipsat'* as 'he answered Achilles with justice on his side' or 'with a claim to justice'.

sense of this statement if one were to translate *dikē* as ‘divine pronouncement’); given that this counsel concerns reconciliation through fair apportionment, we can say that *dikē* here concerns distributive justice. In light of these passages, we can say that in Homer *dikē* does mean both a judgement as to what is just and the concept of justice itself, understood particularly in terms of the equitable distribution of shares.

We can understand *themis* in a similar way. We find throughout Homer the phrase *hē themis estin*, ‘as is [my] custom’ or ‘as is [my] right’, used in a wide variety of contexts.<sup>45</sup> In certain passages, this phrase can be understood as referring to action that is just by virtue of being in accordance with the claims of distributive justice. At *Il.* 2.73, for instance, Agamemnon lets the other *basileis* in on his plan to assess the mettle of the Achaeans, saying that it is *themis* that he will test the Achaeans with words (*epesin peirēsomai*). In my view, Agamemnon here refers to his position as the paramount *basileus*: he is justified, he believes, in testing the Achaeans in this way by virtue of his share of honour in the Achaean camp and the privileges that come with this share. On this view, *themis* is translatable as ‘what is just’. Indeed, we might say that speaking before the assembly in this fashion is one of his privileges; in this way one can render *themis* here as ‘my right’ or ‘what is within my share’. We find a similar conception of *themis* operative in *Il.* 9.32-33, where Diomedes claims that it is *themis* that he will contend first with Agamemnon in the assembly (*soi prōta makhēsomai ... / hē themis estin...agorēi*). That Diomedes means that he has just cause for speaking to Agamemnon in a combative manner is evident in his succeeding statement: he requests that Agamemnon not become

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<sup>45</sup> See Yamagata (1994) pp.72-75 for an overview of the different uses of the term *themis*.

angry in any way (*su de mē ti kholōthēs*: *Il.* 9.33), thus implying that his criticism may bring dishonour upon Agamemnon but is also just, is rightfully respectful of Agamemnon's share of honour. He then proceeds to contrast his speech with Agamemnon's in regard to the paying of due deference: he says that while Agamemnon called him unwarlike (*aptolemon*) and a weakling (*analkida*), making this known to all the Achaeans, it is Agamemnon who is not possessed of strength (*alkēn*: *Il.* 9.34-49). Thus, one might say that in this passage *themis* denotes a sphere of action within which the claims of distributive justice, which comprise respecting the *timai* of others, pertain.

This is likewise evident at *Il.* 11.776-779. Here, Nestor describes how he and Odysseus were once cordially received by Achilles; he remarks that Achilles, upon seeing them on his threshold, immediately took them by the hand and in a good manner provided them with the goods of hospitality (*xeinia t' eu parethēken*), which is the *themis* of guests (*ha te xeinois themis estin*). Nestor's praise of Achilles' actions concerns *themis* both in the sense of 'custom' and in the sense of 'what is just' or 'what one is entitled to': his actions accorded with the norms of hospitality and at the same time accorded his guests the shares they deserve by virtue of their being his guests. Thus, in Nestor's account we can see that the claims of distributive justice are intrinsic in the mores of Homeric society. This sheds light on Penelope's remark that it is neither *kalon* nor *dikaion* to mistreat one's guests (*ou men kalon atembein oude dikaion / xeinous*: *Od.* 21.311-312).

It has been shown that *themis* and *dikē* are properly moral terms in the Homeric epics. In particular, we have observed that these terms – *pace* Yamagata, Havelock, and Detienne – do bespeak a concept of justice. The notion of proper distribution is the

common ground shared by *themis* and *dikē* on the one hand and *kosmos*, *moira*, and *aisa* on the other: all these concepts in some way concern the apportionment of shares and the prescriptions regarding appropriateness and/or justness that this apportionment entails. Here, then, we can introduce another element into our picture of Homeric ethical thought: the concept of *hybris*. As we shall now see, an analysis of this concept not only bears out my claims regarding how propriety and justice are conceived in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* but also demonstrates the coherence of the Homeric system of values. That is to say, it shows the degree to which these values are comprehensible in terms of the distribution of shares.

#### IV: *Hybris*

*Hybris* ('violence', 'outrage', 'insolence') is a concept that we can understand as diametrically opposed to the claims of distributive justice. To clarify this claim, let us first put in general terms the view of just action that we find in Homer. As we have seen, one's actions are understood as just when they are in accordance with distributive justice. Above all, this means that one should not deprive others of their due portions – that is, one should not violate arithmetic or geometric equality – and, further, that one should not claim authority over another whose share in society is equal to one's own. Recall that one's portion of some good represents one's *timē*, and that one's share in society is the broadest sense of the term *timē*. Therefore, we can specify the Homeric view of just action as follows: one acts justly when one treats one's equals in respect of *timē* as one's equals. To act contrariwise is, of course, to act unjustly, but it is also the very definition

of *hybris*. To commit *hybris*, as Fisher has shown, is to deliberately dishonour another – that is, to diminish another’s *timē* – who is one’s equal with respect to *timē*, insofar as all free men, by virtue of being free men, are equals in regard to *timē*.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the antithesis of the just person is the *hybristēs*. This polarity is evident in the expressions of justness that we find in Homer, where *hybristai* are contrasted with *dikaioi* (*Od.* 6.120, 8.575, 9.175, 13.201) and *hybris* with *eunomiē* (‘good distribution’, ‘good order’, ‘lawfulness’: *Od.* 17.487).<sup>47</sup>

But being a *hybristēs* is not just about committing injustice through an intentional act of dishonour. Cairns has demonstrated that *hybris* is also a developed state of mind, whereby one is excessively self-regarding and accordingly has an extreme desire for self-assertion.<sup>48</sup> This drives the *hybristēs* to overvalue himself such that he thinks little of the just claims of others; consequently, he wishes to debase others, ultimately with a view to gratifying himself by feeling superior.<sup>49</sup> At base, then, *hybris* is “the insolent and self-centered failure to pay honour where honour is due”.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, we can say that the *hybristēs* not only acts unjustly but also is habituated to injustice.<sup>51</sup> He has contempt – and so no reverence (*aidōs*) – for the restrictions imposed upon him by distributive

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<sup>46</sup> Fisher (1992); see p.176 for the conclusion that the Homeric conception of *hybris* is the same as the classical Athenian conception – that is, that *hybris* in Homer is fundamentally about deliberately inflicting dishonour upon another. See also Fisher (1976, 1979) for the argument against MacDowell’s (1976) interpretation of *hybris* as “having energy or power and misusing it self-indulgently” (p.21). We shall note Cairns’ (1996) comments with regard to both of these views of *hybris* below.

<sup>47</sup> That *eunomiē* signifies ‘good distribution’ is suggested by the fact that the *nomos* is derived from the verb *nemein*, ‘to distribute’. For this etymology, see Chantraine (1999) s.v. *nemein*.

<sup>48</sup> Cairns (1996) *passim*, esp. p.31.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.* p.31.

<sup>51</sup> In this connection we should note that the people called the most just (*dikaioitatōn*) in Homer are the Abioi (*Il.* 13.6) – i.e., the ‘Violence-Less’: they, unlike *hybristai*, are not possessed of *bia*. See Reece (2001) for the argument that the term Abios refers to the lack of *bia*.

justice, desiring to overstep the bounds of what his share in society permits him to do in relation to others. The difference between being hybristic and being just, then, involves one's behaviour, one's psychic state, and one's character.

This conception of *hybris*, as explicated by Cairns, is present in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. A few passages will suffice to demonstrate this point. At *Od.* 15.262-265 (= *Od.* 17. 428ff.), Odysseus, in the guise of a vagrant, relates how in Egypt his comrades, yielding to their *hybris* (*hoi d' hubrei eixantes*) and being led by their own spirit (*epispomenoi menei sphōi*), disobeyed his order to remain by their ships and instead ransacked the surrounding countryside. In terms of Fisher's view, whereby *hybris* is understood specifically as an act intended to dishonour another, it is impossible to make sense of this passage, as the verbs *eikein* and *ephepein* suggest a loss of self-control in the face of overwhelming impulses, which are here specified as *hybris* and *menos*.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, at *Od.* 18. 138-150, Odysseus, warning Amphinomus of the vengeance to be visited upon the suitors, says that he too was once wealthy (*kai gar pot' emellon en andrasin olbios einai*) and committed many wanton deeds, yielding to his force and strength (*polla d' atasthal' erexa biēi kai kartei eikōn*). Although the term *hybris* is absent in this passage, the conception of *hybris* as a product of one's character clearly underlies Odysseus' remarks: he compares himself to the suitors – who are, as we shall see, regularly described and portrayed as *hybristai* – in regard to his past behaviour, which was wanton, he suggests, because he was prosperous.<sup>53</sup> That *hybris* in Homer concerns

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<sup>52</sup> See Cunliffe 2012 (1924) s.v. *eikein*, *ephepein*.

<sup>53</sup> These comments anticipate Aristotle's views on *hybris* – namely, that the rich, by virtue of their character, are particularly given to committing injustice and *hybris*. These views are expressed at *Pol.* 1295b and *Rh.* 1378b.

one's character is particularly clear at *Od.* 17.394-395, where it is said that Antinous, the most insolent of the suitors, is in the habit (*eiōthe*) of always and wickedly (*kakōs...aiei*) provoking others to anger (*erethizemen*), and at *Il.* 23.587-590, where Menelaus explains Antilochus' outrageous behaviour in terms of his age, claiming that the transgressions (*hyperbasiai*) of a young man are owing to the swiftness of his mind and the thinness of his wisdom. Thus, we can say, agreeing with Cairns, that in Homer being hybristic involves having a certain character and being in the grip of the psychic states that issue from this character. This explains why throughout the *Odyssey* *hybris* is frequently described as something that one possesses (*ekhein*).<sup>54</sup>

We have observed that being hybristic is marked by excessive self-regard and therefore disregard for the claims of others and distributive justice. We can also say that since the *hybristēs* is utterly self-regarding, he is averse to and incapable of friendship (*philotēs*), a relationship that is born of mutuality of affection and accordingly is marked by reciprocal concern for each other's wellbeing.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the *hybristēs* is opposed not only to justice but also to sociality. In this way he is the enemy of communal life: a creature of extreme self-assertion, the *hybristēs* pursues his interests at the expense of all others. Accordingly, that vehement disapprobation is, as we shall see, directed towards *hybristai* demonstrates that in the world of Homer there is an acute concern for the claims of community. However, we shall also see that the terms in which *hybristai* are reproved concern not only hybristic but also excessive behaviour. This is because in Homer *hybris*

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<sup>54</sup> Instances of the phrase *hybrin ekhontes* vel sim.: *Od.* 1.368, 4.321, 4.627, 16.86, 16.410, 16.418, 17.169.

<sup>55</sup> For this view of friendship, and for an analysis of the significance of *philia* in the Homeric epics, see Konstan (1997) pp.24-42. See also Fisher (1992) p.164 for a brief discussion of the relations between reciprocity, hospitality, and friendship.



is but one part of a complex of ideas regarding excess and its effects on one's state of mind and, ultimately, one's conduct. The *hybristēs* is therefore among a host of figures who are grouped together in the Homeric social imagination because they exemplify the dangers of excess with regard to propriety and justice. We will now see that an examination of how individuals who are characterised by excess in respect of their desires are represented reveals this complex of ideas and shows that *hybris* is firmly situated in this complex.

