

I

Prelude to Democracy: Political Thought in Early Greek Texts

Introduction

The earliest democratic governments began to appear in the city-states of Greece in the sixth century BC. Where did the idea come from? Since there is no evidence that the democratic impulse came from anywhere outside Greece, scholars have looked to the texts and events of earlier Greek history for clues of its beginnings. But reliable source material is scarce for the Archaic period of Greek history (roughly the eighth through sixth centuries BC). Archaeological remains can tell us a great deal about many aspects of Greek settlements and culture of the time, but are ill suited to the task of revealing specific political institutions and concepts; for these, literary evidence is essential. The first authors offering potentially relevant information are the poets Homer and Hesiod – not historians, but tellers of epic tales. The political and historical interpretation of their works is thus complicated and has engendered much debate, but still offers the best way to get a glimpse of the kind of thinking that in time led to the development of Greek democracy.

Homer: Selections on speech and authority in assemblies

Though reliable information about Homer and his role in creating the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is famously lacking, most scholars believe the two great epics attributed to him date back to the second half of the eighth century BC or a little later, at least in the form we have them. The *Iliad* tells the

story of a crucial portion of the legendary Trojan War, while the *Odyssey* describes the perils of the long-delayed return of the hero Odysseus to Ithaca after the end of that war. Both contain scenes where communities – either the Greek army before Troy or the people of Ithaca – gather in assemblies to

hear and react to proposals made by their leaders (often called *basileis*, translated as “princes” or “kings”). While the speeches and specific events portrayed in the epics are considered fictional by modern historians, many consider them to be revealing about the attitudes of early Greeks toward power, authority, and the role of the

community at large in political decisions. (*Sources*: Homer, *Iliad* 1.1–305, 2.1–282, trans. by R. Lattimore from *The Iliad* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 59–67, 76–83; *Odyssey* 2.1–259, trans. by W. Shewring from *The Odyssey/Homer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 12–18.)

Iliad 1.1–305

Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus’ son Achilleus and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians, hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls of heroes, but gave their bodies to be the delicate feasting of dogs, of all birds, and the will of Zeus was accomplished since that time when first there stood in division of conflict Atreus’ son the lord of men and brilliant Achilleus.

What god was it then set them together in bitter collision? Zeus’ son and Leto’s, Apollo, who in anger at the king drove the foul pestilence along the host, and the people perished, since Atreus’ son had dishonoured Chryses, priest of Apollo, when he came beside the fast ships of the Achaians to ransom back his daughter, carrying gifts beyond count and holding in his hands wound on a staff of gold the ribbons of Apollo who strikes from afar, and supplicated all the Achaians, but above all Atreus’ two sons, the marshals of the people: ‘Sons of Atreus and you other strong-greaved Achaians, to you may the gods grant who have their homes on Olympus Priam’s city to be plundered and a fair homecoming thereafter, but may you give me back my own daughter and take the ransom, giving honour to Zeus’ son who strikes from afar, Apollo.’

Then all the rest of the Achaians cried out in favour that the priest be respected and the shining ransom be taken; yet this pleased not the heart of Atreus’ son Agamemnon, but harshly he drove him away with a strong order upon him: ‘Never let me find you again, old sir, near our hollow ships, neither lingering now nor coming again hereafter, for fear your staff and the god’s ribbons help you no longer. The girl I will not give back; sooner will old age come upon her in my own house, in Argos, far from her own land, going up and down by the loom and being in my bed as my companion. So go now, do not make me angry; so you will be safer.’

So he spoke, and the old man in terror obeyed him

and went silently away beside the murmuring sea beach.
Over and over the old man prayed as he walked in solitude
to King Apollo, whom Leto of the lovely hair bore: 'Hear me,
lord of the silver bow who set your power about Chryse
and Killa the sacrosanct, who are lord in strength over Tenedos,
Smintheus, if ever it pleased your heart that I built your temple,
if ever it pleased you that I burned all the rich thigh pieces
of bulls, of goats, then bring to pass this wish I pray for:
let your arrows make the Danaans pay for my tears shed.'

So he spoke in prayer, and Phoibos Apollo heard him,
and strode down along the pinnacles of Olympos, angered
in his heart, carrying across his shoulders the bow and the hooded
quiver; and the shafts clashed on the shoulders of the god walking
angrily. He came as night comes down and knelt then
apart and opposite the ships and let go an arrow.
Terrible was the clash that rose from the bow of silver.
First he went after the mules and the circling hounds, then let go
a tearing arrow against the men themselves and struck them.
The corpse fires burned everywhere and did not stop burning.

Nine days up and down the host ranged the god's arrows,
but on the tenth Achilles called the people to assembly;
a thing put into his mind by the goddess of the white arms, Hera,
who had pity upon the Danaans when she saw them dying.
Now when they were all assembled in one place together,
Achilleus of the swift feet stood up among them and spoke forth:
'Son of Atreus, I believe now that straggling backwards
we must make our way home if we can even escape death,
if fighting now must crush the Achaians and the plague likewise.
No, come, let us ask some holy man, some prophet,
even an interpreter of dreams, since a dream also
comes from Zeus, who can tell why Phoibos Apollo is so angry,
if for the sake of some vow, some hecatomb he blames us,
if given the fragrant smoke of lambs, of he goats, somehow
he can be made willing to beat the bane aside from us.'

He spoke thus and sat down again, and among them stood up
Kalchas, Thestor's son, far the best of the bird interpreters,
who knew all things that were, the things to come and the things past,
who guided into the land of Iliion the ships of the Achaians
through that seercraft of his own that Phoibos Apollo gave him.
He in kind intention toward all stood forth and addressed them:
'You have bidden me, Achilleus beloved of Zeus, to explain to
you this anger of Apollo the lord who strikes from afar. Then
I will speak; yet make me a promise and swear before me
readily by word and work of your hands to defend me,
since I believe I shall make a man angry who holds great kingship

over the men of Argos, and all the Achaians obey him. For a king when he is angry with a man beneath him is too strong, and suppose even for the day itself he swallow down his anger, he still keeps bitterness that remains until its fulfilment deep in his chest. Speak forth then, tell me if you will protect me.'

Then in answer again spoke Achilleus of the swift feet: 'Speak, interpreting whatever you know, and fear nothing. In the name of Apollo beloved of Zeus to whom you, Kalchas, make your prayers when you interpret the gods' will to the Danaans, no man so long as I am alive above earth and see daylight shall lay the weight of his hands on you beside the hollow ships, not one of all the Danaans, even if you mean Agamemnon, who now claims to be far the greatest of all the Achaians.'

At this the blameless seer took courage again and spoke forth: 'No, it is not for the sake of some vow or hecatomb he blames us, but for the sake of his priest whom Agamemnon dishonoured and would not give him back his daughter nor accept the ransom. Therefore the archer sent griefs against us and will send them still, nor sooner thrust back the shameful plague from the Danaans until we give the glancing-eyed girl back to her father without price, without ransom, and lead also a blessed hecatomb to Chryse; thus we might propitiate and persuade him.'

He spoke thus and sat down again, and among them stood up Atreus' son the hero wide-ruling Agamemnon raging, the heart within filled black to the brim with anger from beneath, but his two eyes showed like fire in their blazing. First of all he eyed Kalchas bitterly and spoke to him: 'Seer of evil: never yet have you told me a good thing. Always the evil things are dear to your heart to prophesy, but nothing excellent have you said nor ever accomplished. Now once more you make divination to the Danaans, argue forth your reason why he who strikes from afar afflicts them, because I for the sake of the girl Chryseis would not take the shining ransom; and indeed I wish greatly to have her in my own house; since I like her better than Klytimestra my own wife, for in truth she is no way inferior, neither in build nor stature nor wit, not in accomplishment. Still I am willing to give her back, if such is the best way. I myself desire that my people be safe, not perish. Find me then some prize that shall be my own, lest I only among the Argives go without, since that were unfitting; you are all witnesses to this thing, that my prize goes elsewhere.'

Then in answer again spoke brilliant swift-footed Achilleus: 'Son of Atreus, most lordly, greediest for gain of all men, how shall the great-hearted Achaians give you a prize now?

There is no great store of things lying about I know of.
But what we took from the cities by storm has been distributed;
it is unbecoming for the people to call back things once given.
No, for the present give the girl back to the god; we Achaians
thrice and four times over will repay you, if ever Zeus gives
into our hands the strong-walled citadel of Troy to be plundered.'

Then in answer again spoke powerful Agamemnon:
'Not that way, good fighter though you be, godlike Achilles,
strive to cheat, for you will not deceive, you will not persuade me.
What do you want? To keep your own prize and have me sit here
lacking one? Are you ordering me to give this girl back?
Either the great-hearted Achaians shall give me a new prize
chosen according to my desire to atone for the girl lost,
or else if they will not give me one I myself shall take her,
your own prize, or that of Aias, or that of Odysseus,
going myself in person; and he whom I visit will be bitter.
Still, these are things we shall deliberate again hereafter.
Come, now, we must haul a black ship down to the bright sea,
and assemble rowers enough for it, and put on board it
the hecatomb, and the girl herself, Chryseis of the fair cheeks,
and let there be one responsible man in charge of her,
either Aias or Idomeneus or brilliant Odysseus,
or you yourself, son of Peleus, most terrifying of all men,
to reconcile by accomplishing sacrifice the archer.'

Then looking darkly at him Achilles of the swift feet spoke:
'O wrapped in shamelessness, with your mind forever on profit,
how shall any one of the Achaians readily obey you
either to go on a journey or to fight men strongly in battle?
I for my part did not come here for the sake of the Trojan
spearmen to fight against them, since to me they have done nothing.
Never yet have they driven away my cattle or my horses,
never in Phthia where the soil is rich and men grow great did they
spoil my harvest, since indeed there is much that lies between us,
the shadowy mountains and the echoing sea; but for your sake,
o great shamelessness, we followed, to do you favour,
you with the dog's eyes, to win your honour and Menelaos'
from the Trojans. You forget all this or else you care nothing.
And now my prize you threaten in person to strip from me,
for whom I laboured much, the gift of the sons of the Achaians.
Never, when the Achaians sack some well-founded citadel
of the Trojans, do I have a prize that is equal to your prize.
Always the greater part of the painful fighting is the work of
my hands; but when the time comes to distribute the booty
yours is far the greater reward, and I with some small thing
yet dear to me go back to my ships when I am weary with fighting.

Now I am returning to Phthia, since it is much better to go home again with my curved ships, and I am minded no longer to stay here dishonoured and pile up your wealth and your luxury.'

Then answered him in turn the lord of men Agamemnon: 'Run away by all means if your heart drives you. I will not entreat you to stay here for my sake. There are others with me who will do me honour, and above all Zeus of the counsels. To me you are the most hateful of all the kings whom the gods love. Forever quarrelling is dear to your heart, and wars and battles; and if you are very strong indeed, that is a god's gift. Go home then with your own ships and your own companions, be king over the Myrmidons. I care nothing about you. I take no account of your anger. But here is my threat to you. Even as Phoibos Apollo is taking away my Chryseis, I shall convey her back in my own ship, with my own followers; but I shall take the fair-checked Briseis, your prize, I myself going to your shelter, that you may learn well how much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back from likening himself to me and contending against me.'

So he spoke. And the anger came on Peleus' son, and within his shaggy breast the heart was divided two ways, pondering whether to draw from beside his thigh the sharp sword, driving away all those who stood between and kill the son of Atreus, or else to check the spleen within and keep down his anger. Now as he weighed in mind and spirit these two courses and was drawing from its scabbard the great sword, Athene descended from the sky. For Hera the goddess of the white arms sent her, who loved both men equally in her heart and cared for them. The goddess standing behind Peleus' son caught him by the fair hair, appearing to him only, for no man of the others saw her. Achilles in amazement turned about, and straightway knew Pallas Athene and the terrible eyes shining. He uttered winged words and addressed her: 'Why have you come now, o child of Zeus of the aegis, once more? Is it that you may see the outrageousness of the son of Atreus Agamemnon? Yet will I tell you this thing, and I think it shall be accomplished. By such acts of arrogance he may even lose his own life.'

Then in answer the goddess grey-eyed Athene spoke to him: 'I have come down to stay your anger – but will you obey me? – from the sky; and the goddess of the white arms Hera sent me, who loves both of you equally in her heart and cares for you. Come then, do not take your sword in your hand, keep clear of fighting, though indeed with words you may abuse him, and it will be that way. And this also will I tell you and it will be a thing accomplished. Some day three times over such shining gifts shall be given you

by reason of this outrage. Hold your hand then, and obey us.'

Then in answer again spoke Achilleus of the swift feet:
'Goddess, it is necessary that I obey the word of you two,
angry though I am in my heart. So it will be better.
If any man obeys the gods, they listen to him also.'

He spoke, and laid his heavy hand on the silver sword hilt
and thrust the great blade back into the scabbard nor disobeyed
the word of Athene. And she went back again to Olympos
to the house of Zeus of the aegis with the other divinities.

But Peleus' son once again in words of derision
spoke to Atreides, and did not yet let go of his anger:
'You wine sack, with a dog's eyes, with a deer's heart. Never
once have you taken courage in your heart to arm with your people
for battle, or go into ambush with the best of the Achaians.
No, for in such things you see death. Far better to your mind
is it, all along the widespread host of the Achaians
to take away the gifts of any man who speaks up against you.
King who feed on your people, since you rule nonentities;
otherwise, son of Atreus, this were your last outrage.
But I will tell you this and swear a great oath upon it:
in the name of this sceptre, which never again will bear leaf nor
branch, now that it has left behind the cut stump in the mountains,
nor shall it ever blossom again, since the bronze blade stripped
bark and leafage, and now at last the sons of the Achaians
carry it in their hands in state when they administer
the justice of Zeus. And this shall be a great oath before you:
some day longing for Achilleus will come to the sons of the Achaians,
all of them. Then stricken at heart though you be, you will be able
to do nothing, when in their numbers before man-slaughtering Hektor
they drop and die. And then you will eat out the heart within you
in sorrow, that you did no honour to the best of the Achaians.'

Thus spoke Peleus' son and dashed to the ground the sceptre
studded with golden nails, and sat down again. But Atreides
raged still on the other side, and between them Nestor
the fair-spoken rose up, the lucid speaker of Pylos,
from whose lips the streams of words ran sweeter than honey.
In his time two generations of mortal men had perished,
those who had grown up with him and they who had been born to
these in sacred Pylos, and he was king in the third age.
He in kind intention toward both stood forth and addressed them:
'Oh, for shame. Great sorrow comes on the land of Achaia.
Now might Priam and the sons of Priam in truth be happy,
and all the rest of the Trojans be visited in their hearts with gladness,
were they to hear all this wherein you two are quarrelling,
you, who surpass all Danaans in council, in fighting.

Yet be persuaded. Both of you are younger than I am.
Yes, and in my time I have dealt with better men than
you are, and never once did they disregard me. Never
yet have I seen nor shall see again such men as these were,
men like Peirithoös, and Dryas, shepherd of the people,
Kaineus and Exadios, godlike Polyphemos,
or Theseus, Aigeus' son, in the likeness of the immortals.
These were the strongest generation of earth-born mortals,
the strongest, and they fought against the strongest, the beast men
living within the mountains, and terribly they destroyed them.
I was of the company of these men, coming from Pylos,
a long way from a distant land, since they had summoned me.
And I fought single-handed, yet against such men no one
of the mortals now alive upon earth could do battle. And also
these listened to the counsels I gave and heeded my bidding.
Do you also obey, since to be persuaded is better.
You, great man that you are, yet do not take the girl away
but let her be, a prize as the sons of the Achaians gave her
first. Nor, son of Peleus, think to match your strength with
the king, since never equal with the rest is the portion of honour
of the sceptred king to whom Zeus gives magnificence. Even
though you are the stronger man, and the mother who bore you was immortal,
yet is this man greater who is lord over more than you rule.
Son of Atreus, give up your anger; even I entreat you
to give over your bitterness against Achilleus, he who
stands as a great bulwark of battle over all the Achaians.'

Then in answer again spoke powerful Agamemnon:
'Yes, old sir, all this you have said is fair and orderly.
Yet here is a man who wishes to be above all others,
who wishes to hold power over all, and to be lord of
all, and give them their orders, yet I think one will not obey him.
And if the everlasting gods have made him a spearman,
yet they have not given him the right to speak abusively.'

Then looking at him darkly brilliant Achilleus answered him:
'So must I be called of no account and a coward
if I must carry out every order you may happen to give me.
Tell other men to do these things, but give me no more
commands, since I for my part have no intention to obey you.
And put away in your thoughts this other thing I tell you.
With my hands I will not fight for the girl's sake, neither
with you nor any other man, since you take her away who gave her.
But of all the other things that are mine beside my fast black
ship, you shall take nothing away against my pleasure.
Come, then, only try it, that these others may see also;
instantly your own black blood will stain my spearpoint.'

So these two after battling in words of contention
stood up, and broke the assembly beside the ships of the Achaians. [...]

Iliad 2.1–282

[After Achilles withdraws to his camp and refuses to fight any longer for the Greek cause, Zeus sends a false dream to Agamemnon urging an immediate attack on the Trojans.]

Now the rest of the gods, and men who were lords of chariots,
slept night long, but the ease of sleep came not upon Zeus
who was pondering in his heart how he might bring honour
to Achilleus, and destroy many beside the ships of the Achaians.
Now to his mind this thing appeared to be the best counsel,
to send evil Dream to Atreus' son Agamemnon.
He cried out to the dream and addressed him in winged words:
'Go forth, evil Dream, beside the swift ships of the Achaians.
Make your way to the shelter of Atreus' son Agamemnon;
speak to him in words exactly as I command you.
Bid him arm the flowing-haired Achaians for battle
in all haste; since now he might take the wide-wayed city
of the Trojans. For no longer are the gods who live on Olympus
arguing the matter, since Hera forced them all over
by her supplication, and evils are in store for the Trojans.'

So he spoke, and Dream listened to his word and descended.
Lightly he came down beside the swift ships of the Achaians
and came to Agamemnon the son of Atreus. He found him
sleeping within his shelter in a cloud of immortal slumber.
Dream stood then beside his head in the likeness of Nestor,
Neleus' son, whom Agamemnon honoured beyond all
elders beside. In Nestor's likeness the divine Dream spoke to him:
'Son of wise Atreus breaker of horses, are you sleeping?
He should not sleep night long who is a man burdened with counsels
and responsibility for a people and cares so numerous.
Listen quickly to what I say, since I am a messenger
of Zeus, who far away cares much for you and is pitiful.
Zeus bids you arm the flowing-haired Achaians for battle
in all haste; since now you might take the wide-wayed city
of the Trojans. For no longer are the gods who live on Olympus
arguing the matter, since Hera forced them all over
by her supplication, and evils are in store for the Trojans
from Zeus. Keep this thought in your heart then, let not forgetfulness
take you, after you are released from the kindly sweet slumber.'

So he spoke and went away, and left Agamemnon

there, believing things in his heart that were not to be accomplished. For he thought that on that very day he would take Priam's city; fool, who knew nothing of all the things Zeus planned to accomplish, Zeus, who yet was minded to visit tears and sufferings on Trojans and Danaans alike in the strong encounters. Agamemnon awoke from sleep, the divine voice drifting around him. He sat upright and put on his tunic, beautiful, fresh woven, and threw the great mantle over it. Underneath his shining feet he bound the fair sandals and across his shoulders slung the sword with the nails of silver, and took up the sceptre of his fathers, immortal forever. Thus he went beside the ships of the bronze-armoured Achaians.

Now the goddess Dawn drew close to tall Olympos with her message of light to Zeus and the other immortals. But Agamemnon commanded his clear-voiced heralds to summon by proclamation to assembly the flowing-haired Achaians, and the heralds made their cry and the men were assembled swiftly.

First he held a council session of the high-hearted princes beside the ship of Nestor, the king of the race of Pylos. Summoning these he compacted before them his close counsel: 'Hear me, friends: in my sleep a Dream divine came to me through the immortal night, and in appearance and stature and figure it most closely resembled splendid Nestor. It came and stood above my head and spoke a word to me: "Son of wise Atreus breaker of horses, are you sleeping? He should not sleep night long who is a man burdened with counsels and responsibility for a people and cares so numerous. Now listen quickly to what I say, since I am a messenger from Zeus, who far away cares much for you and is pitiful. Zeus bids you arm the flowing-haired Achaians for battle in all haste; since now you might take the wide-wayed city of the Trojans. For no longer are the gods who live on Olympos arguing the matter, since Hera has forced them all over by her supplication, and evils are in store for the Trojans by Zeus' will. Keep this within your heart." So speaking the Dream went away on wings, and sweet sleep released me. Come then, let us see if we can arm the sons of the Achaians. Yet first, since it is the right way, I will make trial of them by words, and tell them even to flee in their benched vessels. Do you take stations here and there, to check them with orders.'

He spoke thus, and sat down again, and among them rose up Nestor, he who ruled as a king in sandy Pylos. He in kind intention toward all stood forth and addressed them: 'Friends, who are leaders of the Argives and keep their counsel, had it been any other Achaian who told of this dream

we should have called it a lie and we might rather have turned from it. Now he who claims to be the best of the Achaians has seen it. Come then, let us see if we can arm the sons of the Achaians.’

So he spoke and led the way departing from the council, and the rest rose to their feet, the sceptred kings, obeying the shepherd of the people, and the army thronged behind them. Like the swarms of clustering bees that issue forever in fresh bursts from the hollow in the stone, and hang like bunched grapes as they hover beneath the flowers in springtime fluttering in swarms together this way and that way, so the many nations of men from the ships and the shelters along the front of the deep sea beach marched in order by companies to the assembly, and Rumour walked blazing among them, Zeus’ messenger, to hasten them along. Thus they were assembled and the place of their assembly was shaken, and the earth groaned as the people took their positions and there was tumult. Nine heralds shouting set about putting them in order, to make them cease their clamour and listen to the kings beloved of Zeus. The people took their seats in sober fashion and were marshalled in their places and gave over their clamouring. Powerful Agamemnon stood up holding the sceptre Hephaistos had wrought him carefully. Hephaistos gave it to Zeus the king, the son of Kronos, and Zeus in turn gave it to the courier Argeiphontes, and lord Hermes gave it to Pelops, driver of horses, and Pelops again gave it to Atreus, the shepherd of the people. Atreus dying left it to Thyestes of the rich flocks, and Thyestes left it in turn to Agamemnon to carry and to be lord of many islands and over all Argos. Leaning upon this sceptre he spoke and addressed the Argives: ‘Fighting men and friends, o Danaans, henchmen of Ares: Zeus son of Kronos has caught me fast in bitter futility. He is hard; who before this time promised me and consented that I might sack strong-walled Ilion and sail homeward. Now he has devised a vile deception, and bids me go back to Argos in dishonour having lost many of my people. Such is the way it will be pleasing to Zeus, who is too strong, who before now has broken the crests of many cities and will break them again, since his power is beyond all others. And this shall be a thing of shame for the men hereafter to be told, that so strong, so great a host of Achaians carried on and fought in vain a war that was useless against men fewer than they, with no accomplishment shown for it; since if both sides were to be willing, Achaians and Trojans, to cut faithful oaths of truce, and both to be numbered, and the Trojans were to be counted by those with homes in the city,

while we were to be allotted in tens, we Achaians,
and each one of our tens chose a man of Troy to pour wine for it,
still there would be many tens left without a wine steward.
By so much I claim we sons of the Achaians outnumber
the Trojans – those who live in the city; but there are companions
from other cities in their numbers, wielders of the spear, to help them,
who drive me hard back again and will not allow me,
despite my will, to sack the well-founded stronghold of Ilion.
And now nine years of mighty Zeus have gone by, and the timbers
of our ships have rotted away and the cables are broken
and far away our own wives and our young children
are sitting within our halls and wait for us, while still our work here
stays forever unfinished as it is, for whose sake we came hither.
Come then, do as I say, let us all be won over; let us
run away with our ships to the beloved land of our fathers
since no longer now shall we capture Troy of the wide ways.’

So he spoke, and stirred up the passion in the breast of all those
who were within that multitude and listened to his counsel.
And the assembly was shaken as on the sea the big waves
in the main by Ikaria, when the south and south-east winds
driving down from the clouds of Zeus the father whip them.
As when the west wind moves across the grain deep standing,
boisterously, and shakes and sweeps it till the tassels lean, so
all of that assembly was shaken, and the men in tumult
swept to the ships, and underneath their feet the dust lifted
and rose high, and the men were all shouting to one another
to lay hold on the ships and drag them down to the bright sea.
They cleaned out the keel channels and their cries hit skyward
as they made for home and snatched the props from under the vessels.

Then for the Argives a homecoming beyond fate might have
been accomplished, had not Hera spoken a word to Athene:
‘For shame, now, Atrytone, daughter of Zeus of the aegis.
As things are, the Argives will take flight homeward over
the wide ridges of the sea to the land of their fathers,
and thus they would leave to Priam and to the Trojans Helen
of Argos, to glory over, for whose sake many Achaians
lost their lives in Troy far from their own native country.
But go now along the host of the bronze-armoured Achaians.
Speak to each man in words of gentleness and draw him backward
nor let them drag down to the salt sea their oarswept vessels.’

So she spoke, nor did the goddess grey-eyed Athene
disobey her, but went in speed down the peaks of Olympos,
and lightly she arrived beside the fast ships of the Achaians.
There she came on Odysseus, the equal of Zeus in counsel,
standing still; he had laid no hand upon his black, strong-benched

vessel, since disappointment touched his heart and his spirit.
 Athene of the grey eyes stood beside him and spoke to him:
 ‘Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus:
 will it be this way? Will you all hurl yourselves into your benched ships
 and take flight homeward to the beloved land of your fathers,
 and would you thus leave to Priam and to the Trojans Helen
 of Argos, to glory over, for whose sake many Achaians
 lost their lives in Troy far from their own native country?
 Go now along the host of the Achaians, give way no longer,
 speak to each man in words of gentleness and draw them backward,
 nor let them drag down to the salt sea their oarswept vessels.’

So she spoke, and he knew the voice of the goddess speaking
 and went on the run, throwing aside his cloak, which was caught up
 by Eurybates the herald of Ithaka who followed him.

He came face to face with Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
 and took from him the sceptre of his fathers, immortal forever.
 With this he went beside the ships of the bronze-armoured Achaians.

Whenever he encountered some king, or man of influence,
 he would stand beside him and with soft words try to restrain him:
 ‘Excellency! It does not become you to be frightened like any
 coward. Rather hold fast and check the rest of the people.
 You do not yet clearly understand the purpose of Atreides.
 Now he makes trial, but soon will bear hard on the sons of the Achaians.
 Did we not all hear what he was saying in council?
 May he not in anger do some harm to the sons of the Achaians!
 For the anger of god-supported kings is a big matter,
 to whom honour and love are given from Zeus of the counsels.’

When he saw some man of the people who was shouting,
 he would strike at him with his staff, and reprove him also:
 ‘Excellency! Sit still and listen to what others tell you,
 to those who are better men than you, you skulker and coward
 and thing of no account whatever in battle or council.
 Surely not all of us Achaians can be as kings here.
 Lordship for many is no good thing. Let there be one ruler,
 one king, to whom the son of devious-devising Kronos
 gives the sceptre and right of judgment, to watch over his people.’

So he went through the army marshalling it, until once more
 they swept back into the assembly place from the ships and the shelters
 clamorously, as when from the thunderous sea the surf-beat
 crashes upon the great beach, and the whole sea is in tumult.

Now the rest had sat down, and were orderly in their places,
 but one man, Thersites of the endless speech, still scolded,
 who knew within his head many words, but disorderly;
 vain, and without decency, to quarrel with the princes
 with any word he thought might be amusing to the Argives.

This was the ugliest man who came beneath Ilion. He was bandy-legged and went lame of one foot, with shoulders stooped and drawn together over his chest, and above this his skull went up to a point with the wool grown sparsely upon it. Beyond all others Achilles hated him, and Odysseus. These two he was forever abusing, but now at brilliant Agamemnon he clashed the shrill noise of his abuse. The Achaians were furiously angry with him, their minds resentful. But he, crying the words aloud, scolded Agamemnon: 'Son of Atreus, what thing further do you want, or find fault with now? Your shelters are filled with bronze, there are plenty of the choicest women for you within your shelter, whom we Achaians give to you first of all whenever we capture some stronghold. Or is it still more gold you will be wanting, that some son of the Trojans, breakers of horses, brings as ransom out of Ilion, one that I, or some other Achaian, capture and bring in? Is it some young woman to lie with in love and keep her all to yourself apart from the others? It is not right for you, their leader, to lead in sorrow the sons of the Achaians. My good fools, poor abuses, you women, not men, of Achaia, let us go back home in our ships, and leave this man here by himself in Troy to mull his prizes of honour that he may find out whether or not we others are helping him. And now he has dishonoured Achilles, a man much better than he is. He has taken his prize by force and keeps her. But there is no gall in Achilles' heart, and he is forgiving. Otherwise, son of Atreus, this were your last outrage.'

So he spoke, Thersites, abusing Agamemnon the shepherd of the people. But brilliant Odysseus swiftly came beside him scowling and laid a harsh word upon him: 'Fluent orator though you be, Thersites, your words are ill-considered. Stop, nor stand up alone against princes. Out of all those who came beneath Ilion with Atreides I assert there is no worse man than you are. Therefore you shall not lift up your mouth to argue with princes, cast reproaches into their teeth, nor sustain the homegoing. We do not even know clearly how these things will be accomplished, whether we sons of the Achaians shall win home well or badly; yet you sit here throwing abuse at Agamemnon, Atreus' son, the shepherd of the people, because the Danaan fighters give him much. You argue nothing but scandal. And this also will I tell you, and it will be a thing accomplished. If once more I find you playing the fool, as you are now, nevermore let the head of Odysseus sit on his shoulders, let me nevermore be called Telemachos' father,

if I do not take you and strip away your personal clothing,
 your mantle and your tunic that cover over your nakedness,
 and send you thus bare and howling back to the fast ships,
 whipping you out of the assembly place with the strokes of indignity.’

So he spoke and dashed the sceptre against his back and
 shoulders, and he doubled over, and a round tear dropped from him,
 and a bloody welt stood up between his shoulders under
 the golden sceptre’s stroke, and he sat down again, frightened,
 in pain, and looking helplessly about wiped off the tear-drops.
 Sorry though the men were they laughed over him happily,
 and thus they would speak to each other, each looking at the man next
 him:

‘Come now: Odysseus has done excellent things by thousands,
 bringing forward good counsels and ordering armed encounters;
 but now this is far the best thing he ever has accomplished
 among the Argives, to keep this thrower of words, this braggart
 out of assembly. Never again will his proud heart stir him
 up, to wrangle with the princes in words of revilement.’

So the multitude spoke, but Odysseus, sacker of cities,
 stood up holding the staff, and beside him grey-eyed Athene
 in the likeness of a herald enjoined the people to silence,
 that at once the foremost and the utmost sons of the Achaians
 might listen to him speaking and deliberate his counsel. [. . .]

Odyssey 2.1–259

[Odysseus, ruler of Ithaca when he departed to fight at Troy, left behind an infant son, Telemachus, who comes of age toward the end of the many years of his father’s absence. On the advice of the goddess Athena, Telemachus summons an assembly meeting in the hopes of doing something about the crowd of greedy suitors besieging his mother and feasting constantly at his father’s household.]

Dawn comes early, with rosy fingers. When she appeared, the son that Odysseus loved sat up to put on his clothes and left his bed, then slung the keen sword about his shoulders, fastened his sandals under his glistening feet and went out from his room, like a god to look upon. At once he ordered the clear-voiced heralds to call the flowing-haired Achaeans to the assembly-place. The heralds made their proclamation and the people soon began to gather. When they were ready – when the assembly-place was filled – Telemachus also took his way there. In his hand was a spear of bronze, beside him were two swift-footed hounds, and Athene shed upon the boy a grace of presence more than human, so that as he came nearer to themselves the people all gazed at him in wonder. He took his place in his father’s seat, and the elders made way for him.

The first to speak to those assembled was Lord Aegyptius, bent with age and unfathomably wise. When King Odysseus sailed with his hollow ships, bound for Troy of the noble horses, a son of Aegyptius had gone with him, and this was the spearsman Antiphus; but the savage Cyclops had killed him inside his arching cave, making a meal of him after all the rest. The old lord had three other sons; one of them – Eurynomus – was among the suitors, and the other two saw to their father’s farms; but still he never forgot the first in his grief and mourning, and with a tear for him he now spoke in council:

“Men of Ithaca, listen to my words. There has been no council and no assembly here from the day when King Odysseus sailed with his hollow ships. Who has thus called us together now? On whom has there come this pressing need, among our younger men or among our elders? Has our summoner heard some news of a host of men approaching, news he would bring before us clearly as being the first to hear of it? Is there some other public matter which he would tell and apprise us of? A worthy man he must be, I think, a heaven-favoured man. May Zeus bring to accomplishment whatever good thing he has at heart!”