#### V: Figures of impropriety, injustice, and excess

As we noted above, the *Iliad* revolves around the dispute between Achilles and Agamemnon, which fundamentally concerns distributive justice. It is not surprising, then, that the first mention of *hybris* in the Homeric poems is with reference to Agamemnon (*Il.* 1.203, 1.214), who, as we saw in the previous chapter, dishonours Achilles by taking away his *geras*. Let us, then, examine how Agamemnon is portrayed in the *Iliad*, paying particular attention to those attributes that are mentioned in connection with his unjust treatment of Achilles. In his first rebuke, Achilles decries Agamemnon as shameless (*anaideiēn epieimene; meg' anaides*) and greedy-minded (*kerdaleophon: Il.* 1.149-158). Achilles then elaborates on his charge of greed, implying that Agamemnon is possessed of an insatiable desire for more than his share by portraying him as a glutton and a sot.<sup>56</sup> He denounces Agamemnon as *kunōpa* ('dog-face'), an insult which Graver explicates in terms of canine rapacity and which Nussbaum understands more broadly in terms of

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<sup>56</sup> See Balot (2001) pp.59-67 for a discussion of this speech in terms of the Greek discourse of greed.

selfishness and immorality, which are, in the Greek view, characteristic of dogs.<sup>57</sup> At the end of this rebuke, he asserts that he is not minded to remain in the Achaean camp as an honourless man (*atimos*), drawing draughts of riches and wealth for Agamemnon (*aphenos kai plouton aphuxein: Il. 1.170-171*).<sup>58</sup> He thus suggests that Agamemnon is treating him as if he were his slave, who lacks a share in society and whose purpose is to keep his master's cup full, and, further, that Agamemnon's desire for more wealth is a consuming passion, akin to the thirst for wine.<sup>59</sup>

In Achilles' second rebuke, which follows Agamemnon's retort that he will take Briseis from him, he ratchets up the rhetoric of greed and gourmandizing. He claims that Agamemnon is 'heavy with wine' (*oinobares*), that he 'has the eyes of a dog' (*kunos ommat' ekhōn*), and that he is a 'people-devouring chief' (*dēmoboros basileus: Il. 1.225-231*). Here, the term *oinobares* is a double-duty insult: first, it does work for Achilles' characterization of Agamemnon as a sot, a species of the greedy individual; and second, it suggests that Agamemnon is not acting soberly, that he is mad to deprive Achilles of his *geras*.<sup>60</sup> We can also say that the sequence of terms in this rebuke reflects an escalation of disapprobation: Agamemnon is first decried as a drunkard, incapable of self-restraint in the face of the pleasures of wine; then, he is portrayed as doggish, possessed of an animalistic and voracious appetite; lastly, he is called a *dēmoboros basileus*, a chief so

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<sup>57</sup> Graver (1995) pp.45-49; Nussbaum (2001 [1986]) p.414.

<sup>58</sup> For the sense of the verb *aphussein* as 'to draw off', see Cunliffe 2012 (1924) s.v. *aphussein*.

<sup>59</sup> See Papakonstantinou (2009) for a survey of drinking protocols and practices in the world of Homer, which, in his view, emphasize commensality, sociality, and fellowship. I disagree, however, with his claim (*passim*) that these protocols and practices can be parsed in terms of class, and that the *dais eĩsē* is best understood as an aristocratic drinking bout (p.9, 17-19). As we have seen, the *dais eĩsē* is an instantiation of arithmetic equality, which obtains not just among *basileis* but rather among all members of the collective (see above, ch.1 n.5).

<sup>60</sup> The veracity of this criticism Agamemnon acknowledges to an extent at *Il. 19. 86-89*, where he claims that savage madness (*agrion atē*) drove him to take Briseis away from Achilles.

consumed by greed that he either destroys his people by consuming their livelihood or is driven to literally eating his own people, to cannibalism. We can, in my view, understand all of Achilles' accusations as parts of a coherent ethical portrait: Agamemnon is, at base, selfish and incontinent, mindful only of glutting his ravenous appetite and therefore insensitive to the claims that others have upon him; as such, he is a shameless egoist, and so is given to committing *hybris*.<sup>61</sup>

The Trojans are similarly portrayed by Menelaus in book 13 of the *Iliad*. It is worth quoting Menelaus' speech in full:

620 λείψετε θην οὕτω γε νέας Δαναῶν ταχυπόλων  
Τρῶες ὑπερφίαλοι δεινῆς ἀκόρητοι αὐτῆς,  
ἄλλης μὲν λώβης τε καὶ αἵσχεος οὐκ ἐπιδευεῖς  
ἦν ἐμὲ λωβήσασθε κακαὶ κύνες, οὐδέ τι θυμῷ  
Ζηνὸς ἐριβρεμέτεω χαλεπὴν ἐδείσατε μῆνιν  
625 ξεινίου, ὅς τέ ποτ' ὕμμι διαφθέρσει πόλιν αἰπὴν:  
οἳ μιν κουριδίην ἄλογον καὶ κτήματα πολλὰ  
μὰ ψ οἴχεσθ' ἀνάγοντες, ἐπεὶ φιλέεσθε παρ' αὐτῇ:  
νῦν αὖτ' ἐν νηυσὶν μενεαίνετε ποντοπόροισι  
πῦρ ὅλοδ' ὀλοὸν βαλέειν, κτεῖναι δ' ἥρωας Ἀχαιοῦς.  
630 ἀλλὰ ποθὶ σχήσεσθε καὶ ἐσσύμενοί περ Ἄρηος.  
Ζεῦ πάτερ ἦ τέ σέ φασι περὶ φρένας ἔμμεναι ἄλλων  
ἀνδρῶν ἠδὲ θεῶν: σέο δ' ἐκ τάδε πάντα πέλονται:  
οἷον δὴ ἄνδρεςσι χαρίζεαι ὕβριστησι  
Τρῶσιν, τῶν μένος αἰὲν ἀτάσθαλον, οὐδὲ δύνανται  
635 φυλόπιδος κορέσασθαι ὁμοῖον πτολέμοιο.  
πάντων μὲν κόρος ἐστὶ καὶ ὕπνου καὶ φιλότητος  
μολπῆς τε γλυκερῆς καὶ ἀμύμονος ὀρχηθμοῖο,  
τῶν πέρ τις καὶ μᾶλλον ἐέλδεται ἐξ ἔρον εἶναι  
ἢ πολέμου: Τρῶες δὲ μάχης ἀκόρητοι ἔασιν.

620 Surely now you will leave the ships of the swift-steed Danaans,  
you overweening Trojans, insatiate of the terrible battle-cry,  
not lacking another outrage and disgrace,  
with which you dishonoured me, you evil dogs, and in your hearts  
you did not fear the harsh wrath of loudthundering Zeus  
625 Xenius, who someday will destroy your lofty city;

<sup>61</sup> These accusations, however, do not simply amount to a charge of *hybris*. The ethical traits that Achilles ascribes to Agamemnon – wantonness, greediness, and shamelessness – are not in and of themselves hybriatic, but they do lend credibility to the claim that Agamemnon is a *hybristēs*, in the sense of an individual who is utterly self-regarding.

you who went home recklessly leading away my wedded wife and  
many possessions, when you were entertained by her;  
now again you desire to cast deadly fire onto our seafaring ships,  
and to slay the Achaean heroes.  
630 But somewhere you will be checked, even though you are eager for  
war. Father Zeus, indeed they say that in wisdom you are above all  
others,  
both men and gods; yet from you all things come into existence;  
look how you favour the Trojans, hybristic men,  
whose might is always wanton, and who are never able  
635 to satisfy their desire for the din of battle or of war, common to all!  
Of all things is there satiety, of sleep, love,  
sweet song, and noble dance;  
indeed, a man wishes to have his fill of these things  
rather than of war; but the Trojans are insatiate of battle.

The relation between excess and injustice is clearly articulated here. First and foremost, the Trojans are cast as creatures of excess, lacking self-restraint particularly but not exclusively with respect to their bloodlust. They are not only incapable of sating their desire for battle but are also doggish in respect to their shamelessness, born of an insensitivity to the just claims of others that is the product of selfishness and incontinence. Since, in Menelaus' view, the Trojans are possessed of an insatiable appetite, they do not fear Zeus Xenius, the god of hospitality, and accordingly did not feel shame when they dishonoured him, their host. It is for these reasons that they are characterizable as *hybristai*, as perpetrators and creatures of *hybris*, whose spirit (*menos*) is always wanton (*aien atasthalon*). Thus, we can say that the dictum, present in later Archaic poetry, that excess (*koros*) begets *hybris* is consistent with Homeric ethical thought, and, further, that Menelaus' statement that there is satiety in all things (*pantōn...koros esti*) not only is comparable to the phrase 'all things in due measure' (*Od.*

7.310, 15.71) but also accords with the later Greek maxim ‘nothing in excess’ (*mēden agan*).<sup>62</sup>

The term *akorētos* (‘insatiate’), used by Menelaus of the Trojans, also occurs in connection with Achilles, referring to his bloodthirstiness (*Il.* 13.746, 20.2).<sup>63</sup> This is to be expected, since Achilles, though not explicitly condemned as a *hybristēs*, is presented in the *Iliad* as a figure of wanton violence and of absolute, unbounded wrath. At *Il.* 24.33-54, in response to Achilles’ defilement of Hector’s corpse, Apollo contrasts Achilles with Hector, casting the former as unaffected by mores and moral sentiments. In spite of the fact that Hector always appeased the gods with sacrifices, the gods, Apollo claims, favour Achilles, who is pernicious (*oloōi*) and whose thoughts are unmeasured (*out’...phrenes eisin enaisimoi*) and unbending (*oute noēma / gnampton*). Thus, he is, in Apollo’s view, comparable to a lion, which has savage thoughts (*agria oiden*) and which is driven by its great might (*megalēi...biēi*) and its arrogant spirit (*agēnori thumōi*) to preying on men; accordingly, Achilles has no sense of pity (*eleon*) or shame (*aidōs*). The nexus of ideas that we observed in connection with Agamemnon and the Trojans is present here: as Apollo sees it, Achilles is consumed by and concerned only with his desire for violence; as such, he is bestial, caring only for the satisfaction of this desire and therefore lacking

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<sup>62</sup> More precisely, we can say that Menelaus’ statement is a positive formulation of this maxim. For the dictum that *koros* begets *hybris*, see Solon fr.6.3 and Thgn. 1.152 (cf. Thgn. 1.1174-1175). For ‘nothing in excess’, see Plat. *Prot.* 343b, D.L. 1.1.41. While I agree with Helm (1993) that the term *koros* in Homer, especially at *Il.* 13.636, means satiety rather than excess, I contest his claim (*passim*, esp. p.11) that the view of excess, prominent in later Greek discourse and expressed through the term *koros*, is absent in Homer. I suggest that this passage demonstrates that this view of excess and the prescriptions it entails in regard to moderation are present in Homeric ethical thought; that the term *koros* does not signify excess in Homer does not mean *ipso facto* that Homer lacks the concept of excess that comes to be associated with the term *koros* in later Greek thought.

<sup>63</sup> Here, we should recall that Agamemnon decries Achilles as the most hated (*ekthistos*) of the *basileis* on the grounds that he always loves strife, wars, and battles (*aiei gar toi eris te philē polemoi te makhai te: Il.* 1.176-177).

reverence for the claims of others. At the same time, however, Achilles is in this way also like a god, inasmuch as he is possessed of wrath that is Olympian in its absoluteness and thus inhumanity.

One might object to using Apollo's claims about Achilles as evidence of the Homeric understanding of excessive desire on the grounds that these claims are not true, inasmuch as Achilles wreaks great violence with a view to avenging the death of Patroclus, his *philos*, and so in this way is sensitive to moral sentiments. This view, however, is open to two criticisms. First, what matters for our inquiry here is the coherence rather than the truthfulness of Apollo's account of Achilles' behaviour. When confronted with excessive violence, which transgresses all norms concerning the treatment of the dead, Apollo explains Achilles' conduct in terms of an ethic regarding excess that he shares with his fellow Olympians; consequently, they find his account credible. In this connection it is worth noting that Hera, who is incensed by Apollo's words (*Il.* 24.55) and who, unlike Apollo, supports the Greeks, does not object to Apollo's speech on the grounds that it misrepresents Achilles' character or that it is incoherent but instead simply argues against Apollo's claim that the gods unduly favour Achilles over Hector (*Il.* 24.56-63). We must remember here that what is germane to our enterprise – the construction of a model of Homeric ethical thought – is not the degree to which judgements of behaviour correspond to reality but rather the moral logic that underlies such judgements.

Second, Apollo's characterization of Achilles is in fact consonant with how he is portrayed by Hector, Patroclus, and Hecuba; indeed, it even accords with Achilles' own

remarks to Hector. In response to Hector's suggestion that he and Achilles swear that whoever survives their duel will grant the loser the proper funeral rites (*Il.* 22.250-259), Achilles asserts that there are no oaths worthy of trust between lions and men (*ouk esti leousi kai andrasin horkia pista: Il.* 22.262), and when Hector beseeches Achilles to not let his corpse be defiled, Achilles refuses, saying that he wants his spirit (*menos*) and his heart (*thumos*) to impel him to eat Hector's flesh (*Il.* 22.345-347). In short, he admits – indeed, embraces – his bestial desire for bloodshed. Accordingly, Hector exclaims that Achilles has a 'heart of iron' (*sidēreos...thumos: Il.* 22.357), a term which here signifies, as Williams notes, an inhuman and inhumane hardness.<sup>64</sup> Patroclus evaluates Achilles' lack of feeling in regard to the suffering of others in similar terms, claiming that he is pitiless (*nēlees*) and that, since his mind is ungentle (*hoti toi noos estin apēnēs*), surely he was born not of human parents but rather of the sea and the cliffs (*Il.* 16.33-35). Lastly, Hecuba, responding to Priam's statement that he will go to the Achaean camp to retrieve Hector's body, claims that Achilles will neither pity nor revere him (*ou s' eleēsei, / oude ti s' aidesetai*), as he is an eater of raw flesh (*ōmēstēs*) and is a man who cannot be trusted (*apistos anēr: Il.* 24.206-208); she thus echoes Achilles' own remarks about himself (*Il.* 22.345-347) and his relation to Hector (*Il.* 22.262). From these passages emerges a coherent picture of Achilles as a figure of excess: wanton with respect to his bloodlust, such that he is describable as a savage lion and as a cannibal, Achilles commits acts that violate the norms of society, and in his rage he is insensitive to the sanction of *nemesis*,

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<sup>64</sup> Williams (2008 [1993]) p.39. The term *nēlēēs* ('pitiless') has a similar significance: it is used of bronze (e.g., *Od.* 10.418) and of Polyphemus' *thumos* (*Od.* 9.287), signifying, it seems, an innate incapacity to feel pity (or, for that matter, any emotion).

which attends any breach of *aidōs*. It is in these passages that we see Achilles as an individual possessed of ruinous and tremendous wrath, not mortal *kholos* but the godlike *mēnis* of which the Muse of the *Iliad* sings.

In the *Odyssey*, we encounter a figure not only of *hybris* but also of monstrous appetite: Polyphemus. As a Cyclops, he is a fundamentally anti-social creature, far removed from communal life and civilization. The Cyclopes, Odysseus recounts, are overweening (*hyperphialōn*) and without *themis* (*athemistōn*); they neither sow nor till their land; they have neither ‘counsel-producing assemblies’ (*agorai boulēphoroi*) nor *themistes*; and they dwell on the peaks of mountains, with each governing his children and his wives (*themisteuei de hekastos / paidōn ēd’ alokhōn*) and all having no regard for one another (*oud’ allēlōn alegousin*: *Od.* 9.105-115; cf. 9.188-189, 9.215). Further, the Cyclopes have neither ships, which allow men to visit and trade with one another (*Od.* 9.127-128), nor shipwrights, who, Odysseus says, would have made their island a well-established settlement (*andres nēōn eni tektones...hoi ke sphin kai nēson euktimenēn ekamonto*: *Od.* 9.126-130). Thus, Cyclopean society not only lacks what the poet sees as the hallmarks of civilization – i.e., law, agriculture, urbanization, commerce, and colonization – but is not a society at all: marked by an absence of sociality and political life, of life in a community, it is merely an agglomeration of atomistic households, where individuals are concerned only with their self-interest and accordingly where the claims of community – indeed, of friendship – are not felt.<sup>65</sup> It is against this backdrop that

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<sup>65</sup> One might object to this claim on the basis of *Od.* 9.403-412. Here, the other Cyclopes, having been awoken by Polyphemus’ cries, assemble outside his cave and ask him whether he is being robbed and/or attacked; in his reply, Polyphemus refers to these Cyclopes as *philoī*. This would seem to suggest that the Cyclopes here are acting out of *philia*. However, in my view, that the Cyclopes interact with one another



Polyphemus' behaviour is intelligible: he acts hybristically and wantonly not simply because he is a wild animal, and therefore is ignorant of *themis*; rather, he is a moral agent, possessing all the faculties of a human being, and as such he acts in conformity with his character, at the heart of which is excessive desire, born of the lawless Cyclopean mode of life.<sup>66</sup> In this way the Cyclopes illustrate an essential part of the concept of *hybris* – namely, the notion that *hybristai* are habituated to injustice, or, one might say, that they are unjust by virtue of their lack of sociality and thus socialization. All this brings into focus Nestor's apothegm that the man who is without a brotherhood (*aphrētōr*), without law (*athemistos*), and without a hearth (*anestios*) is enamoured of horrible civil war (*estin ekeinos / hos polemou eratai epidēmiou okruoentos: Il. 9.63-64*).<sup>67</sup> We shall return to the significance of this statement below.

To confirm these claims, let us inspect precisely how Odysseus, in recounting his encounter with the Cyclops, represents Polyphemus. In his supplication to Polyphemus, Odysseus exhorts him to revere (*aideio*) Zeus *qua* defender of suppliants and strangers; Polyphemus replies 'with a pitiless heart' (*nēlei thumōi*), saying that the Cyclopes have no regard for (*alegousin*) Zeus or the other gods because they are by far better than the Olympians (*polu pherteroi: Od. 9.272-276*). Here we can detect *hybris*: since Polyphemus overestimates his own worth, he neither has reverence for the just claims of others nor

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only when one among their midst is in danger suggests that they are impelled solely by self-interest, and so are not concerned with the wellbeing of their fellows *per se*.

<sup>66</sup> I thus disagree with Yamagata's claim ([1994] p.65) that the Cyclopes simply live outside the bounds of *themis*, like wild animals, as Polyphemus is clearly represented as a moral agent with a particular character: he is greedy, gluttonous, hybristic, and cruel, and in his replies to Odysseus' entreaties, he does not say that he does not know the customs to which Odysseus refers but rather rejects the claims of these customs.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Od. 14.84ff.*, "Even men who are enemies, bound by no ties, who set foot on foreign soil, and Zeus gives them booty, and they fill their ships and depart for home – even on the hearts of these falls great fear of the wrath of the gods." (trans. Murray, rev. Dimock)

fears the retribution that is inflicted on those who act unjustly; accordingly, he feels no shame at the prospect of harming suppliants or guests. Being wholly self-regarding, he is thus concerned only with what is advantageous to him and what will sate his appetite. This point is made clear by the succeeding narrative. Polyphemus asks Odysseus where he and his comrades have moored their ship (*Od.* 9.279-280), with a view to discovering, one assumes, whether they have any wealth that he may steal<sup>68</sup>; as soon as he hears that their ship has been destroyed, he kills and eats two of Odysseus' men (*Od.* 9.287-291). The description of how Polyphemus eats these men is significant: like a lion, he devours them whole, and he satisfies his huge belly (*megalēn...nēdun*) not only with human flesh but also with milk (*Od.* 9.292-297), an un-Greek beverage. His appetites are thus not only monstrous – that is, enormous and monsterlike – but also barbaric. Similarly, Odysseus' account of events shows that Polyphemus is not only ignorant of the protocols regarding the consumption of wine but also incapable of self-restraint with respect to wine drinking: he incapacitates himself by drinking potent, unmixed wine to excess (*Od.* 9.353-374).<sup>69</sup> Thus, the representation of Polyphemus is in keeping with that of the figures considered above: overvaluing himself and caring only about his own pleasures, Polyphemus neither has regard for the norms that just persons are expected to observe nor feels the weight of moral sentiments; consequently, he commits atrocities in the pursuit of gratification.

Lastly, let us consider those individuals towards whom the greatest disapprobation, articulated in terms of *hybris* and wantonness, is directed: the suitors.

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<sup>68</sup> This is implied by Odysseus' statement that Polyphemus was trying to trick him (*Od.* 9.281-282).

<sup>69</sup> On the protocols of wine drinking, see Papakonstantinou (2009) and Corner (forthcoming) chapter one.

Regularly and roundly condemned, juxtaposed with Odysseus and the loyal members of his household, they are the antagonists of the *Odyssey*, and as such they function as negative exempla of appropriate conduct in this poem. Accordingly, their behaviour best illustrates all the ideas regarding excessive desire that we have examined thus far. First and foremost, the suitors are denounced for committing or displaying *hybris* (*Od.* 1.227, 1.368, 4.627, 15.329), on the grounds that they dishonour Odysseus' household by not reciprocating the hospitality shown to them and, further, by deliberately committing shameful deeds in Odysseus' halls.<sup>70</sup> This view is most clearly expressed by Athena, who, at *Od.* 1.225-229, claims that the feast of the suitors is clearly not an *eranos*, a banquet to which each participant contributes a portion<sup>71</sup>; she thus describes the suitors as acting hybristically in an overweening manner (*hybrizontes hyperphialōs*) and their actions as shameful (*aiskheia*) and therefore deserving the righteous indignation (*nemessēsaito*) of a man of good sense (*anēr...pinutos*). But the suitors are also described as *hybristai* for reasons that are outside their disgracing of the *oikos* of Odysseus – namely, because they are possessed of extreme self-assertion, and accordingly are wont to denigrate anyone whom they encounter. This is to be expected, given the nature of the concept of *hybris*, as analysed above: being hybristic is not reducible simply to intentionally inflicting dishonour upon another; rather, *contra* Fisher, it involves having a certain character and being under the sway of the psychic states that spring from this character. Thus, when Telemachus, speaking to Eumaeus, says that he will not send the beggar (i.e., Odysseus) among the company of the suitors on the grounds that they are possessed of exceedingly

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<sup>70</sup> See Fisher (1992) pp.162-176 for an examination of all instances of *hybris* in connection with the suitors.