So he spoke, and the son of Odysseus accepted the omen joyfully, nor did he stay seated longer; eager to speak, he stood up in mid-assembly. The staff of office was put in his hands by Peisenor, a herald versed in the ways of wisdom; then he spoke thus, addressing Aegyptius first:

“Sir, the man you speak of is not far off, as you will now find. It was I who summoned the people here, because of a thing that bears hard upon me. I have heard no news of a host approaching, news I might bring before you as having myself first learned of it, nor is there any other public matter I wish to tell and apprise you of. The business is my own. Evil has fallen upon my house – a double evil. First I have lost my noble father, who once was king among all you here and ruled you as gently as a father; then something far worse has befallen me, which before long will ruin my house altogether and bring to nothing my means of living. My mother, greatly to her distress, has been beset by suitors, sons of the greatest nobles here. They dare not go to the house of Icarius her father so that he in person might receive bride-gifts for his daughter, giving her to any suitor he pleased who was acceptable to herself. Instead, they haunt my palace day in, day out; they slaughter my sheep and oxen and fatted goats; they make merry here, they selfishly drink the glowing wine, and thus abundance of things is wasted. All this is because there is no man left with the mettle of Odysseus to ward off ruin from the house, I myself am not able to ward it off; I fear I shall always be a weakling, with no skill to resist at all. Had I the strength, I would take my stand gladly enough, because these men’s deeds and the havoc they make of my possessions are beyond all justice, beyond endurance. Do you feel no self-reproach yourselves, no shame for the reproach of your neighbours, of those who live all around you here? You should shrink from the anger of the gods; the gods in their indignation may bring your misdoings down on your own heads. I appeal to you by Olympian Zeus himself; I appeal by Themis, who convenes men’s councils and dissolves them, cease from these ways, you men of Ithaca, and leave me unmolested to pine away in my bitter grief. Or can it be that Odysseus my noble father once did in malice some harm to the Achaeans for which in counter-malice you take your revenge on me by hounding on these men against me? Better for me that you yourselves should devour my cattle and hoarded goods. If you of Ithaca were the devourers, amends might indeed be made before long, because we of the household

could accost you here and there in the town, asking aloud for our goods again till everything had been given back. Instead, you inflict upon my spirit miseries for which there is no redress.”

So he spoke in his indignation, and threw down the staff upon the ground. He had burst into tears, and compassion came upon the people. They all kept silent, not having the heart to answer him unkindly; all but Antinous, who rejoined:

“What words are these, Telemachus? How arrogantly you speak, how ungovernable you are in passion! You endeavour to put us to the blush; you hope to fasten disgrace on us. Listen; it is not the Achaean suitors who are to blame; it is your own mother with her unexampled trickery. Three years have passed – and a fourth will soon be gone – since she began to baffle her suitors’ hearts. She gives hope to all, she promises every man in turn, she sends out messages here and there, yet all the while her purpose is far removed. Here is one scheme that she devised. She set up in her hall an ample web, long and delicate, and began to weave. At the same time she spoke to us: ‘Young men who after Odysseus’ death have come here to woo me, you are eager for this marriage with me; nevertheless I ask your patience till I have finished weaving this robe, so that what I have spun may not be wasted and go for nothing; it is King Laertes’ burial-robe, for the time when he is overtaken by the grim doom of distressful death. I dread reproach from Achaean women here for allowing one who had gathered great possessions to lie at his death without a shroud.’ So she spoke, and our wills consented. From that time on she would weave the great web all day, but when night came she would have torches set beside her and would unravel the work. For three years on end this trickery foiled the trusting suitors; but when seasons passed and the fourth year came, one of her maids who was in the secret revealed the truth, and we came upon her undoing the glossy web; so with ill grace she finished the work perforce.

“And now, this is your answer from the suitors; take it to heart yourself, and let all the Achaeans take it to heart as well. Tell your mother to leave this place and take for husband whatever man her father bids her and she approves. Or does she mean to continue plaguing the sons of Achaeans, setting her wits to work in things where Athene has favoured her so richly? Skill in exquisite workmanship, a keen mind, subtlety – these she has, beyond anything we have heard of even in the ladies of older times – the Achaean ladies of braided tresses like Tyro and Alcmene and garlanded Mycene; not one of these had the mastery in devising things that Penelope has, yet her last device went beyond all reason. So the suitors will not cease devouring your substance and possessions as long as she keeps the frame of mind that the gods are fostering in her now. To herself she is bringing great renown, but to you the loss of wealth and substance. We will neither return to our estates nor depart elsewhere till she takes for husband whichever of us Achaeans she may choose.”

Thoughtful Telemachus answered him: “Antinous, I cannot unhouse against her will the mother who bore me and who bred me. My father, alive or dead, is for certain far away from here, and it is hard that I myself should pay heavy recompense to Icarus if of my own free will I tell my mother to leave this place. I shall suffer evil from him, her father, and dark powers also will do me evil because when my mother quits this house she will call down the grim Furies on me; and with fellow-men I shall be a byword. Never then will I utter the word you ask. If your own hearts reproach you now, leave my halls and look for your feasts elsewhere, changing from house to house

to consume possessions that are your own. But if to yourselves it seems a better thing, a more desirable thing, to waste one man's substance and go scot-free – so be it, waste on! I for my part will call aloud on the deathless gods, hoping that Zeus will let requital be made at last; then you will perish in these same halls and it is I who shall go scot-free.”

So spoke Telemachus, and Zeus the Thunderer in response sent forth two eagles to fly down from a mountain height. For a while they flew as the wind wafted them, straining their wings side by side, but when they were right above the assembly-place with its hum of voices, they wheeled about and shook their thick feathers, sweeping low over all those there and boding death; then with their talons they tore at each other's cheeks and necks and sped away to the right, over the town and houses. The astonished people had followed the eagles with their eyes, and their hearts half guessed things that indeed were to come to pass. All this drew words from an aged lord, Halitherses the son of Mastor, who beyond the rest of his generation was versed in the lore of birds and wise in expounding it. Wishing well to all, he gave his interpretation: “Men of Ithaca, heed what I am about to say. My exposition concerns the suitors first; a great wave of trouble is rolling towards them. Odysseus will not be away from his kith and kin much longer; indeed I think he is near already, sowing seeds of death and destruction for every suitor here. As for the rest of us in Ithaca, evil will fall on many of us as well. But let us, while there is still time, consider how best to check these men, or rather, let the men check themselves – they will gain most by so doing now. I speak as no novice in prophecy; I am a master. I see fulfilment now of everything I once said to subtle-witted Odysseus himself when the Argives were embarking for Ilium and he like the rest went aboard his vessel. I told him that after many trials, after the loss of all his comrades, in the twentieth year, known by none, he would come back to Ithaca. All this is finding fulfilment now.”

Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered him: “Enough of this now, old prophesier; go home and interpret omens there; save your own children from threats of doom. This morning's omens I claim to interpret better than you. There are many birds that cross the sunlight, and not all of them have fateful meaning. No: Odysseus has perished far from here, and I wish that you had gone down to destruction with him. Then you would not have uttered these tedious soothsayings, nor would you be fanning his son's resentment in hopes of winning some gift for your own household. I will tell you plainly, and what I tell you will come to pass; if you with your store of ancient wisdom inveigle this boy into defiance, he himself will be first to suffer; and as for you, sir, we shall impose such a fine upon you as it will fret your soul to pay; you will find it very hard to bear. To Telemachus I will give this counsel publicly. Let him bid his mother go back to her father's house; her kinsmen will prepare the wedding and charge themselves with the many gifts that go with a beloved daughter. Short of that, I think that the sons of the Achaeans will never cease from the wooing that so distresses you, since, come what may, we fear nobody, not even Telemachus with his eloquence; and as for your prophecies, old babbler, we have no concern over them either; they come to nothing and only make you the more detested. And the reckless devouring of possessions will also go on just as hitherto, and recompense will never be made so long as in this matter of marriage the queen keeps her suitors in suspense. As it is, we are waiting perpetually, each of us in rivalry with his neighbour over this paragon, instead of seeking those other women whom we might well enough choose to wed.”

Thoughtful Telemachus answered him: “Eurymachus, and you other overbearing suitors – on that matter I have no more to ask or to say; the gods know already where I stand, and all the Achaeans know. But now let me have a rapid ship and a crew of twenty to make the voyage out and back; I mean to go to Sparta and sandy Pylos to seek for news of my father’s homecoming: he has been away from us too long. Perhaps some human witness will speak, perhaps I shall hear some rumour that comes from Zeus, a great source of tidings for mankind. If I hear that my father is alive and is on his way, I may hold my ground for a year more, despite my troubles; but if I hear he is dead and gone, then I will journey back to my own country and raise a cairn to him, then pay him in full his due of funeral honours and find a new husband for my mother.”

With these words he sat down, and Mentor in turn rose to speak – a friend of his noble father in other times. When Odysseus sailed, he had left all his household in Mentor’s care, bidding him guard everything securely and respect the wishes of old Laertes. His words now were of honest purpose. “Men of Ithaca, heed what I am about to say. I could wish that henceforward no sceptred king should set himself to be kind and gentle and equitable; I would have every king a tyrant and evil-doer, since King Odysseus goes utterly unremembered among the people that once he ruled with the gentleness of a father. Nor do I make it a reproach that the headstrong suitors should still do their deeds of violence in all the wickedness of their hearts, because they are staking their own lives when they grossly devour the substance of Odysseus, supposing that he will not return. It is the rest of you I am indignant with, to see how you all sit dumbly there instead of rebuking them and restraining them; you are many; the suitors are few.”

Leocritus son of Euenor answered: “Mentor, what words are these? Mischief-making fool, you are urging the people to restrain us. You will find it harder than you think to fight men who in truth outnumber you, and all this for the sake of a meal. If Odysseus of Ithaca himself surprised us feasting in his palace and were bent on thrusting us out again, his wife would have little joy at his homecoming, however much she had longed for it; no, there and then he would meet an ignominious end if he took up arms against such odds; your words are folly. But come, let the people here disperse, each to his own home; and Telemachus shall be sped upon his journey by Mentor and Halitherses, who are friends of his father from long ago. But he is more likely, I surmise, to remain here a good while yet; what news he learns he will learn in Ithaca, and he will never make this journey.”

So he spoke, letting the assembly break up at once. The people dispersed to their own houses; the suitors made for the palace of Odysseus. [...]

Hesiod: Selections on rulers and justice

Hesiod was early Greece’s other great epic poet. His *Theogony* and *Works and Days* were probably composed around the turn of the seventh century BC, roughly the same era as

or a little later than the epics of Homer. While Hesiod’s two poems are not heroic in the way of Homer’s and each focuses on different themes, they nevertheless touch

upon government and the proper use of power in the Greek world of Hesiod's time. The excerpt from *Theogony* lays out an idealized view of kings/lords who are blessed by the Muses; that of *Works and Days* gives a darker picture, highlighting

the evil effects of rulers who have been corrupted. (*Sources*: Hesiod, *Theogony* ll. 81–97 and *Works and Days* ll. 213–269, trans. by A. N. Athanassakis from *Theogony; Works and Days; Shield/Hesiod* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), pp. 15, 72–3.)

Theogony lines 81–97

[. . .] And if the daughters of great Zeus honor a king
cherished by Zeus and look upon him when he is born,
they pour on his tongue sweet dew
and make the words that flow from his mouth honey-sweet,
and all the people look up to him as with straight justice
he gives his verdict and with unerring firmness
and wisdom brings some great strife to a swift end.
This is why kings are prudent, and when in the assembly
injustice is done, wrongs are righted
by the kings with ease and gentle persuasion.
When such a king comes to the assembly he stands out;
yes, he is revered like a god and treated with cheerful respect.
Such is the holy gift the Muses give men.
The singers and lyre players of this earth
are descended from the Muses and far-shooting Apollon,
but kings are from the line of Zeus. Blessed is the man
whom the Muses love; sweet song flows from his mouth. [. . .]

Works and Days lines 213–269

[. . .] Perses, obey justice and restrain reckless wrongdoing,
for such wrongdoing harms the poor, and even the noble
find it an unwelcome burden that weighs them down
and brings them ruin. The road to fair dealings
is the better one. Justice is the winner in the race
against insolent crime. Only fools need suffer to learn.
The Oath Demon follows the trail of crooked decrees;
Justice howls when she is dragged about by bribe-devouring men
whose verdicts are crooked when they sit in judgment.
Weeping and clothed in mist, she follows through the cities
and dwellings of men, and visits ruin on those
who twist her straight ways and drive her out.
But those who give straight verdicts and follow justice,

both when fellow citizens and strangers are on trial,
live in a city that blossoms, a city that prospers.
Then youth-nurturing peace comes over the land, and Zeus
who sees afar does not decree for them the pains of war.
Men whose justice is straight know neither hunger nor ruin,
but amid feasts enjoy the yield of their labors.
For them the earth brings forth a rich harvest; and for them
the top of an oak teems with acorn and the middle with bees.
Fleecy sheep are weighed down with wool,
and women bear children who resemble their fathers.
There is an abundance of blessings and the grainland
grants such harvests that no one has to sail on the sea.
But far-seeing Zeus, son of Kronos, is the judge
of wanton wrongdoers who plot deeds of harshness.
Many times one man's wickedness ruins a whole city,
if such a man breaks the law and turns his mind to recklessness.
Then the son of Kronos sends a great bane from the sky,
hunger and plague, and the people waste away.
Women bear no children, and families dwindle
through the counsels of Zeus the Olympian,
the son of Kronos, who punishes wrong by wiping out
large armies, walls, and ships at sea.
Kings, give this verdict no little thought,
for the immortals are ever present among men,
and they see those who with crooked verdicts
spurn divine retribution and grind down one another's lives.
Upon this earth that nurtures many Zeus can levy
thirty thousand deathless guardians of mortal men,
who keep a watchful eye over verdicts and cruel acts
as they rove the whole earth, clothed in mist.
Justice is a maiden and a daughter of Zeus;
the gods of Olympos respect her noble title,
and whenever men mistreat her through false charges
she rushes to sit at the feet of Zeus Kronion
and she denounces the designs of men who are not just,
so that the people pay for the reckless deeds and evil plans
of kings whose slanted words twist her straight path.
Keep her commands, O gift-devouring kings, and let
verdicts be straight; yes, lay your crooked ways aside!
He that wrongs another man wrongs, above all, himself,
and evil schemes bring more harm on those who plot them.
The eye of Zeus sees all, notices all;
it sees all this, too, if it wishes, and knows exactly
what sort of host this town is to justice. [...]

Homer and the Beginning of Political Thought in Greece

Kurt A. Raaflaub

[...] To use the epics as historical evidence poses serious problems. For my present purposes it suffices simply to state my position. In the form in which they survive, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* each are the work of one and possibly the same “monumental” poet who lived in the late eighth century in Ionia. Unlike the events and actions that are attributed to the heroes and therefore elevated into a superhuman sphere, the world in which they live and act is human, real, accessible, and understandable to the poet’s audience. The practical aspects of life such as the extended household (*oikos*), the early stages of the polis, agriculture, trade, and war, assemblies and council, relationships within the community and the value system of the leading class – these practical aspects form a system that is sufficiently consistent in itself to mirror a historical society which, according to Moses Finley, is to be dated in the tenth and early ninth centuries, according to others – and more probably – a little later. However that may be, much more important is that the social, political and moral concerns we find in the epics, are the concerns of a real society and, at least in this respect, the poet’s own.¹

Nevertheless, the epics are primarily artistic masterpieces of the highest order. Equally, the poets and bards aimed primarily at entertaining their listeners and glorifying their ancestral heroes. Accordingly we should expect the epics to present, even in their more contemporary elements, a highly positive picture of the “aristocracy.”² Over vast stretches that is indeed the case. But there are notable exceptions, and these are particularly useful for our purposes. Some of them we have already discussed; let us look at a few more.

Iliad I and II

The *Iliad* begins with the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon which is caused by two bad mistakes on the part of the king and results in Achilles’ withdrawal from the war. In its basic outline this story certainly was very old. In our poet’s interpretation it is a conflict between the leader and his most eminent ally. Achilles is the better fighter and the son of a goddess but he is not equal to Agamemnon who commands the greater number of men. The stronger has to subordinate himself to the more powerful: a difficult situation which requires tact and mutual respect, qualities that are lacking in both. Achilles is perfectly justified in doing and saying what he does; he has every right to remind Agamemnon of his duties, to point out his mistakes, and to be offended by the king’s decision to make another pay for his own loss. But that it is

Kurt A. Raaflaub, “Homer and the Beginning of Political Thought in Greece,” in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium Series in Ancient Philosophy* 4 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 1–25, pp. 8–22.

Achilles, of all people, who says these things, and how he says them, is unbearable for the king who feels threatened by a conspiracy of the seer and the overbearing chieftain. In order to save his face and position, he must demonstrate his power over the rival – whatever the consequences,

that you may learn well
 how much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back
 from likening himself to me and contending against me.

(I 185–187; cf. 287–291)

This is a realistic scene, probably one familiar enough to the audience. It gains an additional dimension because the poet is not satisfied with describing the quarrel between the heroes but strongly emphasizes its consequences for the community. Agamemnon is aware of his obligation as a leader: “I myself desire that my people be safe, not perish” (117). But his pride prevails and causes immense disaster for his people, so that Achilles can justly call him “devourer of his people.”³

On the other hand, by withdrawing from the war, Achilles provides the immediate cause for the Greeks’ suffering; and he knows it (240–244):

Some day longing for Achilleus will come to the sons of the Achaians,
 all of them. Then stricken at heart though you be, you will be able
 to do nothing, when in their numbers before man-slaughtering Hektor
 they drop and die. And then you will eat out the heart within you
 in sorrow, that you did no honor to the best of the Achaians.

By sacrificing the common good to their personal feelings, both heroes, then, violate the “heroic code” and thereby threaten the very basis of their privileged position. For the hero’s honor is tied to his obligation of protecting and saving his people⁴ – an obligation clearly described in Sarpedon’s often quoted address to Glaukos⁵ and admirably met by Hector, the “Saviour of the city” par excellence, whose son Skamandrios is named Astyanax, “Lord of the city,” by the Trojans in gratitude for his father’s achievement.⁶

Thus both heroes are at fault, but the primary responsibility lies with the king. He therefore has to bear the brunt of popular anger, as it is expressed so vividly in the famous *Diapira* of Book II. As a result of the king’s attempt to test the resolve of his men the masses rush to the ships. No, this war is not popular, especially after Achilles’ withdrawal. With great difficulty Odysseus restores order. But one man goes on ranting against the king: Thersites, full of disorderly words, “vain, and without decency, forever quarreling with the princes,” the ugliest man in the camp: bandy-legged and lame on one foot, with stooped shoulders and a narrow chest, a pointed skull and almost bald (II 212–219). The poet tries hard to discredit him from the beginning, and when Thersites at the end gets his deserved beating the crowd is ecstatic: the greatest deed Odysseus has ever done (244–278). Having thus made clear that this man counts for nothing, the poet can let him say what actually is to be taken very seriously.⁷ For what Thersites says not only is explicitly described as venting the anger of the masses (222 f.) but corresponds closely with Achilles’ criticism of the king in Book I. He berates Agamemnon for his greed and obsession with women, and continues (233–242):

It is not right for
 you, their leader, to lead in sorrow the sons of the Achaians.
 My good fools, poor abuses, you women, not men, of Achaia,
 let us go back home in our ships, and leave this man here
 by himself in Troy to mull his prizes of honor
 that he may find out whether or not we others are helping him.
 And now he has dishonored Achilles, a man much better than he is . . .
 But there is no gall in Achilles' heart, and he is forgiving.
 Otherwise, son of Atreus, this were your last outrage.

We may conclude, then, that the king's self-centered and irresponsible behavior not only threatens the well-being of the army and the success of the whole enterprise, but has caused a deep crisis of leadership. The rebellion of the most important vassal with all his followers, the enthusiastic "vote by feet" of the whole army to end the war there and then, and the tirades of the antihero par excellence are all expressions of profound dissatisfaction with the king. Odysseus' firm refutation of *polykoiraniē*, rulership by many, supports this conclusion (203 f.). Fortunately for those in power, it is still relatively easy to contain the masses. But in my view scenes such as those described in *Iliad* I and II attest an awareness that the masses fighting in the war and sitting in the assembly represent at least a potential power factor. Otherwise it would be futile for Achilles, Hector, and Thersites to decry the people's passiveness and lack of courage.

Odyssey II

I think it can be shown that such dissatisfaction among the masses is aimed not only at the king, as in the cases of Paris/Priam and Agamemnon, but at large sections of the leading class. As is shown in the *Odyssey*, the conflict between communal and individual interests is a problem as much in peace as in war. When the survival of the community is not threatened by war the powerful nobleman with his household (*oikos*) is almost autonomous. Community and king cannot expect from him more than voluntary cooperation; there are no legal or practical possibilities short of violence to impose a superior will on an unwilling *oikos*. At the same time an individual or *oikos* that is threatened by others cannot expect help from the community; they have to help themselves or seek protection under a more powerful patron.⁸

However, Book II of the *Odyssey* shows beginnings of change in this respect as well. Odysseus has been gone for twenty years and is supposed dead. A band of suitors, sons of the best families from near and far, have occupied Odysseus' house, pressuring his wife Penelope to agree to a new marriage which would at the same time determine the succession, and threatening the king's *oikos* with economic ruin, thereby also weakening Telemachos' chances to succeed his father. Encouraged by Athena, Telemachos finally decides to fight back. He convenes an assembly. There has not been one for twenty years; the reason must be important: a threat of war or some other urgent public business (30–32). The assembly, that is, does not deal with private affairs, not even those of the *oikos* of the king. Yes, says Telemachos, I know; in fact, I have no such public business to offer for discussion (41–44) but the (private) evils that have befallen my house, caused by the suitors,

are beyond all justice, beyond endurance. Do you feel no self-reproach yourselves, no shame for the reproach of your neighbors, of those who live all around you here? You should shrink from the anger of the gods; the gods in their indignation may bring your misdoings down on your own heads. I appeal to you by Olympian Zeus himself, I appeal by Themis, who convenes men's councils, cease from these ways . . . [unless] my noble father once did in malice some harm to the Achaeans for which in counter-malice you take your revenge on me by hounding on these men against me? (45–79; W. Shewring's prose transl.)

So, though private business, it is of public concern, because the reputation of the community is at stake, and its safety may be in peril if indeed the gods punish injustice (143 f., cf. I 378–380). As also in the case of Hesiod, Telemachos' strongest argument is based on religious belief and hope.⁹ Zeus promptly sends an omen which is interpreted by the seer Halitherses: Odysseus is close, the suitors are in mortal danger, many others in Ithaca will be hurt; let us straighten things out while there is still time (161–169). To no avail: the people, though overcome by compassion, keep silent (81–83), and the suitors are not impressed: they fear neither Telemachos nor the gods and see no reason to drop their competition for queen and kingship (85 ff., esp. 111–128; 198–201).

Then old Mentor gives a remarkable speech (229–241), insisting on three points. First, he does not reproach the suitors for their violent deeds, because they are staking their own lives in injuring the house of Odysseus (235–238, cf. 281–284). In other words: what else do you expect of young noblemen? It is their problem if in their competition for power and rank they use the most vicious methods and risk their lives. This does not seem to me to mirror a high opinion of the behavior typical of noblemen.

Second, he criticizes the people in the assembly:

It is the rest of you I am indignant with, to see how you all sit dumbly there instead of rebuking them and restraining them; you are many; the suitors are few. (239–241)

What appears a distant possibility in the *Iliad* is here turned into a direct appeal, expressed not by the despicable Thersites but by the respected Mentor. Here we grasp the very beginnings of the concept of communal responsibility.

Third, Mentor justifies the need for such communal involvement:

I could wish that henceforward no sceptered king should set himself to be kind and gentle and equitable; I would have every king a tyrant and evil-doer, since King Odysseus goes utterly unremembered among the people that once he ruled with the gentleness of a father. (230–234; cf. V 8–12)

That means: Odysseus was a good king without the faults one ordinarily expects from men in his position.¹⁰ As Penelope says to the suitors in Book IV (687–695):

Never, in either word or deed, did he wrong any man among the people, though that is the way of heaven-protected kings; true, a king will befriend one man, but then he will persecute another. With Odysseus it was never so; he was never a tyrant to any man. But

your own . . . shameful actions show themselves plainly for what they are, and past kindness leaves you ungrateful now.

For these merits, the community is obliged to Odysseus and to his family. To ignore such obligations violates traditional rules of behavior,¹¹ just as the behavior of some of the suitors is doubly objectionable because they are ignoring their personal obligations toward their benefactor Odysseus.¹² Moreover, by showing such a lack of gratitude, the community sets a negative example; henceforth, there will be no incentive for a king to put the interest of the community above his own.

Telemachos appeals to the sentiments of the people and stresses moral and religious concerns; Mentor argues politically: what appears to be a private struggle in fact is of central importance to the community as a whole, not only because it affects its present reputation and safety, but because it is going to determine in the future the relationship between king and community and thereby the well-being of all. To shed passiveness and take a stand therefore is indispensable. I think what we have here is the earliest case in which a causal relationship is observed on a primarily political, not moral or religious, level, and then applied to a political issue.¹³

Mentor, however, remains unsuccessful as well. Since the leading families of Ithaca support their sons among the suitors there is no powerful leader (like Achilles in *Iliad* I) to lend political assistance to popular sentiment. Nevertheless the suitors fear that Telemachos might eventually succeed in arousing the people against them (IV 630–672). Their first attempt to assassinate him fails; they meet secretly to devise a better plan. One of them says:

He himself is gifted in mind and counsel, and the people now by no means look kindly on us. We must act, then, before he summons the Achaeans to assembly. . . . When they hear of our wickedness they will take it hard; I fear they will turn to violence, drive us out from our own country and force us to seek some foreign land. (XVI 361 ff., esp. 374–382)

Their plan, of course, will not be realized.

Indeed, the people and assembly are by no means negligible factors; their reactions and sentiments are watched carefully, and in the right circumstances and with the right leader they might suddenly play a much more significant role. We should remember here, as Eric Havelock points out, that the assembly also has an important function in jurisdiction and that it must witness public acts.¹⁴ Moreover, the men it is composed of form a decisive part of the army; as Joachim Latacz shows convincingly, the battle scenes and parades of armies in the *Iliad* mirror the early stages of the massive hoplite formation which could not exist without the involvement of large segments of the non-aristocratic population.¹⁵

Furthermore, the *Odyssey* emphasizes the relations between upper and lower classes, rich and poor, powerful and weak. The problems of hunger and poverty, and the misery of the socially underprivileged are often described. Several times their plight is connected with the vicissitudes of human fate that can turn a king into a beggar, refugee, or slave: Odysseus and Eumaeus are obvious cases.¹⁶ Those outsiders are protected by Zeus. They are treated in an exemplary way by the Phaeacians, Telemachos, Penelope, and Eumaeus. And again it is the suitors, the elite of noble

youth, who consistently and deliberately violate the norms of socially acceptable behavior. Their disaster therefore represents deserved punishment brought about by the gods and just men. Thus from its very beginning Greek social and political thought pays attention to the relationships not only between equals but also between unequals in the polis, and it does not hesitate to condemn the negative behavior of at least parts of the nobility.¹⁷

To sum up this part of my argument, the concerns emphasized by the epic poet in the scenes we have discussed so far all deal with basic problems of life and relationships in a community. The thought devoted to these concerns is political thought. It occupies a remarkably prominent place already in these earliest works of western literature. In keeping with the literary and poetic nature of these works, such thought is fully integrated into the narrative and expressed through action and speech. In other words, the poet uses traditional mythical narrative to discuss ethical and political problems that are important to his audience. By creating positive and negative models of social behavior, by illuminating the causes and consequences of certain actions and relating those to the well-being of the community, the poet raises the level of awareness among his listeners, he forces them to think, he educates them. Here then, to say it paradoxically, in non-political poetry in a prepolitical society, lie the roots of Greek political thought.

Hesiod

It would be tempting to present a similar analysis of political thought in Hesiod. For reasons of space I have to limit myself to a very brief comment. While the problem of justice plays a much larger role in the Homeric epics than I was able to show in my short exposé, it is absolutely central in Hesiod's poems, particularly in the *Works and Days*. Hesiod too sees the well-being of the entire community threatened by irresponsible actions of its leaders, although the conditions in peaceful rural Boeotia lead him to concentrate not on the power struggles among the nobles and the military side of their leadership but on their role as judges.¹⁸ Their venality and preference for crooked sentences cause him to reflect on the relationship between justice and prosperity of individual and community, and to recognize the all-important function of Zeus, the protector of justice who blesses the just and punishes the unjust. Although he cannot offer proof, his strong belief in the justice, power, and care of Zeus stimulates him to describe his insight in a series of impressive images such as the fate of the just and unjust cities (225–247) or the maltreatment of the goddess Dike, Justice, the daughter of Zeus, who howls

when she is dragged about by bribe-devouring men
whose verdicts are crooked when they sit in judgment . . .
She rushes to sit at the feet of Zeus Kronion
and she denounces the designs of men who are not just,
so that the people pay for the reckless deeds and evil plans
of kings whose slanted words twist her straight path.

(220f.; 259–262; transl. A. Athanassakis)

The significance of all this for the early development of political and legal thought has long been recognized.¹⁹ No less significant is Hesiod's effort to complement the negative picture of a world dominated by human injustice with the positive picture of the just, fair, and responsible rule of Zeus among the gods. This picture is drawn in rich detail in the *Theogony*, which has less frequently been read with careful attention to its political aspects.²⁰ Like Homer, Hesiod does not argue abstractly. Rather, he skilfully uses the possibilities offered by myth, genealogy and dramatic narrative to develop a complex set of concepts and to present a coherent model of good leadership, thereby providing a challenging response to one of the most urgent social and political problems of his own time.

Conclusion: The Origin of Political Thought

Let me summarize and then explain. Already in its earliest manifestations Greek thought dealt intensively with the following problems, among others: the detrimental consequences of conflicts within the leading class and of irresponsible actions of kings and noblemen; the possibilities of avoiding such conflicts and actions or controlling and overcoming them if they occurred; the discrepancy between communal and individual interests; the possibilities of improving and enforcing justice; the responsibility of community and nobility for the socially underprivileged and the outsiders; the political and moral problems connected with war.

These all are political problems that were of great importance for the survival and well-being of the community and that were to occupy Greek thought for centuries to come. Moreover, although a decisive role as promoters and enforcers of justice is attributed to the gods and particularly to Zeus because there is no sufficiently powerful and just human agent to rely upon for such purposes, the problems tackled by political thought fit into an entirely human framework of cause and effect. In other words, the gods punish evildoers and their communities and, through seers, poets, or leaders blessed by them, they may offer advice about salutary measures to be taken in a crisis, but they neither cause nor solve such a crisis.²¹ Rather, the crisis is caused by specific human mistakes or irresponsible acts within a given society, and it must be solved by that society itself. It is man's responsibility for the well-being of his community, therefore, upon which political thought focuses its attention from the very beginning, and that, I think, sets Greek political thought apart from any predecessors or parallels that may have existed in other civilizations, whether earlier or contemporary; that makes it truly *political* thought.²²

A striking example for the difference I am trying to define can be found by comparing the Hesiodic explanation of the origin of evil in the world and its Sumerian counterpart. In Hesiod Pandora brings all the evils into the world as punishment for the crimes of Prometheus who tried to deceive Zeus and acted against Zeus' strict orders. Prometheus, though divine, is the patron par excellence of man and thereby the leader of the human community at large.²³ Therefore, just as the city has to pay for the wrongs committed by its king or one of its citizens, so mankind has to suffer for the injustice committed by their leader.²⁴ According to the Sumerian myth, the evils came into existence when Enki, the god of sweet waters, and Ninmah,

the goddess of the earth, quarrelled at a party. In Thorkild Jacobsen's words, the evils were created, "in a moment of irresponsibility, when the gods were in their cups and succumbed momentarily to envy and a desire to show off."²⁵

If this, then, is the beginning of Greek political thought, there immediately follows the question of "why then and there?" What were the causes and preconditions that made such thought possible or necessary in archaic Greece? I shall conclude by outlining a few observations that may help to answer this difficult question.²⁶ First, archaic Greek society was not dominated by a sacred kingship. Unlike the situation in earlier Near Eastern societies, obedience and subordination were not the principal virtues.²⁷ Greek religion did not demand the passive acceptance of an absolute divine will. Authority was not unassailable; criticism and independence were not principally excluded.

Second, after the turmoils of the Dark Ages Greek society was split into small and often topographically confined units in which the polis gradually became the predominant form of community. There did not exist any large and centralized territorial states because, it seems, the formation of such states was required neither by major external threats nor by economic necessities. For centuries the Aegean World was pretty much left to itself. Wars mostly consisted of neighborhood conflicts that rarely threatened the existence of the community.²⁸ The tribal kingship inherited from the period of transition and migration was weak. The king was a *primus inter pares* whose position was based on his personal resources and qualities. The members of the "proto-aristocratic" leading class envisaged by Homer and Hesiod enjoyed basic equality. In their intensive competition for influence and power the king was vulnerable to criticism like everyone else. Eventually kingship proved unnecessary altogether and disappeared in most places.²⁹

Third, the aristocracy that gradually emerged was ambitious. Their efforts to set up barriers against those not belonging to their circle³⁰ failed, however, because, despite their glorious self-presentation, only a relatively small gap separated them from the broad "middle" class of independent farmers. These "semi-aristocrats"³¹ played an increasingly indispensable role in the hoplite army and assembly, a role that in a rudimentary form is already visible in Homer. The nobility therefore depended on that large landowning middle class, had to recognize and increasingly respect their sentiments and were in turn open to criticism. Criticism, that is, was possible, and in those small, open communities, in which everybody knew everybody, reasons for criticism were easily found. Furthermore, because of the lack of massive external pressure and the relatively harmless nature of war there was no need of a strong, disciplined, and cohesive class of leaders. Typically, the aristocracy soon sought to prove its excellence in an alternative area, that of sports. The significance of all this becomes even clearer if one compares it with the situation in early Rome.³²

Fourth, all this happened in a period of rapid social change.³³ The population was growing. The polis developed into a tight unit in which the communal element was strengthened at the expense of the individual *oikos*, and power and political procedures were formalized and somewhat depersonalized. Colonization, seafaring, and trade offered many opportunities for success and economic gain. Social and political mobility increased. Many non-nobles acquired enough wealth and self-confidence and had proved their capabilities sufficiently to enter competition with the aristocracy which, in turn, lost much of its cohesion, exclusiveness, and unquestioned predominance.