<sup>71</sup> See Cunliffe (2012 [1924]) s.v. *eranos*. See also Corner (forthcoming) chapter one.

wanton *hybris* (*liēn gar atasthalon hybrin ekhousi*), and as such are likely (so Telemachus fears) to taunt him (*kertomeōsin: Od. 16.85-87*), he suggests that the suitors have an hybristic character and therefore are prone to degrading others. This view, which sees the suitors as *hybristai* by virtue of their disposition, makes sense of the statement, considered above, that it is Antinous' habit, his *ēthos*, to provoke others to anger (*eiōthe: Od. 17.394-395*). Indeed, in light of this view and the conception of *hybris* as a psychic force can we explain why the suitors are frequently described as arrogant (*agēnores: Od. 1.106, 1.144, 2.235, 2.299, 16.462, 17.65, 17.79, 17.105, 18.43, 18.346, 20.284, 20.292, 21.68, 23.8*), shameless (*anaideis: Od. 1.254, 13.376, 20.29, 20.39, 20.386, 23.37*), and devisers of wanton deeds (*atasthala mēkhanoōntai: Od. 3.207, 16.93, 17.588, 18.143, 20.170, 20.370*).

Yet one cannot explain the behaviour of the suitors entirely in terms of *hybris*, as their comportment is marked not just by excessive self-assertion and the resultant desire to dishonour others. At base, the suitors are portrayed as creatures of appetite, wanton in their pursuit of pleasure. With respect to wine drinking, the suitors are incapable of self-restraint: Telemachus, when addressing the assembly of the Ithacans, claims that the suitors drink wine recklessly (*mapsidiōs: Od. 2.57-58*), and Eumaeus, in recounting the suitors' crimes to Odysseus, says that they draw draughts of wine in a wanton manner (*hyperbion: Od. 14.95*). Similarly, the suitors are also cast as gluttons, inasmuch as Odysseus accuses the suitors of eating his bread recklessly (*maps*) and without limit (*ateleston: Od. 16.110-111*) and later denounces them as dogs (*kunes: Od. 22.35*), referring to their animalistic voracity. As sots and gourmandizers, the suitors are thus

depicted as greedy, concerned above all with enriching themselves by consuming (and, ultimately, obtaining through marriage to Penelope) the wealth of the *oikos* of Odysseus. In this connection it is worth noting that Nestor enjoins Telemachus to not be absent from Ithaca for long, lest the suitors, whom he calls overweening (*hyperphialous*)<sup>72</sup>, devour his possessions after they have divided them up among themselves (*phagōsin / ktēmata dassamenoi*: *Od.* 3.313-316). He thus suggests that the suitors are gluttonous in their appetite for wealth and, further, are concerned with equitable distribution only with regard to their division of Odysseus' property. This is consonant with how the suitors themselves present their concerns: at *Od.* 2.332-336, the suitors discuss the idea of distributing Odysseus' wealth among themselves in the event that Telemachus dies at sea, and at *Od.* 16.371-386, Antinous proposes to the suitors that they murder Telemachus and take his property for themselves, divvying it up *kata moiran*. It is telling that the only occurrence of the phrase *kata moiran* in a statement said by a suitor concerns the unjust and violent laying claim to the goods of another: it reveals that the suitors are greedy to the extent that they are concerned with justice only when they stand to benefit from it.

We can compare Antinous' statement to *Od.* 21.288-310, where Antinous upbraids Odysseus, still in the guise of a beggar, for expressing his wish to participate in the archery contest. He explains Odysseus' behaviour in terms of drunkenness, saying that wine, which harms others (*hos te kai allous / blaptei*) when one seizes it greedily (*hos*

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<sup>72</sup> The etymology of the term *hyperphialos* may be significant in this context: Chantraine ([1999] s.v. *hyperphialos*) suggests that the term is associated with the phrase, present in later Greek discourse, *hyper phialēn* – viz., 'over [the brim of] one's cup'. In light of this, we might say that in connection with the suitors this term refers to their sottishness; one might translate the phrase as 'overbrimming'. We should, however, also note that in the Homeric poems the referent of the word *phialē* is not a drinking cup but rather an urn (*Il.* 23.243, 23.253, 23.270, 23.616).

*an min khandon helēi*) and drinks it unmeasuredly (*mēd' aisima pinēi*), has affected him, just as it rendered the Centaur Eurytion mad (*aas'*) and thereby drove him to commit evils (*mainomenos kak' erexe*) in the house of Perithous, king of the Lapiths. The hypocrisy of this passage is apparent: a man known for being a drunkard chides another for his drunkenness and tells him a parable regarding the dangers of wine.<sup>73</sup> That Antinous' reproach of Odysseus is groundless is recognized by Penelope, who, speaking immediately after Antinous, claims that it is neither good nor just to mistreat one's guests (*ou men kalon atembein oude dikaion / xeinous: Od. 21.311-312*). This points up another wont of the suitors – namely, the use of abusive language without just cause, for its own sake. We also hear of this wont in Philoetius' rebuke of Ctesippus, the suitor who abused Odysseus by throwing a hoof at him in place of offering him food (*Od. 20.299-300*): Ctesippus, Philoetius claims, is 'enamoured of jeering' (*philokertome*) and 'speaks big' (*mega eipein*), giving way to his thoughtlessness (*eikōn aphradiēis: Od. 22.287-288*).<sup>74</sup> He accuses him, in short, of being a wanton reviler and braggart. We can, I maintain, comprehend all these ethical traits as parts of a coherent whole: as utterly self-regarding and incontinent persons, the suitors are concerned only with sating their pleasures, even when this entails unjustly consuming or impinging upon another's goods; accordingly, they are not only insensitive to the just claims of others but are also inured to injustice, given to committing *hybris* and having no reverence (*aidōs*) for the reciprocity that obtains between guests and hosts. In all these respects are the suitors negative models of

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<sup>73</sup> There is thus a measure of poetic justice in how Antinous is killed: he is shot by Odysseus just before he takes a sip of wine from his cup (*Od. 22.9-21*).

<sup>74</sup> In this connection we should note Nagy's observation ([1999 {1979}] p.261) that Ctesippus' patronymic, Polythersides ('Son of Bold-in-many-ways'), strengthens the force of the epithet *philokertomos*.

proper deportment in the world of Homer. Indeed, we can discern in the poet's depiction of their behaviour an implicit statement about how one ought to go on together with others in a community of independent households. We shall return to this thought in the succeeding chapter.

The examination of these figures and the continuities in how they are represented with regard to their ethical condition has revealed that in Homer there is a consistent set of ideas regarding excessive desire and its effects on one's state of mind. We have seen that Homeric ethical thought sees one whose desires are extreme as one who is likely to be mindful only of one's own pleasures. Accordingly, in this system of thought, excessive desire makes one extremely self-regarding and thereby attenuates one's regard for others. By virtue of being insensitive to the claims of others, an individual who is consumed by inordinate passions is not concerned with acting appropriately or justly; rather, he cares only about sating his appetites and will do anything to sate these appetites. All this explains why figures of greed, gluttony, sottishness, and *hybris* are all viewed as enemies not only of propriety and justice but also of society: caring only for their shares, and always wanting to have more than their share, they wholly lack regard for others, and so are deeply adverse to living with others and submitting to the claims of justice.

## VI: Conclusion

We can now braid together the different lines of thought developed in this chapter. In Homer, the concepts of portion, proportion, and proper distribution inform all judgements of appropriateness and justness. With regard to *kosmos*, *moira*, and *aisa*, we

saw that proper deportment is understood in terms of what one's share is in a given context and, further, what is in accordance with due proportion. We also observed that acting according to *kosmos*, *moira*, or *aisa* involves having a certain character. Behaviour that is *kata kosmon* or *kata moiran*, we noted, is marked by self-control and is orderly, in accordance with due proportion. It was also shown that to be 'measured' (*aisimos*, *enaissimos*) is to be temperate in respect of one's emotions and, further, to be sensitive to the claims that others have upon one's moral sentiments. In other words, in Homeric ethical thought, acting decorously follows from having the parts of one's psyche properly, proportionately arranged. With regard to *themis* and *dikē*, we noted that these concepts share ground with *kosmos*, *moira*, and *aisa*, to the extent that *dikē*, since at base it means 'boundary mark', is intelligible in terms of proper apportionment and, further, that *themis* and *dikē* refer to action that is just in virtue of its being within the limits of one's share. Relatedly, it was shown that *themis* and *dikē* in certain contexts concern distributive justice, which is an aspect of the larger concept of proper distribution. We then saw that the concept of *hybris* and the Homeric conception of excessive desire are consonant with this view of appropriateness and justness. In particular, we observed that the concept of *hybris* implies a conception of justice as the equitable distribution of shares and, further, that *hybristai* have a certain character, by virtue of which they are given to committing injustices and are sharply distinguished from those who are possessed of measuredness. Similarly, we found that figures of excess are at base incontinent and extremely self-regarding: they are, in contrast to individuals who act in accordance with *kosmos*, *moira*, or *aisa*, incapable of self-restraint, intemperate in respect to their emotions, and have no



regard for the shares of others. Thus, I contend, in Homer there is a single view of appropriateness and justness, according to which actions are evaluated in terms of portions and proper distribution; to this extent, then, the claims of distributive justice are central in the Homeric value system. As we shall now see, this conclusion helps us clarify the relation between Homeric society and the polis in respect of political culture.

### Chapter Three: Homeric political culture

#### I: Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to elucidate what the findings of the previous chapter tell us about Homeric political culture vis-à-vis that of the polis. On the basis of the Homeric understanding and evaluation of excessive desire, I argue that Homeric values share ground with the values of moderation that are constitutive of the middling ideology of the polis. This ideology is commonly seen as not only absent in the world of Homer but also as opposed to Homeric values, which supposedly are egoistic, agonistic, and/or aristocratic.<sup>1</sup> As we shall see, my argument is supported by the fact that in Homer there is the fear, characteristic of the discourse of the middle, that excessive desire will lead not only to the violation of distributive justice but also to the destruction of the community by way of factional conflict – that is, *stasis*. There are, however, important differences between Homer and later Greek thought in respect of the values of moderation. First, *sōphrosunē* and its related terms are in Homer not centered on self-restraint. Second, the

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<sup>1</sup> The view, advocated by Adkins ([1960] *passim*, esp. pp.61-62), that the Homeric heroes are concerned only with their own interests, and pursue their interests at the expense of others, has been contested, especially by Long (1970) and Williams (2008 [1993]). Long argues that Adkins' schema, in which all Homeric values are categorized as either competitive or cooperative, is too rigid, in that it does not allow for values that are both competitive and cooperative (pp.123-126). Further, he claims that Adkins overlooks the fact that in Homer agents act not only out of a desire for *timē* for themselves but also out of respect for the *timai* of others (pp.138-139). Williams demonstrates that Adkins as well as Snell (1953 [1948]) misunderstand shame as an egoistic and heteronomous ethical concept (pp. 77-78, 81-84). He also notes that they overlook how shame embeds one in a community by making one internalize shared feelings about shameful acts (p.80) and, more broadly, by situating one's image of oneself, which one strives to live up to, in the context of one's relations with others (pp.93-94). Williams shares ground with Dickie (1978), to the extent that Dickie also critiques the interpretation of shame that Adkins and Snell share and the view of Homeric society that is founded on this interpretation. The view that the Homeric value system is aristocratic, however, still has currency; we have already mentioned Donlan's (1999) and van Wees' (1993) arguments in regard to the Homeric ideology of status. We shall mention Morris' views on the nature of Homeric political culture below. Thalmann's view is that the *Odyssey* is best understood as a product of class discourse, and that the worldview we have in Homer is that of an aristocratic class ([1998] *passim*, esp. p.14, 17, 244); in this way Thalmann's reading of Homer is quite similar to Morris' (1986).

terms *mesos* ('middling') and *metrios* ('measured') do not connote temperance or the virtues of a middling amount of wealth, but the middle (*meson*) does symbolize at once impartiality and common ownership. The middling ideology, then, is to a certain extent implicit in the Homeric view of excessive desire and is explicit in Homer only insofar as the middle is identified with what is fair and what is common (*xunon*) as opposed to one's own (*idion*). Relatedly, although in the world of Homer there is a nascent notion of a *dēmos* ('a people') and of *dēmia* ('public') matters, individuals in this world do not act out of a sense of civic duty – that is, the notion that one should, by virtue of being a citizen, aid one's fellow-citizens, regardless of whether one knows these citizens personally. Rather, individuals are impelled by the claims of fairness, understood in terms of the equitable distribution of shares, and the claims of *philia* ('affection') that their kith and kin have upon their moral sentiments. In my view, all this suggests that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* reflect the worldview of a society built upon face-to-face relations between the heads of independent households (*oikoi*) who must restrain their self-interest, to the extent that they do not encroach upon the due shares of others, such as to create the conditions for communal cooperation and thus prosperity. In this way the Homeric poems bespeak the *mentalité* of the proto-polis, of a world smaller and less socially complex than, but nevertheless sharing the basic values of, the world of the polis.