This complex development was compounded by a deep crisis which affected large parts of Greece in the seventh century.³⁴ Often it resulted in violent confrontations between the mostly aristocratic wealthy landowners and large parts of the smaller landholders who were tied to the former through various forms of dependency. These conflicts usually ended in some sort of social compromise between the classes and in the possibility of increased political participation by at least those farmers who fought in the hoplite army.

Fifth, in these crises it became necessary to find new ways of solving conflicts. Each polis had its own institutions and customs; comparison with those of others must have been easy and frequent. In the course of colonization such opportunities of comparison were used more frequently and new solutions were tried out, particularly since the colonists often came from different towns and might have left home precisely because of their dissatisfaction with the existing order and the social conflicts caused by it.³⁵ Such violent conflicts demanded compromises and creative solutions. Often those involved agreed upon a procedure of mediation and legislation by a person or group standing above the parties. The connection between some of those mediators, belonging to the group of the "Seven Sages," and Delphi seems to indicate that such efforts were encouraged and supported by that panhellenic sanctuary. Delphi also played an important role in collecting information and giving advice in matters of colonization. All these tasks required an increasingly wide-spread, highly developed, and highly respected culture of political thought which found its expression in remarkably complex, radical, and innovative solutions. It suffices to mention the reforms introduced in Athens by Solon and Cleisthenes at the beginning and end of the sixth century.³⁶

Many of these five factors existed already in the late eighth century, although they became more pronounced and significant over the next 200 years. They formed the preconditions for the emergence and further development of political thought, the framework in which such thought was not suppressed but possible and eventually even necessary. Finally, there is a sixth factor, the immediate cause that provoked the earliest manifestations of political thought and remained one of its most cogent stimuli. This is the dissatisfaction with the shortcomings of aristocratic leadership, the discrepancy between the interests of community and individual which we found at the core of Homer's and Hesiod's political concerns. By observing, criticizing and even refuting some of the values, norms, and attitudes of the aristocracy, the early thinkers were provoked to analyze and define the essential problems and needs of the community, and then to conceive and propagate alternative values and possibilities of behavior. Thus it is the long drawn-out confrontation between the claims of the community and those of an individualistic aristocracy to which the Greeks owed not only the polis in its classical form and an autonomous political sphere within the polis, but also the impetus and development of their political thought.

NOTES

- 1 Finley 1977. Cf. furthermore, e.g., Gschnitzer 1981, pp. 27–47; Strasburger 1953, pp. 97–114, repr. in Strasburger 1982, I, pp. 491–518; Donlan 1981/82, pp. 137–175. The

- very concept of a historical “Homeric society” has been questioned recently, e.g., by Snodgrass 1971, pp. 388–394; Snodgrass 1974, pp. 114–125; contra: Finley 1974, pp. 13–31, repr. in revised and abridged form in Finley 1977, pp. 142–158. For a critical discussion of the whole issue see now Morris 1986, pp. 81–138 (with ample bibliography).
- 2 That we are dealing rather with a “proto-aristocracy” has been emphasized recently, e.g., by Starr 1977, pp. 119–123; Spahn 1977, pp. 38–47; Donlan 1980, pp. 18–25.
 - 3 *Il.* I 231: δημοβόρος βασιλεύς; cf. Theognis 1181: δημοφάγον τύραννον. It is tempting to take this as applying to the lives of the demos; the usual interpretation thinks of the people’s possessions or substance and compares it with Hesiod’s “gift-eating kings” (δωροφάγοι βασιλείς: *Works and Days* 39, 221, 264). Cf. Liddell, Scott, and Jones 1940 *s.v.* and West 1978, p. 151.
 - 4 Cf. Redfield 1975, pp. 99–103.
 - 5 XII 310–316: “Glaukos, why is it you and I are honored before others,/with pride of place, the choice meats and the filled wine cups/in Lykia, and all men look on us as if we were immortals,/and we are appointed a great piece of land by the banks of Xanthos,/ good land, orchard and vineyard, and ploughland for the planting of wheat?/Therefore it is our duty in the forefront of the Lykians/to take our stand, and bear our part of the blazing of battle . . .”; cf. 317–321.
 - 6 VI 402 f.: “. . . since Hector alone saved Ilion.” Cf. Nagy 1979, p. 146. Phoenix’s story of the siege of Kalydon and the anger of Meleagros (IX 527–599) provides another example of the conflict between the vital interests of the community and the tendency among members of its leading families to let their personal sentiments prevail.
 - 7 Like the *Narrenfreiheit* granted to the midget or the *Hofnarr* at the courts of kings. This scene is interpreted well by Gschnitzer 1976.
 - 8 On the nature of the polis in Homer, see the brief summary in Raaflaub 1985, pp. 43 f. In my view, in this early stage the main function of the polis was that of a “community of defense” to secure the common survival in emergencies; in times of peace, however, the private sphere of the *oikos* prevailed by far over the communal sphere with its rudimentary institutions. This problem has been discussed by many scholars; cf. Strasburger 1954, pp. 227–248 = Strasburger 1982, I, pp. 423–448 = Gschnitzer 1969, pp. 97–122; Hoffmann 1956, pp. 153–165 = Gschnitzer 1969, pp. 123–138; Starr 1957, pp. 97–108 = Starr 1979, pp. 122–133; Thomas 1966, pp. 5–14; Greenhalgh 1972, pp. 528–537; Spahn 1977, pp. 29–37; Reinau 1981, pp. 9–14; Donlan 1980, ch. 1, esp. 8 ff.; Scully 1981, pp. 1–34. See also Gschnitzer 1955, pp. 120–144 = Gschnitzer 1969, pp. 271–297, esp. 286ff.
 - 9 Cf. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 1–285 *passim*.
 - 10 Cf. *Il.* I 80–83.
 - 11 Such rules are comparable to those in the better known relationship between patron and client at Rome.
 - 12 E.g., Antinoos in *Od.* XVI 424–432.
 - 13 Such political causality is analyzed more incisively and with far-reaching conclusions in Solon’s frag. 3 Diehl (= 4 West). For Solon’s political thought, see Jaeger 1965, pp. 136–149; Jaeger 1966, pp. 75–99; Vlastos 1946, pp. 65–83; Meier 1970, pp. 19–25; Raaflaub 1981, pp. 48 f.; Havelock 1978, pp. 249–262.
 - 14 Havelock 1978, esp. pp. 123–138.
 - 15 Latacz 1977, esp. ch. 5 and 6 and pp. 242–244.
 - 16 *Od.* XIII 429 ff.; XIV 191 ff.; XV 404 ff., and *passim* in XVII–XX.
 - 17 Cf. Havelock 1978, ch. 9. The *Odyssey* is filled with positive and negative models of social behavior.
 - 18 Cf. *Theog.* 80ff.; *Works and Days* 27ff., 219ff., 248ff., etc. Cf. on Hesiod, Burn 1936; Detienne 1963; Donlan 1980, 26ff., 48ff.; Spahn 1980, pp. 533ff.; Nagy 1982, pp. 43–73; and the lit. cited in the following notes.

- 19 Cf. Havelock 1978, ch. 11; Wolf 1950, pp. 120ff.; Voegelin 1957, pp. 126–164; Martin 1984, pp. 29–48; and the lit. cited in n20.
- 20 Cf., e.g., Solmsen 1949, pp. 3–75; Brown 1953, pp. 7–50.
- 21 This is expressed very clearly in *Od.* I 32–44 and Solon, fr. 3 Diehl (= 4 West), 1–16: “Never will Athens vanish away by immortal commandment,/by the Olympians’ wish or by the will of Zeus . . ./Athens’ own citizens, rather, astray and blinded by folly,/mad with the lust for gain, threaten their state with its end . . .” (1–6; transl. J. Willis, in Fränkel 1973, p. 220).
- 22 An interdisciplinary discussion of this issue among classicists and specialists on ancient Near-Eastern thought (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Israel) is a *desideratum*. Cf., e.g., Weber-Schäfer 1976, pp. 16–91 (with lit. on pp. 168f.); Frankfort et al. 1946.
- 23 Cf. also Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, esp. 107ff., 231ff., 248ff., and 442ff.
- 24 City: Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 238–247. Prometheus: *ibid.*, 42–105; cf. *Theog.*, 561–564, 570–613.
- 25 Jacobsen 1946, p. 165.
- 26 I take the liberty of including in my thoughts the entire archaic period. I have learned much from Barker 1918, pp. 47–52; Vernant 1982; Meier 1980, pp. 51–90; id., Meier 1985, pp. 31–60.
- 27 For a society, in which these were the principal virtues, cf. Jacobsen 1946, pp. 125ff., esp. 202–207.
- 28 Cf. Raaflaub 1985, pp. 82–92.
- 29 Cf. Starr 1961, pp. 129–138 = Starr 1979, pp. 134–143; Starr 1986, pp. 64f. Drews 1983 is skeptical about the significance of archaic kingship in general.
- 30 Cf. Theognis 183ff., 193ff., 31f., 101ff., et al. For comments, see Donlan 1980, ch. 3; for a comparison with Rome, see Raaflaub 1986c, pp. 227–234.
- 31 Cf. Starr 1977, pp. 123–128.
- 32 Cf. Raaflaub 1984, pp. 553–563; Raaflaub 1986b, pp. 29–34.
- 33 For the development outlined in this section, cf., e.g., Starr 1977 and 1986; Austin and Vidal-Naquet 1977, ch. 3; Snodgrass 1980; Murray 1983.
- 34 The effects of this crisis are best known from Solonian Athens. Cf. Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 5ff. with the comm. by Rhodes 1981, pp. 90ff., 118ff.; Plut., *Solon* 13ff. with the comm. by Manfredini and Piccirilli 1977; Spahn 1977, pp. 52–59, 112–161; Gschnitzer 1981, pp. 75–84; Lintott 1982, pp. 43–47.
- 35 For this and the following remarks, cf. Barker 1918, pp. 3ff., 48f., and esp. Meier 1980, pp. 70–90. For the role of Delphi, see Meier 1980, 73ff.; Forrest 1957, pp. 160–175; Kiechle 1958, pp. 129–156 = Gschnitzer 1969, pp. 528–577. For the “Seven Sages,” see Snell 1971; Fränkel 1973, pp. 238–240.
- 36 For Solon, cf. the lit. cited in n13 and n34. For Cleisthenes, see Herod. 5.66, 69f., 72f.; Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 20f. with Rhodes’ comm. (1981) *ad loc.* (with bibl.); Lévêque and Vidal-Naquet 1964; Will 1972, pp. 63–76; Spahn 1977, pp. 161–178; Meier 1980, pp. 91–143; Siewert 1982.

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Commentary on Raaflaub

Lowell Edmunds

The title of Professor Raaflaub's lecture was "Homer, Hesiod, and the Beginnings of Greek Political Thought." The challenging element in this title is "Homer." Most of us do not think of Homer as a political thinker. Homeric scholarship, when it has been concerned at all with the political in Homer, has attempted to find evidence for the history of political institutions – assemblies, councils, law-courts – that might have been in existence in Homer's own time and to combine that evidence with the archaeological record, with facts from later Greek history, and with comparative evidence. The political *thought* of Homer is a paradoxical notion, and my remarks will therefore largely be concerned with what Professor Raaflaub had to say about Homer.

Almost any approach, let alone this paradoxical one, is beset with difficulties, and Raaflaub acknowledged the problems of using Homer as a historical source, addressing himself to seven preliminary questions. The fourth through the seventh of these questions were concerned with the use of poetry in general and of Homer in particular as historical evidence. He took the position that the society depicted in the Homeric epics, as distinguished from the heroes and their deeds, is historical and is that known to the poet and his audience. I am in agreement with this contention concerning the basic historicity of the material and social aspects of the epics, which do, with some notable exceptions, form a coherent picture. Certainly no one doubts that the principles of the warrior-aristocrats form a consistent code reflecting the ideology of the aristocrats of Homer's own day, in whose halls the bards sang epic song.¹

If Homer can mirror this society and its ideology, can he also criticize them? Is Homer capable of *critical* thought about contemporary institutions? Raaflaub's answer is yes. He has enucleated a critical attitude toward the aristocratic chieftains which brings Homer unexpectedly closer to Hesiod, whose *Works and Days* reproaches the "bribe-devouring kings" he had to contend with in Boeotian Ascræ. I find Raaflaub's analysis of this anti-aristocratic tendency in the *Iliad* very persuasive and, in passing, I want to add a corroborative detail. In rereading the opening books of the *Iliad* through the impulse of Raaflaub's paper, I noticed that the adjective "other," in various formulaic expressions, serves to distinguish a leader from his followers and often to express their dissension. For example, at the very beginning of the *Iliad*, Agamemnon rejects the petition of the priest Chryses, while "the other Achæans" approve it. The result of the king's decision is the plague, sent by Chryses' patron, Apollo, which forces Agamemnon to restore Chryses' daughter, for whom he demands Briseïs as recompense – and all the rest.

I should like, however, to qualify Raaflaub's position in two respects.

Lowell Edmunds, "Commentary on Raaflaub," in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium Series in Ancient Philosophy* 4 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 26–33, pp. 26–31.

First, no matter what traces of political thought we find in the *Iliad*, the fact remains the fundamental situation is not a political one. A band of Achaeans from many cities is gathered in a camp on the plains of Troy. A quarrel breaks out between the leader of the Achaeans and the best warrior amongst his chieftains. Agamemnon, the leader, is *primus inter pares*; his position is based on the fact that he rules over more people than do the others. Achilles, the best warrior, like the other chieftains, is under no obligation to fight at Troy. His loyalty to Agamemnon and to his fellows is based on the principles of *philia*, a kind of friendship.² This *philia*, I submit, is pre-political or apolitical. The quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles breaks out because Achilles feels that his honor has been offended. His honor is a personal matter, not a political one, and Zeus himself accords it the greatest importance. The Plan of Zeus (I 5, 498–530; XIII 345–360) provides that thousands of Achilles' fellow-Achaeans will die in order to demonstrate the need for the restoration of this honor.

The oath sworn by Achilles in Book I of the *Iliad* shows that the quarrel, which is, after all, the basis of the plot of the whole poem, is not a political matter. As he swears the oath, Achilles raises the scepter which was passed around from speaker to speaker in assemblies and courts. He says (I 234–244):

I swear by this staff I hold – which no longer has bud
Or leaf since it left its stump in the mountains, nor ever
Grows green again and blooms since the sharp bronze stripped it
Of foliage and bark, but which now the sons of Achaeans
Bear in their hands, they who are judges among us
And uphold the laws of Zeus – by this staff I swear
A great oath that surely someday a desperate need
For Achilles shall come upon all the sons of Achaeans,
Nor will you be able to help them at all, no matter
How grieved you are, when man-killing Hector is cutting them
Down by the dozen. Then, I say, you'll rend
Your heart with wrath and remorse for failing to honor
The best Achaean of all!³

Having finished, Achilles throws the scepter on the ground instead of handing it to someone else (245). The word for “judges” in this oath, *dikaspoloi*, is a compound noun of which the first element means “judgements,” “trials,” or, in the abstract, “justice.” But Achilles is not in the role of a *dikaspolos*, nor are the laws sanctioned by Zeus at issue here. The scepter shows the distance that separates the quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles from a conflict that could be adjudicated according to the norms of the polis. What would be normal in the polis is shown on the shield of Achilles in Book XVIII, on which Hephaestus represented “two beautiful cities of mortals” (490f.). In one of them, a trial is taking place in the agora before a council of elders, who sit in a circle and hold scepters in their hands. As the language of the passage makes quite clear, the issue is one of justice. The Achaeans at Troy, however, do not constitute a “beautiful city of mortals” but a band of heroes, amongst whom political justice does not operate. The quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles

concerns the institution of the *dasmós*, the division of spoils amongst warriors, and this is not an institution of the polis.

The dimension of the political is present only inferentially, as a conclusion to be drawn from the depiction, full of negative hues, as Raaflaub has rightly pointed out, of what at least some of Homer's audience might have felt was the old order, the *ancien régime*. The need for the polis, with all its problems, which are already known to Homer's audience, may be implied by the situation and still greater problems of the Achaean army. In an article published in 1963, Seth Benardete analyzed three contrasting pairs, men or mortals and heroes, Achaeans and Trojans, and Achilles and Agamemnon, and showed that, while Homer seems to give a higher ranking to heroes, Achaeans, and Achilles, the plot of the poem moves contrary to the rankings and forces us to rethink them.⁴ The *Iliad* moves from the apparently higher categories to the apparently lower, with the result that the original distinctions break down and the lower categories are seen to lie beyond these distinctions. The lower, i.e. mortality as opposed to heroism, the settled life of the Trojans as opposed to the martial discipline of the Achaeans, and the vested authority of Agamemnon as opposed to the natural gifts of Achilles, might point to the polis. One recalls the myth of Er at the end of Plato's *Republic*, where Odysseus chooses the life of an ordinary citizen (620c3–d2).

There is one other way in which I would qualify Raaflaub's position. Even if we find criticism of the nobility and implicit exhortation to the masses to assume their proper role, it seems that neither Hesiod nor Homer could imagine any political order except one in which there are a number of chiefs amongst whom one is preeminent, as Agamemnon is at Troy, and as Odysseus is in Ithaca. (There are a number of "kings" in Ithaca besides Odysseus (*Od.* I 394f.) but Odysseus' family is the "most kingly" and powerful (XV 533f.)) Hesiod in the *Works and Days* addresses "kings" and tries to persuade them to give straight judgements. The *Theogony* is no less concerned with kingship and justice, and Raaflaub is right that this poem is as much political as it is theological. His insight is corroborated by a recent article by Richard Martin, who assigns the *Theogony* to a genre he calls "The Instruction of Princes."⁵ Certainly, as Raaflaub has argued, the reign of Zeus is presented as a model of good government. One has only to compare the role of the Hundred-Handers in the *Theogony* with their role in the *Iliad*. In the *Theogony* Zeus (and the other gods) release the three Hundred-Handers from the Underworld to support them against the Titans (617–626). They are the "trustworthy guardians of Zeus" (735) and are later settled by him as his "glorious allies" at the sources of Ocean (816–817). In the *Iliad*, on the other hand, Achilles reminds Thetis that she had once summoned Briareus, one of the Hundred-Handers, to defend Zeus against the other Olympians, who intended to stage a palace revolution. Thetis can now, Achilles thinks, use this good deed as a bargaining chip to persuade Zeus to honor Achilles by disgracing Agamemnon (I 396–412). And so she uses it. Zeus' main concern, however, is what Hera will think. It is unnecessary to say more about the somewhat soap operatic results of Thetis' visit. But whatever the demerits of Zeus, whatever the demerits of Agamemnon, the *Iliad* does not seem to think beyond the institution of kingship.

Even the Thersites scene, or perhaps I could say, especially the Thersites scene, reinforces this institution. My interpretation of this scene differs somewhat from Raaflaub's. Though I agree that Thersites is able to restate the conflict between

Achilles and Agamemnon from Achilles' point of view and that Thersites expresses the resentment of the ordinary fighting man at Troy, I think that the real focus of the scene is Odysseus. Through the inspiration of Athena, he takes the scepter from Agamemnon (II 185–186) and restrains the Achaean army, which is rushing to the ships, eager to return home. He restrains kings and outstanding men with kindly words, men of the people with blows (188–206). His principle is that the rule of many is a bad thing – let there be one king, to whom Zeus has given the scepter and the laws (204–206); and the scene as a whole vindicates this principle. When the army sees Odysseus beat Thersites with the scepter and a bloody welt rises on his back and he begins to weep, they laugh with pleasure, even though they are vexed by all their cares (270). Odysseus has provided them with some comic relief, and they say that it is the best thing he has ever done. It will be a long time before Thersites dares to rebuke kings again (272–277). Odysseus then rises with the scepter to give a speech that will restore a sense of purpose. The scene as a whole has Odysseus as its protagonist and is a vindication of kingship.

I would distinguish, then, between recognition of the importance of the masses, on the one hand, and, on the other, political thought that would assign them any other role than the one they have in the *Iliad*. I agree with Raaflaub that the *Iliad* recognizes their importance, and I consider this an original and important finding. What I have to ask, however, is whether we are dealing with the mere reflex of a historical situation or with a criticism of that situation. The poem can reflect the situation without criticizing it. To return for a moment to the beginning of the scene I have just discussed, we know that in the fourth century BC Odysseus' restraint of the Achaeans was held to express an anti-democratic attitude. The speech of Poly-crates against Socrates, composed as a pamphlet sometime in the 390's after Socrates' death, seems to have charged Socrates with hostility to the demos on the grounds that he often quoted this passage (II 188f.) on Odysseus' restraint of the Achaeans.⁶ In other words, the actions of Odysseus, which included restraining the common soldiers with blows, are anti-democratic, and, as I have argued, Odysseus' actions in this whole episode, including his treatment of Thersites, are vindicated. The Achaeans must remain at Troy in fulfillment of their vows and promises (II 286, 339–341).

My two main criticisms or qualifications of Raaflaub's position, then, are that the situation in the *Iliad* is not fundamentally political and that neither Homer nor Hesiod can imagine any political order except one in which there are a number of "kings," i.e. noble chieftains.

I do not, however, think that this limitation on the dimension of the political, which must entail a limitation on political thought, restricts criticism of the nobility. (Such criticism is of course explicit in Hesiod's *Works and Days*.) [...]

NOTES

- 1 Murray 1983, p. 49.
- 2 Nagy 1979, pp. 103–111.
- 3 Rees 1963, pp. 10–11.

- 4 Benardete 1963, pp. 1ff.
 5 Martin 1984, pp. 29–84.
 6 Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.58–59 with Libanius *Decl.* 1.121–126. Xen. defends Socrates.

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Equality and the Origins of Greek Democracy

Ian Morris

Ian Morris seeks the origins of Greek democracy by tracing signs of egalitarian change in Greek society from the eighth through sixth centuries BC. The testimony of Homer and

Hesiod is incorporated into what Morris sees as a conflict of “elite” versus “middling” ideologies detectable across the Greek literature and archaeology of the Archaic period.

I. Introduction

Origins are out of fashion.¹ For most of [the twentieth] century, social scientists have held it as self-evident that synchronic analysis is prior to diachronic, and in the last few years many Greek historians have come to share this view, treating democracy as a static, functioning system.² This approach has good antecedents, most notably Aristotle’s treatment of the eighty years or so from 403 to his own time as “the current constitution” (*Ath. Pol.* 42.1). But critics have always stressed that functionalism does not so much *explain* a situation as *redescribe* it in technical language – a view that Aristotle appears to have shared, prefacing his account of fourth-century institutions with a long narrative describing Athenian development since the seventh century, and beginning the *Politics* (1252a1–1253a40) with a model of the origins of the polis.

Any society can be said to function, but to understand why people live within one social system rather than another, we have to look to historical factors.³ When the

Ian Morris, “The Strong Principle of Equality and the Archaic Origins of Greek Democracy,” in J. Ober and C. Hedrick (eds.), *Demokratia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 19–48, pp. 19–22, 24–48.

social system in question is as unusual as that of city-state democracy, we cannot be content with showing how different institutions intersected to maintain the system, no matter how skillfully the analysis may be done. But the most influential recent treatments of Athenian democracy [...] have little to say about the Archaic social order that made democracy possible.⁴

This leaves us unable to explain why Athenians chose to organize their society in this particular way, rather than in some equally functional but quite different way. In this paper I sketch the history of what I see as some of the necessary conditions for the emergence of Greek democracy. I argue four points:

- 1 There was a massive social change all across central Greece in the eighth century BC, which produced a conception of the state as a community of “middling” citizens.
- 2 Not everyone liked this. Those who did not argued that authority lay outside these middling communities, in an inter-polis aristocracy that had privileged links to the gods, the heroes, and the East.
- 3 Much of the social history of the archaic period is best understood as a conflict between these two conceptions of social order.
- 4 At the end of the sixth century, the elitist ideology suffered major reverses. It became very difficult to claim a level of political skill denied to other citizens, and once this had happened, citizen democracy became a plausible system of government.

I suggest that we treat the origins of democracy as a process that is equally cultural and political. Mogens Hansen has recently argued that “it is the political institutions that shaped the ‘democratic man’ and the ‘democratic life’, not vice versa,”⁵ but I take issue with this interpretation, arguing that a longer historical perspective shows that democratic institutions were merely one response to the emergence of broader egalitarian attitudes and ideologies. I structure my analysis around Robert Dahl’s useful discussion of what he calls “the Strong Principle of Equality.” Dahl suggests that “it is obvious . . . that the emergence and persistence of a democratic government among a group of people depends in some way on their *beliefs*. . . . Among a group whose members believe that they are all about equally well qualified to participate in the decisions of the group, the chances are relatively high that they will govern themselves through some sort of democratic process.” This Strong Principle of Equality actually rests on two propositions:

All members are sufficiently well qualified, taken all around, to participate in making the collective decisions binding on the association that significantly affect their good or interests. In any case, none are so definitely better qualified than the others that they should be entrusted with making the collective and binding decisions.⁶

The first of these propositions corresponds to what Dahl calls the Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests.⁷ This affords to each citizen equal respect and an equal right to be heard, but reserves the possibility that some citizens may be able to decide what is in everyone’s best interests and are thus qualified to make the decisions for all. I suggest that something like the Principle of Equal Consideration appeared in

the eighth century, and something like the Strong Principle of Equality in the late sixth. As I imply in my title, I see the origins of democracy as a long process, spanning the whole archaic period, and a broad one, involving the whole Greek world.

The Strong Principle of Equality is not synonymous with democracy as an institutional order. But when enough people hold views of this kind, it becomes possible – and perhaps logical – to respond to the collapse of an oligarchy (whether through internal dissension or outside force) by developing new conceptions of majority rule, instead of simply finding a different group of guardians. This is what happened at Athens in 507.

A Strong Principle of Equality within a bounded citizen group crystallized over much of Greece between c. 525 and 490. As Dahl implies, in such a context the establishment of democracy is not so surprising. The remarkable thing is that such an ideology could gain the upper hand in the first place, and explaining this ought to be one of the central questions in archaic Greek history. In this paper I propose at least a partial explanation, arguing that the Strong Principle of Equality was a late-sixth-century phenomenon, which can only be explained in the light of its eighth-century roots. The core ideas were already present, and important, by 700 BC. What I offer here is a kind of social history of ideologies spanning three centuries; I pursue the longer-term history of these ideologies and their connections with broader cultural and economic processes in more detail elsewhere.⁸

I concentrate in this paper on the literary evidence from Archaic Greece. I argue that the source problems of the poetry of the period c. 700–525 are such that we must adopt a synchronic approach (section IV). Only archaeology can reveal detailed regional and chronological variations; archaic literature is too traditional to sustain a narrative history. But what we lose in detail we gain in understanding social dynamics. Historians have read this poetry too literally, systematically mistaking the elitist ideology for an objective account of social relations, characterizing the archaic poleis as “zero-sum” agonal societies dominated by aristocratic feuding over honor.⁹ I dispute this. I suggest that the elitist position was a “dominant ideology” only in the sense that sociologists use that expression: it reinforced solidarity *within* a would-be elite, persuading its members of the justness of their claims, but had less influence on other groups.¹⁰ It was not a “false consciousness,” duping people into accepting aristocratic authority. On the contrary it was oppositional, working best outside the civic space, in the world of interstate aristocratic ties and closed symposia; and it was contested on all points by a rival “middling” philosophy.

I begin, though, at the end of this part of the story, with the “middling” ideology of fourth-century Athens. Such a teleological approach is perhaps an inevitable result of pursuing what Foucault castigated as the “chimera of origins.” We could construct other narratives, with other beginning and end points; but if we are to understand ancient democracy, rather than redescribing it, we cannot do without such points. Chartier rightly concludes that “history stripped of all temptation to teleology would risk becoming an endless inventory of disconnected facts abandoned to their teeming incoherence for want of a hypothesis to propose a possible order among them.”¹¹ I begin in the fourth century, then, for two reasons. First, this is where our sources are strongest; and second, I argue that this conception of equality goes back as far as we can follow the literary sources, all over the central regions of Greece.

II. Athenian Citizen Equality

Fourth-century Athenian sources present the polis as a community of *metrioi* or *mesoi*, words that, following Walt Whitman's usage, I will translate as "middling men."¹² Like Whitman's middling man, the Athenian *metrios* was an ideological category that benefited from the vagueness of its definition. It allowed *all* Athenian citizens to think of themselves as members of a community of restrained, sensible men, characterized by "same-mindedness" (*homonoia*) and tied together by *philia*, which literally means "friendship" but carries a sense like Sahlins's category of "balanced reciprocity." The *metrios* was said to be content with "a little" money and was contrasted with both the rich and the poor. Yet even a wealthy liturgist could be called *metrios* if he lived properly. He was defined through everyday actions – providing well for his family and community, having a strong sense of shame, and above all keeping his appetites under control. Neither *mesoi* nor *metrioi* meant an economic "middle class," or a hoplite *Mittelschicht*, although membership in the phalanx was an important part of their self-imagination.¹³ [. . .]

[Morris goes on to elaborate on the nature of Athenian citizen equality]

III. The Eighth-century Revolution

The strong principle of equality was not peculiar to fourth-century Athens, but neither was it a timeless "Greek" *Zeitgeist*. Such beliefs were probably not important in the world of the Mycenaean palaces, and I see them beginning to take the forms we see in classical Greece in an eighth-century upheaval visible in the archaeological record.²²

Most evidence from the Greek Dark Age (c. 1100–750) is from graves, and I have argued that in central Greece funerals drew a line within each community, between an elite group and lower, dependent groups. Most children were excluded from elite rituals. Elite funerals produced distinctive remains, which are well known to excavators, while the less formal funerals of the lower orders are only detected under favorable circumstances. The evidence for sacrifice has a similar pattern. In Dark Age central Greece, the major rites may have taken place in chiefs' houses, effectively excluding most people and defining a subgroup of full members of the community. Whitley argues that forms of rationing similarly limited other forms of symbolic behavior. All these classes of evidence, as well as house remains, suggest an elite ideology of homogeneity: rituals aggressively denied differences within the elite.²³

There were huge changes in the eighth century. A new funerary system emerged, incorporating the whole adult and child population, often in the same cemeteries. The first signs appear at Corinth around 775, and at Argos, Athens, Megara, and many other sites by 750. Intramural burial largely ended (at Corinth by 750, elsewhere by 700), and cemeteries and settlements were now often walled. The most spectacular change was in sacrificial space. Around 750 areas for worship began to be walled, and by 700 nearly all communities had one or more substantial temples, while

a few sanctuaries won Panhellenic importance. Most poleis adopted a “bipolar” religious structure, with a major sanctuary in the town and another near a frontier. The Dark Age rituals in chiefs’ houses died out.²⁴

At first the quantity and quality of grave goods increased, presumably as some people went on differentiating status within the new ritual terrain. Spending peaked at Corinth by 750, at Athens by 725, and at Argos by 700. At most sites this phase lasted only about a generation, and a shift toward large, poor, and homogeneous citizen cemeteries followed. Around 750 the new sanctuaries began to receive huge numbers of votives, at first mainly pottery, but by 700 in many cases expensive metal items too. Snodgrass links this to the fall in grave goods: by 700 it was rarely acceptable to lavish wealth on funerals, but such offerings could be made at sanctuaries.²⁵ In the fourth century Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 1122b19–1123a4; cf. Xen., *Oec.* 2.5–7) defined spending money on sacrifices as “magnificence” (*megaloprepeia*), and concluded that “the magnificent man spends not for himself but for the common good” (*ta koina*). Historians of the eighth century often see the shift from grave goods to votives in these terms, as a victory for the community over individual families within it. However, Aristotle also observed that *megaloprepeia* must be in proportion to a man’s resources, and that the poor man (*penēs*) cannot be magnificent, since if he spends lavishly he is simply foolish (*ēlithios*). Spending on the gods was ambiguous, creating both a sense of community and a hierarchical structure of honor within it. I return to this in section VI.

These changes were contested, and the archaeological record reveals varied outcomes. On Crete, despite the early appearance of “civic” forms such as agoras, temples, and lawcodes, sacrifice retained local peculiarities, and grave goods escalated until about 625; then virtually all finds except inscriptions disappear until the fourth century. In Thessaly some elements of the general pattern apply in the eighth century, but rich warrior burials continue in the seventh.²⁶ Athens is the most interesting case: here the eighth-century shifts are very clear, but then around 700 they were reversed. Distinct elite burials returned, while rich votives, monumental temples, and religious bipolarity are absent in the seventh century. This seems to have been a self-conscious attempt to restore the lost order of the Dark Age, and Athens remained unique in ritual terms well into the sixth century.²⁷

IV. Source Problems

Generalizations must, then, be qualified by region and period, but this is not easy to do with the written sources. Nagy argues that much of what comes down to us under the names of specific poets was in fact formed by broader processes: “The pan-Hellenic tradition of oral poetry appropriates the poet, potentially transforming even historical figures into generic ones who merely represent the traditional functions of their poetry.”²⁸ He suggests that prior to the eighth century there was enormous regional variety in Greek oral poetry, but that by 700 some bards were traveling widely. Discrepancies between local traditions became more apparent to them, and they tried to produce poems that were relevant to all areas of Greece but specific to none, developing fixed ideas about the heroic past. It became useful for them to imagine performance as the reconstitution of a fixed text by a noncomposing

rhapsode. Local mythology was marginalized in opposition to *alēthea*, “unforgotten things,” known by authoritative bards. As traditions coalesced, rhapsodes retrojected into the distant past Ur-poets – first Homer, then Hesiod, Archilochus, and a range of other personas in a series of bids for Panhellenic status. This does not necessarily mean that these poets were not real people; only that they were already submerged within the genre in archaic times. Only at the end of the sixth century, Nagy suggests, did individual poets emerge as “authors.”²⁹

Something like this clearly happened with “Theognis.” Some verses should date before 625, and others after 490; and many are also attributed to other poets. “Theognis” was a poetic persona, into which anyone could step to compose in this genre, just as “Anacreon” continued to be into the Middle Ages.³⁰ Ancient disputes over the poets’ cities of origin might represent competing retrojections.