## II: The middling ideology and Homeric ethical thought

To clarify the claim that the system of ethical and political values in Homer resembles the middling ideology, it is of course necessary to grasp what middlingness

consists in. Let us here consider Morris' model of this ideology. Morris develops his model in the context of democratic Athens:

By *hoi mesoi*, 'those in the middle', Athenians did not mean a 'middle class' in an economic or occupational sense. The *metrioi* were defined primarily through their attitudes, which determined how they would use their wealth. Any *metrios* who had sufficient means had no cause to pursue still more wealth (Din. 3.18). The *metrios* possessed *aischunē*, self-respect (Aes. 3.11), which brought his appetites under control. He exercised restraint in sexual matters (e.g., Aes. 1.42; Dem. 54.17) and drinking (Dem. 54.15) as well as in spending, quietly minding his own affairs (Hyp. 4.21), doing good for family and community alike (Din. 2.8). Speakers assumed that *all* citizens, except those defined as enemies, belonged to the middle. They formed, in their own eyes, a community of restrained, sensible *metrioi* who shared *homonoia*, 'same-mindedness'...*Homonoia* generated *philia*, the glue which held the community of true *metrioi* together. *Philia* is usually translated as 'friendship', but it carried a much stronger sense of interdependence. *Philoī* are those people on whom we not only can, but must, rely...When the Athenians called themselves *metrioi* they imagined one another as self-sufficient farmers on their own land, heads of households, married with children, pious, responsible, and self-controlled. The phalanx of hoplites was a key metaphor for the solidarity of the citizens. No more than half the citizens qualified as hoplites, but for Athenians, that was not the point...What mattered was that every citizen was a *metrios* and a *philos*, and all shared *homonoia*.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, middlingness is understood primarily in ethical terms: the middling man was possessed of moderation, exercising self-restraint with respect to his pleasures, and of a moderate character, being temperate in respect of his emotions. The characteristic virtue of the middling man was therefore *sōphrosunē* – both 'self-restraint' and 'temperance'.<sup>3</sup> That this was the essence of middlingness allowed many to lay claim to being middling, and therefore made sustainable the social fiction whereby all citizens imagined themselves as middling. Accordingly, the middling ideology had the effect not of entrenching but rather of transcending class differences. That is to say, this ideology operated to engender *homonoia*, and therefore *philia*, among free men in the face of disparities with regard to wealth. Thus, the discourse of the middle did not concern class *per se*; rather, this discourse concerned one's material condition only insofar as it affected

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<sup>2</sup> Morris (2000) pp.115-116.

<sup>3</sup> See Foucault (1990 [1984]) pp.63-77 for an analysis of *sōphrosunē*. See also Rademaker (2005) pp.221-250 for a discussion of the rhetorical use of *metrios* alongside *sōphrōn*.

one's ability to live as a free man among free men, to live as a citizen in a community of interdependent citizens without surrendering one's independence. This concern with creating bonds across classes points up what motivates and what is characteristic of this ideology: a fear of *stasis*, specifically civil strife born of class differences.<sup>4</sup>

In Morris' view, the origins of the middling ideology are to be found not in Homer but rather in Hesiod.<sup>5</sup> This is because, he contends, the Homeric view of the world legitimates the authority of the *basileis* and passes over the claims of the *dēmos*, and therefore is aristocratic; from this he argues that the Homeric epics are a part of an elitist discourse that is diametrically opposed to the middling ideology.<sup>6</sup> Morris' contention that the Homeric outlook is aristocratic is dubious, given that the claims of distributive justice, as we observed in the first chapter, pertain in many contexts and, further, that these claims are not trumped by the claims of status. Moreover, Morris misapprehends the Homeric system of ethical and political values; he overlooks the aspects of this system that concern moderation and temperance. As we have seen, *kosmos*, *moira*, and *aisa* – central concepts in the Homeric value system – all express a view of appropriate behaviour that involves moderating one's desires and being temperate in respect of one's emotions. Further, the disapprobation directed at *hybristai* and other figures of excessive desire in Homer bespeaks an acute concern for being moderate. It is my contention, therefore, that Homeric ethical thought has much in common with the values of moderation that compose the middling ideology. Indeed, there is, I argue, further evidence in the Homeric

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the middling ideology and its relation to factional conflict, as well as the relation between civic independence and interdependence, see Corner (2013b) pp.229-230.

<sup>5</sup> Morris (1996) pp.28-29; (2000) pp.163-176.

<sup>6</sup> Morris (1986) p.124, 126-127; (2000) p.176.

poems for this position: *stasis* is clearly understood and deeply feared, and the middle is identified with what is common and what is fair. Let us now examine *stasis* and how it is conceived in the Homeric poems.

### III: The fear of *stasis*

From one vantage, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are comprehensible as poems about *stasis*. That is to say, one can claim that to a certain extent both poems are built around the theme of factional violence: they both concern conflict between individuals or households within a community; the origins of such conflict in certain ethical conditions; the effects of such conflict on social order; and the resolution of conflict that ultimately restores harmony in society.<sup>7</sup> From this vantage, it is not surprising that we encounter multiple scenes in Homer where a fear of strife (*neikos*) or discord (*eris*) is operative. One such scene we have already mentioned: the *eris* that played out between Agamemnon and Menelaus in an assembly of the Achaeans (*Od.* 3.103-200). As we noted in the previous chapter, the decision to hold an assembly at sunset was deemed contrary to *kosmos* on the grounds that it was a disorderly procedure and so produced social discord. Let us here examine how this scene is framed and the details of this scene to which Nestor, the scene's narrator, draws our attention. Speaking in praise of Odysseus to Telemachus, Nestor claims that he and Odysseus never spoke at variance with one another in the assembly or in council (*oute pot' ein agorēi dikh' ebazomen out' eni boulēi*); instead, 'having one heart' (*hena thumon ekhonte*), together they advised the Achaeans with their mind (*noōi*) and shrewd counsel (*epiphroni boulēi*) on how their affairs would turn out for

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<sup>7</sup> I have in mind here the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon and the conflict between the suitors and Odysseus.

the best (*hopōs okh' arista genoito*: *Od.* 3.126-129). Nestor thus sets up a contrast between Odysseus and himself on the one hand and Agamemnon and Menelaus on the other: they, unlike the sons of Atreus, were of one mind, possessed of same-mindedness (in later Greek, *homonoia*), and so were able to cooperate with one another, such that the Achaean camp as a whole benefitted from their united counsel. In this context the phrase *dikha bazein*, 'to speak at variance with', is particularly significant: literally meaning 'to speak in a twofold manner', the phrase connotes speech that gives rise to the divergence of opinion, and so to the dissolution of consensus.<sup>8</sup> In other words, it suggests speech that engenders factionalism.

Such speech is evident in the quarrel between Agamemnon and Menelaus. After Athena placed *eris* between them (*erin...met' amphotois in ethēke*), the sons of Atreus, Nestor says, stood up (*hestasan*) and exchanged harsh words (*tō men khalepoisin ameibomenō epeessin*); in response, the Achaeans – who, recall, were 'heavy with wine' (*oinōi bebarēotes*) – leapt up with a tremendous uproar (*hoi de anorousan... ēkhēi thespesiēi*), and they found a twofold plan (*dikha...boulē*) pleasing (*de sphisin hēndane*: *Od.* 3.139-150).<sup>9</sup> After the assembly, the Achaeans turned over in their minds harsh

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<sup>8</sup> For the significance of *dikha*, see Cunliffe (2012 [1924]) and Autenrieth (1960 [1877]) s.v. *dikha*. See also Chantraine (1999) s.v. *dis*. We might contrast *dikha bazein* with *artia bazein* ('to speak fitting things', 'to speak proportionately'), which, in the context of *Il.* 14. 92, where Odysseus upbraids Agamemnon for his suggestion that the Achaeans leave Troy, seems to connote speech that does not give rise to social disorder. From the vantage of poetics, however, *artia bazein* can be understood as signifying a proportional relation between one's words and one's deeds; for this view, as well as a discussion of this phrase in relation to the representation of Agamemnon as an authoritative speaker, see Martin (1989) pp.122-123. See also *Il.* 18.510 for the phrase *dikha boulē*, which occurs in connection with the besieged city depicted in the Shield of Achilles.

<sup>9</sup> One might say that here the purpose of the assembly to produce counsel (*agorai boulēphoroi*: *Od.* 9.112) has been perverted: the assembly is providing not sound advice but tempestuous argument aimed at exciting the passions.

thoughts against one another (*khalepa phresin hormainontes / allēlois*), and on the next morning half of the Achaean host, following Menelaus, left Troy, while the other half remained (*Od.* 3.151-158). The disintegration of the Achaean army continued: at Tenedos, where Menelaus and his followers dropped anchor, Zeus again raised wicked *eris* (*hos rh' erin ōrse kakēn*); as a result, Odysseus, Nestor, and Diomedes abandoned Menelaus' contingent, with each sailing in a different direction (*Od.* 3.159-169). Indeed, even among Nestor's company of ships did factiousness obtain: he relates how he and his men debated (*hormainontas*) whether they should sail along the seaward or landward shore of Chios; only after they received a sign from the gods did they come to a decision and safely traverse the sea (*Od.* 3.169-178). He concludes his account by saying that he knows the fates only of the Myrmidons, Philoctetes, Idomeneus, and Agamemnon (*Od.* 3.184-200).

We have here not only an account of the *nostoi* of the Achaean heroes but also a clear picture of the origins and consequences of *stasis*. Let us inspect this passage more closely. It is significant that the breakup of the Achaean camp begins with a conflict between brothers; here, one might say, the poet is imagining the worst possible form of civil strife. Further, this conflict is a literal *stasis*, a 'standing': being at loggerheads, Agamemnon and Menelaus 'stood up' – *hestasan*, from *histanai*, the verb that is the etymological root of the word *stasis*.<sup>10</sup> The verb denotes a rising movement and, in this context, connotes rising tension. It is also worth noting that once Agamemnon and Menelaus begin their quarrel, they engage in speech described as *khalepos* – viz., 'hard',

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<sup>10</sup> See Chantraine (1999) and Frisk (1960 [1954]) s.v. *stasis*.