The problem is most acute with Archilochus. His characters’ names have long aroused suspicion, and Miralles and Pòrtulas suggest that the poems resemble the worldwide “trickster” genre, in which a cunning Brer Rabbit figure with insatiable hungers for food and sex outwits opponents and unmasks their hypocrisy – he is “the outcast able to cause someone else’s casting out, the figure that has been excluded but has the power to exclude.” Some of his characters also appear in a third-century BC inscription, but this only adds to the problem. The text was set up by one Mnesiepes, a name meaning “he who remembers the words.”³¹ However we interpret him, we are dealing here with a long-term process like those that Hobsbawm and Ranger have called the invention of tradition, or perhaps better still, as Herzfeld puts it, the *negotiation* of tradition, in which actors recast one another’s notions in a competitive process of literary construction.³²

We have to recognize the continuities between certain groups of archaic poets, and the constraining powers of genre. I see three implications for historians. First, we can only approach the main body of texts synchronically. Tracing an intellectual evolution by stringing the poems together in their supposed chronological order is unwise. It finds change by ignoring continuity and explains all differences diachronically. Literary critics then step into the persona of Mnesiepes, becoming an active part of the invention of tradition.

Second, we cannot reconstruct specific events. Archilochus and Alcaeus may well have been real people, singing about other real people, but when performing they adopted poetic personas. They sang through conventional *topoi*; it was perhaps impossible for them to think constructively in any other terms. When Alcaeus called Pittacus “fatty” and “base born,” we cannot assume that these charges were true, or even that the poet expected anyone to find them credible. A man singing Alcaeus took the part of the betrayed one, trying to recreate an ideal, homogeneous world by casting out the traditional enemy, just as Archilochus cast out Neoboule the “fickle one,” Hipponax cast out Boupalos the “big-dick,” and Demosthenes was to cast out Aeschines with accusations of servile origin. If we take anything from these stories at face value, we may be seriously misled.³³

These are negative arguments, but the third implication is positive. The *topoi* within which events were constructed had immense cultural importance. In sections V and VI, I develop the arguments of Mazzarino and Kurke that we should divide archaic poetry into two broad traditions, which I call “elitist” and “middling.” These partly correspond to formal distinctions, with lyric poetry dominating the former and

elegy and iambus the latter, but the boundaries are not rigid. Hexameter was used in both traditions, with Homer in some regards standing at the head of the elitist tradition, and Hesiod of the middling; but in neither case is this a clear-cut relationship.³⁴

For all the antagonism between the traditions (section VI), they were not rigidly separated. They should be seen as ideal types, representing the ends of a spectrum of social attitudes. Phocylides, for example, is more “middling” than Theognis, whose complex attitudes were sometimes hostile to ordinary citizens. Further, like any artists, individual poets (or traditions) were not consistent, occupying a single point on this spectrum; they rather occupied a range of positions. Thus Alcman gives us some strikingly elitist statements in his *partheneia* but in fr. 17 apparently adopts a middling, iambic persona, calling himself the eater of everything (*pamphagos*) who rejoices in common foods (*ta koina*) just like the people (*ho damos*).³⁵ Similarly, the same literary *topos* could be reworked in strikingly different ways within each tradition, as when Alcaeus reused Hesiod’s image of the lustiness of women and the weakness of men in the dog days of summer.³⁶

Both traditions were “elite” in the sense that most poems were produced by and for elites of birth, wealth, and education. The hostility between the extant traditions was primarily a conflict within the highest social circles over what constituted legitimate culture. Bourdieu suggests that such struggles are common to all elites, and that very often some people will claim to monopolize a high culture that is beyond the reach of the masses, while others assert their power by deliberately transgressing, conferring high status on values and objects excluded from the privileged aesthetics. The popular aesthetic is normally not simply a failure to grasp elitist tastes, but also a conscious refusal of them, among ordinary people and among the elite. I suggest in section VI that those aristocrats who adopted the middling position deliberately assimilated themselves to the dominant civic values within archaic poleis. They were not surrendering their claims to be elite: a wealthy symposiast insisting on the excellence of *to meson* represented a situation very different from that of a poor farmer pronouncing the same words.³⁷ However, they claimed leadership as special members of the polis, not as a wholly distinct aristocratic community of the kind created by the elitist tradition. There is no reason to think that middling aristocrats struggled across the seventh and sixth centuries to create democracy. But the unintended consequence of their beliefs was that when the elitist ideology collapsed after 525, the general acceptance of middling values made democracy a real possibility; and when a ruling elite fell apart in disorder, as at Athens in 507, democratic institutions were one obvious response.

V. The Middling Tradition

The core features of the middling ideology go back at least to Hesiod’s *Works and Days* (c. 700 BC). Like the fourth-century *metrios*, Hesiod’s good man was married with children, ideally owning land, two oxen, a slave women, a hired laborer, and dependents of some kind, who received rations. He strongly endorsed the essentialist argument that the ideal community is male: women were a late addition sent to curse men. Good men knew that the gods filled the barns of those who ordered their works

with due measure (*Op.* 306: *erga metria kosmein*). Hard work was the key to the gods' favor, and the only alternative was begging.³⁸

Hesiod never used words such as *astoi* or *politai* for "citizens." His community consisted of neighbors (*geitones*). Possibly no concept of citizenship had yet emerged, but this may be too literal an approach. *Geitones* had a long history as a poetic *topos*, lasting into the fourth century. Hesiod advised Perses that neighbors were more important than kin, and his neighbors interacted much like fourth-century citizens. They lived in a certain tension with one another: a man had to respect his equals but also be sensitive to slights, balancing healthy rivalry and even dealings. He had to be tough but welcoming, because either too much or too little trust would ruin him.³⁹

The good man's attitude toward "the poor" was also like that of the fourth-century *metrios*. They should not be mocked, but neither should they be trusted, for their empty bellies degraded them and forced them to lie.⁴⁰ The relationship with the rich was more complex. In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod said the "lords" (*basilēes*) were "gift-devouring judges" who relied on violence, not right: "The fools know neither how much greater the half is than the whole, nor what advantage there is in mallow and asphodel" (40–41) – that is, that a fair share was better than unjustly seizing everything, and that peasant foods were better than luxury. But in the *Theogony* Hesiod praised the *basilēes* to whom the Muses gave honey-sweet tongues for settling quarrels. The whole people treated them like gods when they walked through their assemblies. There is no contradiction here. The *Theogony* sets out the ideal, and the *Works and Days* shows it under attack from the unjustness endemic in the Age of Iron. When the nobles show proper respect, the city flourishes; when they do not, Shame flees to Olympus, and Zeus makes the whole community pay. Hubris – another central fourth-century concern – then destroys the city.⁴¹

In both poems the *basilēes* have a divine right to settle disputes, manifested in their eloquence and respect for gods and men. This is strikingly different from what we see in the fourth century, but we should hesitate before concluding that Boeotian villages around 700 really were ruled by *basilēes*. Hesiod's account parallels Homer's in *Od.* 8.166–77, and both probably drew on a tradition of advice-poetry.⁴² Indeed, Ascrā (and all the people in it) were probably as much a *topos* as the Thebes of tragedy: Ascrā was the place where Zeus' will, personified by the good *basilēes*, was undermined by hubris.⁴³ Detienne suggests that in Hesiod *alēthea* was not an abstract "truth" but a form of "magico-religious" speech, available only to kings, poets, and seers, who monopolized contact with an invisible realm and drew wisdom, justice, and prophecy from it. In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod judged the *alēthea* of the *basilēes* by their behavior. It did not live up to expectations, showing that they were masters not of *alēthea* but of *apatē*.⁴⁴

Like the *basilēes*, Hesiod appeals to outside sources of authority, casting himself as an "exterior insider" whose origin and position on the edge of the community give him privileged insights. As Nagy observes, in Ascrā "the function of the *basileus* 'king' as the authority who tells what is and what is not *themis* 'divine law' by way of his *dikē* 'judgment' is taken over by the poem itself."⁴⁵ We see a similar idea of the poet absorbing external sources of legality in elegy, through identifying with semi-legendary middling lawgivers who went to Crete or Delphi to legitimate laws, which they then brought back within the community, writing them down and putting them increasingly under civic control.⁴⁶ By 500 BC the citizen body itself took authority for

the laws. Ostwald argues that the sixth-century Athenian word for “law,” *thesmos*, implied “something imposed by an external agency, conceived as standing apart and on a higher plane than the ordinary,” while the fifth-century word, *nomos*, implied something “motivated less by the authority of the agent who imposed it than by the fact that it is regarded and accepted as valid by those who live under it.”⁴⁷

Hesiodic society has parallels in other literatures, and its mythology overlaps with Near Eastern wisdom texts. The roughly contemporary Egyptian *Instructions of Amenemopet* agrees that unrighteous profits are fleeting (9.16–10.13), but Hesiod’s egalitarianism is unique. Even in the superficially similar Middle Kingdom *Protests of the Eloquent Peasant*, the good steward Rensi only believes the peasant Khun-Atepe after beatings that in Ascrea would have been hubristic (B. 185–190).⁴⁸ I suggest that Hesiod’s egalitarianism was a peculiarly Greek product of the eighth-century transformation. Similarly, Nagy notes that while Greek hexameter poetry shares much with other Indo-European traditions, it also has important differences, which he also links to eighth-century changes in the archaeological record.⁴⁹

The core of Hesiod’s ideal persona recurs in elegy, despite a major change in audience. Hesiod’s song was open to all, but he also knew of songs limited to those who understand (*phroneousi*). He called these *ainos* (*Op.* 202), which meant “praise” but was also the root of *ainigma*, denoting coded speech. Most elegy and iambus was *ainos* poetry, intended for a small group of “the wise” (*sophoi*). Theognis called his verses “*ainigmata* hidden by me for the good men” (681). But although they were produced by and for aristocrats, “elegiac poetics in general amount to a formal expression of the ideology of the polis, in that the notion of social order is envisaged as the equitable distribution of communal property among equals.”⁵⁰ In this poetry some members of the aristocracy came to terms with the polis of middling citizens while acquiring a useful weapon in intra-elite struggles. Poets and audiences could still see themselves as *sophoi* who guided the polis with special wisdom and piety, but elegists presented their own symposia as a force for moderation, not elitism. “The wise” might claim to know what was good for ordinary citizens better than the citizens did themselves, but they did so within a Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests.⁵¹

To be in the middle was best. Solon called himself a shield held over rich and poor, a wolf at bay among hounds, one who made laws alike (*homoios*) for good and bad, and a boundary stone at the midpoint (*en metaichmiō*) between them (frs. 4c; 36.26–27, 18–20; 37.9–10).⁵² Phocylides said simply, “*mesos* in the polis I would be” (fr. 12), and Theognis, “the middle is best in everything” (335). Restraint and moderation were the keys, expressed first as *aidōs*, and later as *sōphrosunē*. The middling man needed moderate wealth (as in Hesiod, *man* was the operative word: women were reviled ferociously). Phocylides, again like Hesiod, saw a fertile farm as the source of plenty, and Theognis wished only “to be rich without evil cares, unharmed, with no misfortune” (1153–54). As in Hesiod and in the fourth century, the middle was defined against the poor as well as the rich. Men were constrained (*biatai*: Solon 13.41) by poverty, and its victim “cannot say or do anything, and his tongue is tied” (Theog. 177–78). All men despised the poor, and the hungry belly was to blame for their lack of dignity and self-control. For Solon, “luxury in belly, sides, and feet” was equal (*ison*) to silver, gold, land, and horses (21.1–4).⁵³

If moderate wealth was the precondition for the ideal of middling life from the seventh to the fourth century, the ogre of greed was just as consistently its enemy.

Men pursued wealth through any means, setting no limits. Wealth and hubris were inseparable. For Solon “excess breeds hubris when great wealth follows men who do not have a complete mind” (6.3–4). Hubris then destroyed the polis: “The *astoi* themselves, obsessed by greed, are prepared to ruin this great city” (4.5–6). He would check this by setting up *eunomia*, a “well-ordered world” that “makes all things wise and perfect among men” (4.39). This presumably refers to Solon’s own reforms of 594, but it also continues the Hesiodic tradition of creating the ideal order by asserting it poetically, merging the lawgiver and poet.⁵⁴

To a great extent the middle was constructed in opposition to the bogeyman of the hubristic aristocrat, defined – as in the fourth century – through his decadence and lack of control. To understand this dimension, we must now turn to the elitist tradition.

VI. The Elitist Tradition and the Conflict of Values

In an earlier paper I argued that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were written down in the upheavals of the eighth century, as attempts to fix against alternative constructions an elitist view of the heroic age as a time when the community depended for its very survival on mighty individuals. The poems show us eighth-century assumptions about what a heroic age would be like, and, not surprisingly, they share some elements with the “middling” tradition. Fisher shows that hubris is the main offense of both Agamemnon in the *Iliad* and the suitors in the *Odyssey*, and that its overtones are “entirely compatible with those found in our study of *hybris* in classical Athens.” There is, however, a crucial difference: the victim of hubris in each case is no middling citizen but a mighty hero, and hubris is avenged not by communal action but by individual *biē* (force) or *mētis* (cunning). Similarly, it is only partly true that Homer criticizes heroic excess in favor of polis institutions, or that the Thersites episode (*Il.* 2.270–78) undermines elitism. The main thrust of both poems was the dependence of the community on the individual hero.⁵⁵

The heroic past assumed immense importance in the eighth century, and the variety of cults at Bronze Age tombs attests debates over its meaning. The story that Helen never went to Troy (which certainly goes back to Stesichorus, and probably to Hesiod) also suggests the scale of variations, but the Panhellenization of Homer over the next two centuries effectively silenced most alternatives.⁵⁶

Hesiod knew there could be lying poetry and saw poets and *basilēes* as competing in truth, but Homer was more aggressive, claiming to be merely the audience’s point of contact with the total knowledge of the Muses. Ford notes that “by neglecting the possibility that two mortal poets might differ in their versions of a given story, [Homer] encourages us to regard the story as the enunciation of earlier deeds in their timeless structure.” Homer thus naturalized a specific vision of the heroic age.⁵⁷

Elitist sympotic poetry took for granted this appropriation of the heroic age, and the heroic warrior became a potent symbol. Some historians use references to heroic-style warfare to date the “hoplite reform,”⁵⁸ but it makes more sense to see these passages as synecdochical: the part stands for the whole, and the hero evokes a package of heroic values, loyalties, and dependencies. The “heroic” war scenes are associated with those poets who express elitist sentiments. For example, only one

martial fragment (14) survives from Mimnermus, and it describes in epic tones a hero rushing forward to rout the Lydian cavalry. Alcaeus fr. 140 uses epic language for arms and armor hanging on a wall while his companions share a peaceful feast. But then the pace changes: we move to a jumbled heap of weapons on the floor, described with nonepic words such as *spathē* (sword), and to the seamy facts of the fragmented fellowship and civil war on Lesbos. The hero's weapons stand for the perfect aristocratic community, now disordered.⁵⁹

But on the whole the world of "contemporary" nobles was a far cry from the brutal heroic age. It was a place of delicacy, elaborate manners, sweet perfumes, and wealth. Sappho's simple statement "I love luxury" (*habrosunē*: fr. 58.25) was the direct opposite of Phocylides' "mesos in the polis I would be." Luxury was not just a way to make life pleasant – it collapsed the distances between the aristocracy and the gods, the heroes, and the great rulers of Lydia. Even as the middling poets brought the external grounding of law under communal control, the elitists emphasized their own similarities to these three outside sources of legitimacy. They described the gods as dressed in gold and living in a golden house, pouring drinks from golden vessels, and coming to worshipers who made offerings in similar golden cups. Gentili observes that Sappho merged divine and mortal luxury in personalized epiphanies of Aphrodite, claiming to have "privileged religious experiences bringing closer communion with the god." Luxury bridged the gulf between mortals and gods. Sappho and her friends dwelled in a realm more like the heroic age than the seventh century. The gods moved among them, and Sappho identified as strongly with Aphrodite as Odysseus did with Athena. Lavish display made the aristocracy something more than human.⁶⁰

Giving a golden cup or a bronze tripod to the gods was an act of *megaloprepeia* which benefited the whole community, but, as in Aristotle's account, it was open to varying interpretations. It was more than the "increasing competition for status via the conspicuous consumption of wealth" stressed by Morgan;⁶¹ to those steeped in the elitist culture, it gave the dedicator a direct experience of the gods which was denied to ordinary mortals. These lavish dedications became common shortly before 700, and I would suggest that they, and the themes in Sappho, were reactions to the eighth-century social transformation. Assertions of elite power were generally banished from the explicit arena of funerals, but, like aristocracies in all ages, Greek nobles were adaptable. They shifted one of their primary arenas of self-definition to a more ambiguous context. At Athens, where I have suggested that a powerful elite regained control and rejected the middling ideology, rich seventh-century votives are scarce. Athenian nobles apparently did not need these new-fangled ideas and tried to recreate the simpler, ancestral rites of the Dark Age. Seventh-century Corinth and Argos, on the other hand, combined strikingly homogeneous cemeteries with fabulously wealthy rural sanctuaries of Hera.