‘harsh’, ‘difficult’; thus, ‘intransigent’. We might say, then, that Agamemnon and Menelaus have turned from compromise to uncompromising argument, speaking out of anger and with an eye towards the pleasure of defeating the other. Here, we can see that the political order of the Achaean camp has begun to unravel: not only has the authority of the paramount *basileus* been challenged by his brother; the assembly has become a forum for zero-sum competition rather than the settling of disputes to achieve some measure of equity or the providing of counsel to realize some common goal.<sup>11</sup> The breakdown of political order is then exacerbated by the psychological condition of the audience: by virtue of their drunkenness, the Achaeans feel enmity in excess, quickly taking sides and contemplating hardhearted thoughts (*khalepa*) against their former fellows. All this brings about the division of the army, further factionalization, and, finally, the scattering of the whole host across the seas. Thus, one can say that Nestor’s account charts the development of *stasis*, highlighting the factors involved in the generation of civil strife and the vicious cycle of this strife. It is altogether fitting, then, that his account of the disintegration of the Achaean community culminates in the *nostoi*, those tempestuous voyages undertaken by the Achaean heroes: a tumultuous ocean, we might say, is the backdrop of a scene depicting tumult among men. We can see here another feature of the discourse of *stasis* – namely, the storm at sea as a symbol of the fissiparous forces of civil discord.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In this connection we should note Hammer’s ([2002] pp.82-86) view that we can read the assembly debate in book 1 of the *Iliad* as a demonstration of how the use of violence leads to the disintegration of the political field.

<sup>12</sup> On the storm at sea as a symbol of the forces of *stasis*, see Corner (2010), esp. pp.367-369.

It is also significant that in Nestor's account drunkenness plays a key role in the generation of *stasis*. This, too, anticipates later Greek discourse, specifically the fear that the overconsumption of wine will beget and/or abet strife.<sup>13</sup> In the Homeric poems, we find this fear most clearly expressed at *Od.* 21.288-310. Here, as we observed in the previous chapter, Antinous upbraids Odysseus, arguing that he acts brazenly because he is drunk. What is germane to our inquiry here is not the hypocrisy evident in this passage, but rather the parable regarding the dangers of wine that Antinous includes in his rebuke. Having asserted that wine, when consumed beyond measure (*mēd' aisima pinēi*), harms others (*allous / blaptei*), Antinous claims that it was wine that rendered the Centaur Eurytion foolish (*aas'*) when he was in the halls of Pirithous, where he committed evil deeds (*kak' erexe*) while being enraged (*mainomenos*). In response to these deeds, the Lapiths leapt up (*anaixantes*), cast Eurytion out from Pirithous' household, and then mutilated his face; consequently, Eurytion went his way, bearing his folly (*atēn okheōn*) in his foolish heart (*aesiphroni thumōi*). From this, Antinous concludes, did the *neikos* between Centaurs and men arise (*ex hou Kentauroisi kai andrasi neikos etukhthē*). Although Antinous does not specify the nature of Eurytion's crimes, we can assume, given that he sets these crimes in the context of Pirithous' household<sup>14</sup>, that he is referring to some violation of *xeiniē*.<sup>15</sup> This reading agrees with what one assumes is Antinous' intention for telling this parable – i.e., to make more forceful his denigration of Odysseus

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<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of Greek thought concerning drunkenness and its relation to factionalism, see Corner (2010), Corner (forthcoming) chapter two.

<sup>14</sup> Specifically, the *megaron* and *domon* of Pirithous: *Od.* 21.296, 298.

<sup>15</sup> The mention of Pirithous and the Lapiths here suggests that Antinous is alluding to the wedding of Pirithous and Hippodameia, and therefore to Eurytion's attempted rape of Hippodameia. On the genealogy of this myth, see duBois (1996 [1982]) pp.27-32.

as a wretched guest (*deile xeinōn*: *Od.* 21.288).<sup>16</sup> We can, then, articulate the line of thought running through this parable as follows: inebriation makes one insensitive to inhibitions; specifically, it gives rise to *atē*, a state of mind whereby one is not in control of oneself and thereby is prone to committing follies; therefore, a guest who is drunk is likely to act in such a way as breaches the norms of hospitality. Further, the violation of such norms may involve a transgression against one's host, and such a transgression engenders outrage, which drives the transgressed and his supporters to seek violent retribution against the transgressor. Accordingly, if at a banquet – where commensality is a means of establishing and undergirding bonds of affection (*philia*) between individuals<sup>17</sup> – a guest drinks wine unmeasured, such that he becomes drunk, he runs the risk of giving rise to conflict that will dissolve table fellowship and so destroy the community of banqueters. At the endpoint of this line of thought can we see how Eurytion's actions, as Antinous' claims, brought about the *neikos* between Centaurs and men.<sup>18</sup> But we also have here a detailed account of *stasis* generally. This parable is set in a context where the consequences of strife are immediately apparent and thus graspable; it clearly demonstrates how in a domestic context strife, set in motion by drunkenness, does violence to the bonds of *philia*, which hold together any community.

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<sup>16</sup> That a concern for *xeiniē* is operative in this scene is also apparent in how the Lapiths react to Eurytion's behaviour: they mutilate his face only after they have dragged him out of Pirithous' household. In this way the Lapiths avoid committing 'ugly/shameful deeds' (*aiskheia*) in Pirithous' halls, and so display a concern for the honour of Pirithous, who is, one assumes, their host.

<sup>17</sup> For this view of *philia*, see Fisher (1992) p.164 and Corner (forthcoming) chapter two. See also Morris (2000) p.115 for a discussion of the place of *philia* in the middling ideology.

<sup>18</sup> One might take *ex hou* in line 303 as referring to Eurytion (as *hoi* does in the following line) rather than all the events just described. This reading would support the view that Eurytion's actions alone, not in combination with those of the Lapiths, gave rise to the *neikos* between Centaurs and men.

We should also note the significance of the Centaurs in relation to *stasis*. In Greek myth, the Centaurs are proverbial sots, infamously incapable of self-restraint in the face of the pleasures of wine.<sup>19</sup> This is because they are part beast, and so are, like the Cyclopes, far removed from civilization, living outside and having no regard for communal life; as such, they neither have been habituated to drink wine within measure nor see the social value in drinking wine in this manner, caring only for their own pleasures. We might say, then, that the Centaurs are stasiotic figures: since they are wholly self-indulgent and accordingly lack concern for others, they are hostile to and unaffected by the constraints that are imposed by society on the individual and that have the purpose of maintaining social order. This parable is therefore about the dangers that drunkenness as well as excessive self-regard, born of an asocial mode of life, pose to the preservation of the community.

In this connection we should recall Nestor's apothegm, mentioned in the previous chapter, that he who is without a brotherhood, without law, and without a hearth is enamoured of horrible civil war (*aphrētōr athemistos anestios estin ekeinos / hos polemou eratai epidēmious okruoentos*: *Il.* 9.63-64). Let us unpack this statement. We can say that Nestor's apothegm describes a person who is utterly anti-social: it refers to an individual who, by virtue of not partaking in any association, does not feel the claims of others, and so is not horrified by the thought of indiscriminate carnage. This accords with how the Cyclopes, particularly Polyphemus, are represented. But the figure that Nestor has in mind is not just averse to sociality: he suggests that such a person is in love with (*eratai*)

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<sup>19</sup> On the representation of the Centaurs, see duBois (1996 [1982]) pp.27-32.

such violence. The psychological constitution of this person, one might say, is out of proportion: rather than having affection (*philia*) for others, this person has an erotic desire (*eros*) for slaying others. Thus the thought here is that a lack of sociality, and so socialization, will make one not just a social deviant but an enemy of society, a menace to the maintenance of social order. In this way the worry that Nestor voices here is similar to that which concerns the *hybristēs* and the violence he does to communal life.

When we consider Nestor's apothegm in its context, we see that Nestor is speaking out of a fear of *stasis*, aiming to head off strife between Diomedes and Agamemnon and thereby prevent factional conflict in the Achaean camp. Speaking in the assembly, Diomedes upbraids Agamemnon for suggesting that the Achaeans flee from Troy, claiming that he lacks strength (*alkēn*), and, further, that Agamemnon should depart from the camp with his ships and leave the rest of the Achaeans to carry on the fight (*Il.* 9.32-49). Diomedes' speech goes over well with the audience: all the Achaeans, the poet says, shouted aloud (*epiakhon*), having marveled at Diomedes' authoritative utterance (*muthon agassamenoi: Il.* 9.50-51).<sup>20</sup> The tensions here in respect of political authority are twofold. First, Diomedes insults Agamemnon before the eyes of the whole army; he thus diminishes Agamemnon's *timē* as the paramount *basileus* and thereby runs the risk of starting a quarrel, akin to that which played out between Agamemnon and Achilles to the detriment of the whole Achaean host. Second, the Achaeans acknowledge the authority of Diomedes' speech rather than Agamemnon's, and so put into jeopardy

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<sup>20</sup> For the view that the word *muthos* signifies speech that is an authoritative utterance, see Martin (1989) pp.22-23. See *ibid.* pp.24-26 for a discussion of this scene in terms of the system of speech-acts evident in Homer.

Agamemnon's position in the Achaean camp and at the same time create the conditions for factionalism. Nestor quells these mounting tensions before they come to a head. He does so not only by bringing to the fore the prospect of civil war but also by distributing criticism fairly between Diomedes and Agamemnon. With regard to Diomedes, Nestor claims that he is skilled in battle and in council and that he has spoken *kata moiran*, but he also critiques his speech for not having realized its end (*atar ou telos hikeo muthōn*) and reminds Diomedes that he is his junior, and so should yield to his advice (*Il.* 9.53-61). With regard to Agamemnon, Nestor shows due deference, calling him 'the most chiefly' (*basileutatos*), but also reminds him of the privileges and obligations that are attendant upon his share of honour, saying that he should feast the elders – as is fitting and not unseemly for Agamemnon (*eoike toi, ou toi aeikes*) in view of all the goods in his possession – so that they may devise good (*esthlēs*) and shrewd (*pukinēs*) counsel, of which all the Achaeans are in need (*Il.* 9.65-76). We might say, then, that Nestor successfully arbitrates between the claims of Diomedes and Agamemnon, and thereby stops the assembly from descending into zero-sum competition. We can contrast Nestor's success here with his failure in book 1, where his speech in the assembly to Agamemnon and Achilles (*Il.* 1.254-284) did not effect reconciliation and so did not prevent Achilles from exiting the Achaean camp. It is in light of these concerns about the maintenance of social order that we can understand the force of Nestor's apothegm.

I have argued thus far that in Homer there is a fear of factionalism, which is a feature of the discourse of middlingness. I have also claimed that the Homeric poems can be understood as structured around the theme of *stasis*. In the *Iliad*, we need only look to

the wrath of Achilles and the woes it brought upon the Achaean camp to see the validity of this latter claim. But we find the greatest support for both of these claims in the scenes that form the conclusion of the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 24.412-548). Here, the poet puts before us a detailed picture of how *stasis* begins and develops as well as the means through which social order is restored in the face of *stasis*. Let us briefly set these scenes in context. By the final book of the *Odyssey*, the suitors have been killed by Odysseus, Telemachus, and their loyal slaves. We might say that from Odysseus' vantage the slaying of the suitors is justified on the grounds that the suitors committed *hybris* against him and, further, that it is necessary, only insofar as the suitors are, by virtue of their character, concerned only with their own pleasures, and as such are not amenable to compromise. But seen from the perspective of the suitors' relatives, Odysseus' punishment of the suitors constitutes a violation of hospitality: although the suitors committed many injustices and shameful acts, they were nevertheless guests in Odysseus' halls. Thus, each side can make a reasonable claim to justice, and so the stage is set for irresolvable conflict and therefore factionalism.

Such conflict is what we encounter in book 24. The massacre of the suitors does not restore the political order of Ithaca, in which the *oikos* of Odysseus is superordinate, but instead gives rise to social discord, generating outrage among the *oikoi* of the suitors and thereby engendering civil strife in Ithaca. On hearing that the suitors have been slain, the members of the Ithacan political community meet in the assembly to discuss how they should respond to Odysseus' actions. Eupeithes, the father of Antinous, argues that Odysseus has committed a 'monstrous deed' against the Achaeans (*mega ergon anēr hod'*

*emēsai’ Akhaious*) and so has brought disgrace (*lōbē*) upon kinsmen of the suitors; he concludes that they should seek vengeance (*tisometh’*: *Od.* 24.426-437). All the Achaeans (i.e., the Ithacans) feel pity in response to his remarks (*oiktos d’ hele pantas Akhaious*: *Od.* 24.438). But Medon and Halitherses argue that Odysseus was right to kill the suitors, the former claiming that Odysseus acted in accordance with the will of the gods (*Od.* 24.443-444) and the latter contending that the slaying of the suitors was brought about by the suitors themselves, since they committed a monstrous deed against Odysseus through their wantonness and wickedness (*hoi mega ergon erexan atasthaliēisi kakēisi*: *Od.* 24.454-462). The Ithacan assembly then splits into factions: more than half (*hēmiseōn pleious*) of those in the assembly spring up with a great cry (*anēixan megalōi alalētōi*), approving of Halitherses’ speech, but the others remain in their seats, supporting Eupeithes; these men straightaway arm themselves and assemble outside the city (*Od.* 24.463-468). Ithaca thus teeters on the edge of civil war. This Athena recognizes: she asks Zeus whether he will bring about war or will establish *philotēs* between the two factions (*philotēta met’ amphotoeroisi tithēstha*: *Od.* 24.475-476). In response, Zeus says that he will tell her what is fitting (*epeoiken*: *Od.* 24.481). What follows can be understood as a settlement, made with a view to restoring social order. Zeus decrees that the supporters of Eupeithes should ‘cut out [i.e., make] trustworthy oaths’ (*horkia pista tamontes*); that Odysseus should always be *basileus* (*ho men basileuetō aiei*); that he and Athena should establish a forgetting (*eklēsīn theōmen*) of the murder of the suitors; that the Ithacans should have affection for one another, as before (*toi d’ allēlous phileontōn / hōs to paros*); and that there should be prosperity and peace in abundance (*ploutos de kai*



*eirēnē halis estō*: *Od.* 24.478-486). This Athena brings to pass only by instilling fear in the members of each faction (*Od.* 24.531-534) and by telling Odysseus that he must stop ‘the strife of common war’ (*paue de neikos homoiou polemoio*) lest Zeus become angry with him (*mē pōs toi...kekholōsetai...Zeus*: *Od.* 24.542-544). Thus ends the *Odyssey*.

We can draw several conclusions from the events that transpire in this book of the *Odyssey*. First, it is clear that the breakdown of social order is understood as a direct result of the dissolution of the bonds of *philia* or *philotēs* and, further, that the reforging of these bonds is viewed as a necessary condition of the restoration of social order. In this connection we might say that the books of the *Odyssey* that concern the events in Ithaca can be viewed as an account of how excessive self-regard, manifested particularly but not exclusively by *hybris*, does violence to these bonds. In this way the *Odyssey* shows us in detail the conditions under which *stasis* originates and takes root. Second, as is evident in Zeus’ speech, the view that an amnesty (*eklēsis*), guaranteed by oaths (*horkia*), is a crucial means of re-establishing amicable relations and thus social order is present in Homer. This anticipates the practices of dissolving civil strife that we find in later Greek history.<sup>21</sup> Third, it is apparent that public speech, performed in the assembly, is seen as a potentially exacerbating factor in the escalation of tensions between households that leads to civil war. We also find this view in Nestor’s account of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Menelaus. Lastly, the development of the conflict between the *oikoi* of the suitors and the *oikos* of Odysseus shows how the problem of *stasis* is endemic to Homeric political society: inevitably, the private interests of *oikoi* will conflict with one

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<sup>21</sup> See Loraux (2001 [1997]) pp.155-158 for discussion of book 24 of the *Odyssey* in terms of the discourse of amnesty.

another, and this conflict will not always be resolvable through arbitration, since in many cases both parties in a conflict will either have a reasonable claim to justice or will not be willing to engage in compromise at all. In this regard it is worth noting that the Ithacans are persuaded to refrain from internecine bloodshed only out of fear of the gods: Athena does not act as a third-party arbitrator, as she does in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, but rather as an agent of coercion. The poet of the *Odyssey*, it would seem, regarded *stasis* so powerful and dangerous a force that he thought only fear of divine retribution could abate its development. This in and of itself bespeaks a profound fear of civil strife.

It is abundantly clear that in Homer there is a rich understanding of the dynamics of *stasis* as well as a fear of *stasis* and its effects on the community. We have observed that there are multiple scenes in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that depict the origins, development, and consequences of factional conflict, showing how quarrels, abetted by inflamed emotions, in domestic contexts boil over into civil strife. We have also seen that the breakdown of political discourse, of deliberative speech in the assembly, is understood as a crucial factor in the development of factionalism. Further, it was shown that in several respects the Homeric poems anticipate later Greek discourse on *stasis*. With regard to Nestor's account of the *nostoi*, we detected not only the concept of *homonoia* but also the use of the storm at sea as a symbol of the forces of *stasis*. We also noted in this account the weight given to drunkenness as a factor in the development of *stasis*; we also observed this in connection with Antinous' parable. Lastly, with regard to the end of the *Odyssey*, we saw that the restoration of *philia* through an amnesty is understood as a means of resolving *stasis* and re-establishing social order. Thus, we can

say that in Homer the complexity of the treatment of factional conflict reflects the degree to which such conflict was regarded with fear in the mind of the poet. To the extent that *stasis* is a primary concern of the middling ideology, we can therefore say that the Homeric system of ethical and political values shares ground with the middling ideology. Let us now consider how the middle itself is conceived in Homer and what this tells us about the Homeric value system.

#### IV: *Meson* and *dēmion*

As I have claimed, in Homer the middle (*meson*) is identified with impartiality and common ownership, but it is not associated with the values of moderation. Here, I draw on Detienne's argument regarding the significance of the middle. According to Detienne, in Homer the *meson* symbolizes what is common property and, further, what is public, which signified, to use Vernant's terms, "an area of common interest, as opposed to private concerns, and open practices openly arrived at, as opposed to secret procedures".<sup>22</sup> He explicates how the midpoint in the collective functions in both these ways:

A single spatial model dominates the interplay of all these institutions – deliberative assemblies, booty distributions, funeral games: a circular and centered space within which, ideally, each individual stands in reciprocal and reversible relationship to everyone else...The *meson* was the common point for all those gathered in a circle around it. All the riches set down there were common, *xuneia*, as opposed to *ktēmata*, possessions owned by individuals. The same held for words spoken from this spot: they concerned matters of common interest. As a commonly shared point, the *meson* was the public place par excellence: its geographical position was synonymous with all that was public. Given that anything said *es meson* concerned the group interests, it was necessarily addressed to every member of the assembly. The division of booty also occurred in the public domain: each man stepped forward to take his share in full view of the rest...At every level, in the athletic games, in the booty distribution, and in the assembly, what was central was always

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<sup>22</sup> For this formulation, see Vernant (1984 [1962]) p.51. For Vernant's view of the place of the public in Greek political thought, see *ibid* pp.49-60.

both submitted to the public gaze and shared in common. The complementary characteristics of centrality were publicity and common sharing.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, on this view, what is *meson*, what is *xunon*<sup>24</sup>, and what is public are all mutually implicated in one another in the Homeric epics. *Il.* 19.172-176 particularly demonstrates the interrelatedness of these three concepts. Here, Odysseus advises Agamemnon to place his gifts of recompense for Achilles in the middle of the assembly (*oisetō es messēn agorēn*), in order that all the Achaeans may behold them (*hina pantes / Akhaioi ophthalmoisin idōsi*), and to stand among the Achaeans (*en Argeioisin anastas*) and swear an oath, promising that he did not have sexual relations with Briseis (*omnuetō de toi horkon...mē pote tēs eunēs epibēmenai ēde migēnai*). By placing his gifts in the middle of the assembly, Agamemnon both relinquishes ownership of these goods –he signals that they are *xunēia* and therefore are claimable by Achilles – and ensures that the Achaean host witnesses the settling of this dispute, which, since it inflicted much damage upon the Achaean camp, is a matter of common concern. Further, by swearing an oath concerning private affairs in the midst of assembled Achaeans, Agamemnon submits his actions to public scrutiny and guarantees that this oath will be remembered by all and therefore will be binding.

There is, however, another element of the *meson* that is absent in Detienne's picture: impartiality. That the *meson* connotes what is impartial is particularly clear in *Il.* 23.573-574, where Menelaus enjoins the Achaean leaders to pronounce judgement toward the middle for both Antilochus and himself (*es meson amphotoiroisi dikassate*), not in

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<sup>23</sup> Detienne (1996 [1967]) pp.97-98.

<sup>24</sup> We should note that the terms *xunon* and *xunēion* occurs infrequently in Homer (*xunon*: *Il.* 15.193, 16.262, 18.309; *xunēion*: *Il.* 1.124, 23.809). *Xunon* is used of land (*Il.* 15.193), a calamity (16.262), and war, personified by Ares (18.309); *xunēion* is used only of goods.

favour of either of them (*mēd' ep' arōgēi*). Here, the *meson* is clearly contrasted with preference, and therefore signifies the target at which an arbitrator ought to aim his judgements – i.e., what is fair, understood without reference to other considerations. This sense of *meson* complements Detienne's argument regarding the semantic field of *meson*: since the midpoint in the collective was where common possessions were placed, it was the point on which the distribution of goods was centered; it was therefore the focal point of distributive justice. In view of this, it is not surprising that the *meson* represents impartiality. We see the convergence of these different meanings of *meson* in the description of two cities at the center of the Shield of Achilles. In the assembly, the poet says, elders are shown presiding over a dispute; in the midst of them lie two talents of gold<sup>25</sup> (*keito d' ar' en messoisi duō khruoio talanta*), to be given to whoever among them pronounces the straightest judgement (*tōi domēn hos meta toisi dikēn ithuntata eipoi*: *Il.* 18.497-508). Publicity, common ownership, and impartiality are all at work here: the elders speak before the assembly, in full view of all, with an eye to making the straightest (that is, fairest) judgement; the midpoint in the assembly is the locus of common property, of goods that are available for the victor in this contest to obtain; and the goods placed at the midpoint here are rewards for the best arbitrator. Thus, in light of these passages and Detienne's reading, we can say that in Homer the *meson* was identified with what is common as opposed to one's own; what is public as opposed to secret; and what is fair as opposed to partial.

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<sup>25</sup> Detienne ([1996 {1967}] p.58) notes that these *talanta* may refer not to 'talents' but rather to 'scales', which, in his view, represent divine speech, truth, and justice. Inasmuch as the passage clearly indicates that these *talanta* are rewards for whoever makes the fairest judgement, these *talanta* are, in my view, symbols of fairness rather than of the authority of mantic speech.

What is conspicuously absent in the Homeric view of the *meson* is what is front and center in the middling ideology: middlingness as an ethical condition, marked by self-restraint and temperance. Indeed, in Homer the terms *mesos* never signifies middlingness in this sense, and the term *metrios* is not present in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, *sōphrosunē*, that characteristic virtue of the middling man, does not have in Homeric epics the significance it does in later Greek discourse. As Rademaker has demonstrated, *sōphrosunē* (in Homeric diction, *saophrosunē*) and its associated terms do not concern self-restraint; rather, they signify “a ‘sound’ state of mind, responsibility for one’s self-interest and quiet/submissive respect of young men versus their elders, and of servants versus their masters.”<sup>27</sup> Yet this is not to say, as Rademaker acknowledges, that Homer lacks the concepts of self-restraint and temperance.<sup>28</sup> As we have seen, the concepts of *kosmos* and *moira* imply an ethic of moderation, and, further, being possessed of ‘measuredness’, as expressed by *aisa* and its related words, involves having a temperate disposition. Nevertheless, it is the case that in Homer the discourse of *sōphrosunē* is not prominent and, further, that the middle is not associated with the concepts of self-restraint or temperance. We shall return to the significance of this point below.

Having examined the significance of the middle in Homer, let us consider how the terms *dēmos* and *dēmion* relate to this concept. According to Donlan, *dēmos* in Homer signifies “either an area of (probably cultivated) land or its inhabitants, who make up the

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<sup>26</sup> See Cunliffe (2012 [1924]) and Autenrieth (1960 [1877]) s.v. *mesos*. The term *metron* is present in both epics, but signifies simply ‘a measure’ – i.e., a quantity or an instrument of measurement: *ibid.* s.v. *metron*.

<sup>27</sup> Rademaker (2005) p.74.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

aggregate of the dwellers in a community...*dēmos* is never spoken of in disparaging terms, nor is it regarded either as a social class or as a political unit. It is, simply, the people.”<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, with regard to property, the adjective *dēmion* functions in much the same way as does *meson* and *xunon*: it refers to possessions that are held in common. This is evident in *Od.* 20.264, where Telemachus claims that the household of Odysseus is not a public household (*dēmios...oikos*), by which, one assumes, he means a *leskhē*, a tavern. More importantly, *dēmion* is used in connection with matters brought before an assembly. The debate in book 2 of the *Odyssey* sheds light not only on this sense of *dēmion* but also on the relations between *dēmion*, *xunon*, and *meson*. Standing in the middle of the assembly and holding the *skēptron* – the symbol of speech that concerns matters of common interest<sup>30</sup> – Telemachus claims that he has convened the assembly to discuss not some public matter (*ti dēmion allo*), such as news of the Ithacan army’s return from Troy, but rather his own business (*emon autou khreios*) – namely, that the suitors have committed evil deeds against his household and will soon squander his livelihood (*Od.* 2.40-49). This suggests that here what is *dēmion* is what pertains to the whole *dēmos*; the suitors’ crimes are not a matter of common concern because they do not affect the whole Ithacan community. Thus, by speaking at the *meson*, Telemachus does not signal that his dispute with the suitors is a communal concern, a *xunon* issue; rather, he signals that he is submitting a private dispute to public arbitration, with a view to obtaining a fair settlement.

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<sup>29</sup> Donlan (1999 [=1970]) pp.226-227.

<sup>30</sup> For the relation between the *skēptron* and speaking at the middle, see Detienne (1996 [1967]) p.96.

This scene is also noteworthy for what it tells us about the Homeric political imagination. Telemachus asks his audience for support only if Odysseus did not commit evils against them with ill intent (*dusmeneōn kak' erexen*); if he did, he claims, their supporting of the suitors is a deserved requital against his household (*Od.* 2.68-74). Telemachus thus frames his appeal in terms of reciprocity between the individual *oikoi* that make up the Ithacan political community and the *oikos* of Odysseus; he does not, in attempting to mobilize support for his cause, appeal to a notion of civic duty. In my view, this is because Homer lacks the concept of civic obligation altogether. In the world of Homer, individuals act primarily out of a concern for their kith and kin and, as was shown in the first chapter, out of a sense of fairness, conceived in terms of the equitable distribution of shares. Although a concern for strangers is valued, it is valued only in universal terms: one should, in accordance with the norms of hospitality, respect suppliants and guests, and one should pity others who are suffering. In the Homeric epics, individuals are not motivated by a concern for their fellow-citizens, as they do not imagine themselves as forming a citizenry.

Nowhere in Homer is this clearer than in the Embassy to Achilles. Here, Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax attempt to persuade Achilles to rejoin the Achaean war effort. None of the ambassadors, however, argues that Achilles has a duty to aid the Achaeans by virtue of being a member of the Achaean political community, or that Achilles should be concerned with the well-being of the Achaeans *qua* fellow-citizens. Odysseus appeals to Achilles' sense of honour: he recites Peleus' advice to Achilles that he should curb his great-spirited heart (*megalētora thumon / iskhein*) and withdraw from



strife (*lēgemenai d' eridos*), in order that the Achaeans may honour him more (*ophra se mallon / tiōs'*: *Il.* 9.254-258). He also claims that the Achaeans would honour Achilles as a god if he were to pity them (*su d' allous per Panakhaious...eleaire kata straton, hoi se theon hōs tisous'*: *Il.* 9.301-302). Phoenix first invokes the claims of *philia*, relating to Achilles how he raised him and loved him as a son (*Il.* 9.485-495) and saying that it is not right that Achilles have a pitiless heart (*oude ti se khrē / nēlees ētor ekhein*), since even the gods are not as intransigent as he (*Il.* 9.496-497). Then, he takes up Odysseus' argument: he tells the parable of Meleager, which concerns how this hero, by persisting in his anger and remaining withdrawn from Calydonian society, deprived himself of a greater share of honour (*Il.* 9.529-606). Achilles is not affected by either of these arguments. In response, Ajax denounces Achilles as cruel (*skhetlios*) and as having no regard for the friendship of comrades (*oude metatrepetai philotētos hetairōn*), but he nevertheless attempts to move Achilles by appeal to the claims of hospitality and friendship, reminding Achilles that he, Phoenix, and Odysseus are under his halls (*hypōrophoioi de toi eimen*) and saying that they are the nearest and dearest to him of all the Achaeans (*kēdistoi t' emenai kai philtatoi*: *Il.* 9.628-642). Thus, we can say that all the ambassadors frame their arguments in terms of either *timē* and/or *philia/philotēs*; while we do hear in these speeches a fear of strife and factionalism, and so a concern for the safety of the community, nowhere in these speeches do we find an appeal to the claims that fellow-citizens have upon one another. In this connection we should recall that Achilles is impelled to re-enter the war by the death of Patroclus, his *philos* and *hetairos*, and that Achilles puts aside his wrath against Hector only when the elderly Priam reminds

him of his own father and so moves him to pity. In the world of Homer, we can say, civic obligation does not operate as a motivating value; indeed, it does not exist in the Homeric political imagination.

We can now put together the various parts of our discussion of *meson* and *dēmion*. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the *meson* is identified with common ownership, publicity, and impartiality. Accordingly, it is the focal point of distributive justice; its importance in a variety of contexts therefore reflects the importance of the claims of distributive justice in the Homeric value system. Further, while the middle is not associated with the values of moderation, in Homer there are ethical concepts that entail an ethic of moderation. Nevertheless, the discourse of *sōphrosunē* is not as elaborate in Homer as it is in later Greek discourse. Similarly, *dēmos* and its related terms do not connote the notion of a citizenry or of civic duty; instead, they signify common property and matters of common interest. In addition, when we examine the reasons in accordance with which agents in Homer choose a course of action, we see that these agents are impelled primarily by the claims of affection and the claims of fairness. All this points to a conclusion regarding the nature of Homeric political culture, to which we shall now turn.

## V: Conclusion

It has been argued by some scholars that in Homer we find the origins of the polis.<sup>31</sup> But among these scholars there is no consensus as to how we should understand the ethical and political values of Homer, how we should understand these values in relation to those of the polis, and what we should infer about the history of the polis from

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<sup>31</sup> E.g., Morris (1986), Raaflaub (1993, 1998), Corner (forthcoming).

this relation. My aim in this chapter has been to use the findings of the previous chapters to shed light on these questions. We have seen that in Homer there is a conception of justice as the equitable distribution of shares and, further, that the prescriptions regarding fair treatment that this conception entails pertain in many contexts. This suggests that the claims of community are at the heart of the Homeric value system. Here, we can already see similarities between the world of Homer and the world of the polis in respect of political values. Further, we have seen that the concepts of portion, proportion, and proper distribution animate all judgements of appropriateness and justness; from this I argued that the distribution of shares, of which distributive justice is one aspect, is central in Homeric ethical thought. These concepts, we noted, also imply an ethic of moderation and a view of excessive desire that share much ground with the middling ideology of the polis. In this chapter, we pursued this line of thought, investigating to what extent the discourse of the middle – that system of ideas characteristic of the worldview of the polis – is present in Homer. We observed that *stasis* is a central concern in Homeric ethical thought and that the middle – understood as a symbol of common sharing, publicity, and fairness – plays an important role in the Homeric value system. These findings support my contention that Homeric ethical and political thought bears many resemblances to the middling ideology, the system of thought that obtained in the polis. However, we also noted that the discourse of *sōphrosunē* is not prominent in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, that the middle does not connote the virtues of a middling amount of wealth or temperance, and that the concept of a citizenry is nowhere to be found in the Homeric political imagination. In these respects the world of Homer is distant from the world of polis.

In my view, this distance is attributable to the differences in respect of social complexity between these two worlds. The lack of a concept of a citizenry suggests that the Homeric worldview reflects the social and material conditions of a world that is less complex than that of the polis. Specifically, this absence bespeaks the *mentalité* of a society in which the members of the political community knew and formed bonds with each other through face-to-face interaction. Since, as we have seen, the heads of independent *oikoi* composed the political community depicted in the Homeric epics, we can say that it was necessary in this society that each and every head of an *oikos* restrain his self-interest such that he did not encroach upon the due shares of another *oikos* and thereby engender strife. This explains the similarities in respect of distributive justice and ethical thought between Homeric society and the polis. Second, that the discourse of *sōphrosunē* and being *metrios/mesos* is not prominent in Homer is explicable in terms of the political sociology of the polis. In the world of the polis, greater disparities with regard to wealth made more likely the development of factional conflict along class lines. This in turn made more urgent the need for a means of abating such conflict by transcending class differences. Thus, in response to this need, the middling ideology, nascent in the world of Homer, developed into a more robust set of ideas regarding self-restraint and temperance, with the result that middlingness became a more central concept in the social and political imagination of the polis. In view of all this, I submit, we can say that the Homeric worldview is of a society that is smaller and less sociologically diverse than the polis but also comprises those ethical and political values that are seen as

characteristic of the culture of the polis. In short, we find in Homer the values of the proto-polis.

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