In these dedications the worlds of nobles, gods, heroes, and Easterners intersected, most strikingly in bronze tripod-cauldrons. Catling argues that no tripods were made in Dark Age Greece, but Bronze Age Cypriot heirlooms continued to circulate; Matthäus thinks that local tripods were being made in Crete and the islands by the tenth century, in close imitation of Cypriot models. Either way, by the eighth century tripods were intimately linked with both the past and the East and were established as *the* gift of heroes. Examples dating from before c. 750 were made from almost pure

copper, but in the second half of the century a new series appeared, imitating both the designs and the high tin content of Eastern (probably north Syrian) tripods. The tripod simultaneously heroized and Orientalized: all sources of external power flowed together in the act of giving a tripod to the gods. By about 650, fewer Greek-made Orientalizing tripods were being dedicated, and more hoplite arms and armor. Coming as it did at about the same time as the emergence of the phalanx as a poetic metaphor for citizen solidarity, this might represent an alternative, “middling” kind of gift to the gods; but it was paralleled by an increase in dedications of imported Oriental tripods.⁶²

True aristocrats were comfortable using the East, moving within their own version of the culture of Gyges. Aristeas, significantly said to have been an ecstatic devotee of Apollo, supposedly traveled all over Asia in the seventh century, seeing mythical beasts everywhere. Elite religion adapted Eastern rites, and Carter suggests that Alcman’s *partheneia* borrowed Phoenician elements.⁶³ The dependence on the East was just as true of the symposium, the primary context for the performance of lyric monody, as of the sanctuary. Drinking groups had probably been an important way for chiefs to gather and reward followers since at least 900, as suggested by the heavily worn krater from Koukounaries on Paros, the consistent use of ceramic kraters and amphoras to mark prestigious burials, and the burial of complete Attic drinking sets in Knossian tombs.⁶⁴ But around 700, symposia had their own Orientalizing revolution, adapting special rooms and furniture from the East. Reclining on couches of Near Eastern type and using vessels with Lydian prototypes, aristocrats sang about Lydian dress, women, and military might, judging Greek life against these standards. The new symbols justified their users’ claims to superiority – they virtually mixed with the gods themselves, just like the ancient heroes, on whom society had depended for its very existence; and they felt like the kings of the East, whose power vastly exceeded that of the Greeks.⁶⁵

The Orientalizing movement was a class phenomenon. As in many other contexts, decisions to adopt or to resist artistic innovation from overseas were political. Would-be aristocrats who felt marginalized and unfairly excluded from power welcomed new and disruptive ideas, looking outward to the past, the East, and the divine for justification. Those who believed in middling values resisted these novelties.⁶⁶

The outcomes of these struggles varied enormously. At Athens Eastern imports and Orientalizing styles were welcomed enthusiastically in the last quarter of the eighth century but after 700 were used much more carefully by the elite. In Argos Eastern metalwork was given to Hera in large quantities,⁶⁷ but otherwise the East had a minimal impact on material culture. Only a handful of local Orientalizing potsherds are known. Corinthian aristocrats used expensive Eastern and Orientalizing objects in similar ways, but the makers of Protocorinthian pottery, probably in use across the social scale and in all contexts, debased the Eastern styles, effectively vulgarizing them. The Cretans, on the other hand, had (in Burkert’s words) “been ‘orientalizing’ all the time.” Phoenicians had been coming to Kommos since the tenth century, and there may have been a community of Levantine craftsmen at Knossos by 850. A vigorous Orientalizing pottery style, Protogeometric B, flourished in the late ninth century alongside a Middle Geometric style. The East must have meant entirely different things in Crete than in the central Aegean.⁶⁸

In eastern Greece a handful of sanctuaries received spectacular Oriental votives in the seventh century, but few lavish Archaic burials are known, and indeed few burials of any kind before about 550.⁶⁹ Most elitist poets were placed in eastern Greece – Sappho and Alcaeus on Lesbos, Mimnermus in Colophon, Anacreon in Teos. Even Alcman of Sparta was linked with Sardis, and Ibycus of Rhegion spent much of his career on Samos. But there is no way to know whether elitist poetry really was a product of the fringes of Asia, or whether it was located there because the East was so important for it. Oriental power was more threatening for east Greeks than for mainlanders, but Nagy is surely right that these poets achieved canonical status by being generalized across Greece in a series of Panhellenic “promotions.” Regardless of their ultimate origins, “eastern” poets appealed to symposiasts on the mainland and in the islands.

The elitist version of sympotic culture directly opposed the middling ideology. Murray suggests that “the *symposion* became in many respects a place apart from the normal rules of society, with its own strict code of honour in the *pistis* [trust] there created, and its own willingness to establish conventions fundamentally opposed to those within the *polis* as a whole.”⁷⁰ The primary assets were beauty, eroticism, love of wine, arcane mythical knowledge, and athletic skills. The games perhaps owed as much to the East as did the symposium, and both merged with ritual friendship to form a coherent culture beyond polis morality. No rules barred ordinary citizens from entering the games, but the expense of training effectively achieved this. Stories of goat- and cowherds winning at Olympia have a mythical air, and in any case, the scale of rewards made victory an avenue of rapid promotion into elite circles. Serious competitors constituted in their own eyes an interstate elite, and it is from their literature, rather than from that of the majority of citizens, that Burckhardt created his image of Greece as an agonal society. Ordinary citizens enjoyed the spectacle of elite conflicts and honored the victors, much as fourth-century Athenian jurymen watched the struggles of wealthy litigants; but for the participants, athletic victory renewed the household’s glory. The presence of a victor in one’s family, like the correct use of luxury, identified a true aristocrat, someone who stood close to the gods and heroes.⁷¹

The middling poets resisted all these beliefs. The phalanx became the standard image for citizen solidarity and remained so until the fourth century. Archilochus mocked the heroic model by describing in lofty language how he abandoned his “blameless armament” (*entos amōmēton*) to a Thracian tribesman – but Archilochus didn’t care and found the whole episode amusing (fr. 5). He preferred a short, bowlegged man with his feet on the ground to a tall, elegant, heroic officer (fr. 114). In Tyrtaeus and Callinus, the phalanx is a metaphor for the ideal citizen group. Begging is the only alternative to hard work in Hesiod (*Op.* 397–400), and to standing your ground in the ranks in Tyrtaeus (fr. 10.1–14). These are not transparent accounts of tactical changes: they are part of a series of exchanges between the two poetic traditions, what Rose calls “matters of discursive conflict.”⁷²

Xenophanes questioned the epic gods. Far from being companions of the elite, the gods of middling poets kept the ends of life hidden from all men.⁷³ But the harshest attacks were on the East. For Phocylides “an orderly polis on a rock is better than silly Nineveh” (fr. 5), and Xenophanes told how Colophon “learned useless luxuries from the Lydians while they were still free from hateful tyranny” (fr. 3.1–2). In fr. 19 Archilochus had Charon the carpenter say, “I don’t care for Gyges the Golden’s things, and I’ve never envied him. I’m not jealous of the works of gods either, and I don’t lust

after a magnificent tyranny. These are beyond my gaze.” Aristotle describes Charon’s comments as *agroikia*, “rustic” or “boorish.” Fränkel suggested that “the carpenter was a stock example of the industrious man,” and perhaps the audience was supposed to react to Charon as a solid, worthy citizen.⁷⁴ What he rejected was a virtual checklist of elitism – the desire to be like the king of Lydia, to rival the gods, and (at least in the eyes of critics) to be a tyrant. But perhaps the most effective attack on elite pretensions came from Hipponax, who abused the delicacy, eroticism, and Orientalism that Sappho and others saw as sources of social power. The dung-covered hero of fr. 92 found himself in a toilet with a woman who performed an obscure act on his anus while beating his genitals with a fig branch. The fragment ends with a cloud of dung beetles whirring out of the filth. The woman was *Ludizousa*, “speaking in a Lydian fashion”; perhaps the whole episode was so down-market that it did not even involve a real Lydian. This is classic iambic abuse, making it hard to take the *habrosunē* ideology seriously, and that was surely the point.⁷⁵

There was no way to transcend the polis in the middling tradition. Not even athletic victory brought a man closer to the gods and heroes. The differences between the two poetic traditions came down to a single point: the elitists legitimated their special role from sources outside the polis; the middling poets rejected such claims. The former blurred distinctions between male and female, present and past, mortal and divine, Greek and Lydian, to reinforce a distinction between aristocrat and commoner; the latter did the opposite. Each was probably guilty of disgusting and polluting behavior in the eyes of the other. Elitist poetry was the oppositional literature of an *immanent elite*, an imagined community evoked in the interstices of the polis world – at interstate games, in the arrival of a *xenos* from a different city, or behind the closed doors of the symposium.⁷⁶

It was opposed on all counts by beliefs that made the polis the center of the world, but that we can only see through the poetry of aristocrats who accepted it. The voices of ordinary citizens like Archilochus’ Charon might express the middling ideology even more vigorously. But even as it is, we see a spectrum of opinions among the upper classes. The middle was malleable, just as “equality” and “freedom” would be in classical times. For instance, Solon and Theognis agreed that the combination of hubristic rich and desperate poor led to tyranny, but in Theognis this verged on antagonism toward the *dēmos*. “Drive the empty-headed vulgar herd with kicks,” he said; “jab them with sharp goads and put a galling yoke on their neck; you will not find, among all the men the sun looks down upon, a people that loves a master more than this one” (847–50).⁷⁷

This flexibility allowed some upper-class Greeks to accept the community of middling citizens as the source of legitimate authority, while still monopolizing political decision-making as the subcommunity of the wise. The middle was put into action in different ways in different poleis and at different times, even if the convention-bound, Panhellenic poetry does not allow us to document this.

VII. The Emergence of Democracy

The middling tradition goes back to the eighth century, over a wide area of Greece.⁷⁸ It contained some of the key elements of the Strong Principle of Equality, but

democratic institutions only emerged in the late sixth century. Herodotus mentions several experiments with popular rule around the time of Cleisthenes' reforms. About a generation earlier, Demonax of Mantinea came to Cyrene in a dynastic crisis. He divided the citizens into new tribes, set aside some land and offices for the kings, and "gave all the other things which the kings had formerly held into the midst of the people" (*es meson tōi dēmōi*: 4.161). It is hard to know exactly what Herodotus meant, or if the story is true, but he used similar language in three more passages. In 522, he says, Maiandrios wished to lay aside his tyranny over Samos. He set up a shrine of Zeus as God of Freedom and offered *isonomia*, "equality before the law," to the people (3.142). In the best-known but least plausible tale, Herodotus claims that in the very next year, the Persian noble Otanes proposed that the whole empire should be a democracy (3.80). All these plans fell through, but Herodotus mentions in passing that in 499 certain rich men were thrown out of Naxos by the *dēmos* (5.30), and that at some time around 500 Cadmus, tyrant of Cos, inspired by his sense of justice (*dikaíosynē*), "gave his rule into the midst of the Koans" (*esmeson Kōōisi*: 7.164), and moved to Sicily. He probably felt comfortable there: in 491, the Syracusan *demos* expelled their notables and set up their own democracy (7.155). Herodotus knew that not everyone believed his story about Otanes, so he bolstered it by emphasizing that in 492 the Persians had set up democracies all through Ionia (6.43).⁷⁹

All these stories have well-known problems, and none can be pressed too hard,⁸⁰ but their chronological clustering is nevertheless striking. They suggest a broad trend toward granting political powers to the *dēmos* between 525 and 490. At Athens democracy was established in a violent rejection of all authority external to the polis itself, as Hippias' base in the club of tyrants and Isagoras' in Sparta were denied in favor of Cleisthenes' total commitment to the citizenry.⁸¹ Changes in poetry and archaeology suggest that this was part of a widespread development in the last decades of the sixth century, and that with the collapse of the elitist ideology democracy became a possibility.

Around 520, aristocrats started commissioning odes in honor of returning athletic victors, to be performed by a chorus in the home city.⁸² This poetry brought the victor's glory back to the community. It was an old idea: Crotty observes that in Homer "it is only by rejoining his fellows that the warrior can receive their acknowledgement and honor." The heroes had worried about what "someone" (*tis*) from the people might say, but the new epinician odes go much further, offering to incorporate everyone in the polis into a single song. The praise of other nobles was now not enough, even for such diehards as the dynasts of Thessaly. There was a crisis of praising.⁸³

A group of professional poets emerged, arguing that ordinary citizens' praise was shapeless and therefore futile. It was easily misdirected, being no better than gossip. The poets' technical virtuosity, verging on incomprehensibility, marked their words as standing outside ordinary speech. They presented themselves as a neutral group, mediating between mass and elite, turning aside ordinary men's envy of those who were more successful. Pindar could describe himself at one moment as the guest-friend of Sogenes of Aegina (*Nem.* 7.61–65), and at another as an ordinary citizen (*Pyth.* 2.13), identifying with each group as the need arose.⁸⁴

Epinician poets embraced the image of the middling citizen. Pindar agreed that the “middle rank” (*ta mesa*) had the most enduring prosperity (*Pyth.* 11.52–53), heaping praise on those who pursued the *metron*. For Bacchylides, whoever had his health and lived off his own estate rivaled “the first men” (*Ode* 1.165–68).⁸⁵ But they did not simply continue the middling tradition. They envisaged an elite distinguished from ordinary citizens by more than just greater wisdom and moderation. Pindar baldly asserted that “the piloting of poleis is passed from father to son, in the hands of the nobles” (*Pyth.* 10.71–72). Pindar divided the world into gods, extraordinary men, and ordinary men. For him, as Most puts it, “the gods are superior in that they always possess felicity, the extraordinary men in that they have, at least on one occasion and if only briefly, attained felicity.” But this was not the bold elite of Sappho and Alcman. Those who won in the games attained special links with the gods and heroes (Heracles had set up and won the first Olympics), but their victories were mainly *megaloprepeia*. The elite’s spending and efforts were not just for themselves or their class but were “in the common interest” (Pindar, *Pyth.* 9.93), obliging all citizens to repay it with *charis*, “gratitude,” which the poet converted into praise.⁸⁶

Like the men in Xenophanes’ ideal symposia, Pindar’s extraordinary men were wise enough to be pious. But Pindar also believed that in return for piety the gods granted them favor, which translated into wealth, to be spent on the games. Their wealth then became “a conspicuous star, truest light for a man” (Pindar, *Ol.* 2.55–56), illuminating the whole city. The only alternative to this public spending was to hoard wealth in the darkness, hiding the family’s fame. Pindar’s universe simply had no room for the Sapphic manipulation of luxury.⁸⁷

Pindar described the nobleman with his golden cups in similar terms to the gods on Olympus, but the poets agreed that an unbridgeable gulf separated mortals from the divine. “One is the race of men, one is the race of gods,” explains Pindar, “and from one mother do we both draw our breath; but a wholly sundered power has divided us, so that the one is nothing, while for the other, brazen Heaven remains secure for ever” (*Nem.* 6.1–4).⁸⁸ Aristocrats were cut off from the East just as brutally. Persia had crushed Lydia in 546, and the epinician Lydia was little more than a source of music. Luxury continued to be associated with the East, but by the time of Aeschylus’ *Persians* in 472 this was entirely negative: luxury, softness, and hubris explained the Persian defeats in 490–479. It was much harder to draw on the East as a source of legitimacy after this, but the meager evidence does not allow us to say whether these changes were already underway before 500.⁸⁹

Shorn of external sources of authority, aristocrats had to fall back on themselves and their poleis. The only alternative was to retreat to the mystery cults that flourished at this time, but as Detienne points out, “the priests and the initiates lived on the [social] margins of the city, and aspired only to a completely interior transformation.” And even when transformed, the priest claimed only an inner superiority over ordinary men, rather than domination, as the archaic elitists had done.⁹⁰ For those who wished to stay in the mainstream, essentialist definitions of the aristocrat no longer held good. For Simonides there could be no “all-blameless man . . . built four-square, without blame, in hand, foot, and mind” (fr. 542.24, 2–3). The best a man could hope for was to avoid doing anything disgraceful, and to be mindful of civic justice (542.27–29, 34–35). Not without cause does Gentili speak of “Simonides’ deconsecration of aristocratic values,” or Detienne of his demotion of *alētheia* in favor

of *doxa*. Virtue became a relative matter, defined from the point of view of the polis. Simonides summed his view up in an elegiac fragment: “It is the polis that teaches the man” (fr. 15 West).⁹¹

The major exception perhaps proves the rule. In *Ode* 3.17–66, Bacchylides says that Hieron, tyrant of Syracuse, gave more gold to Apollo than anyone except Croesus of Lydia, and that both men had special divine favor. Burnett points out that the peculiarity of Hieron’s triumph – “the victor did not drive his own team or even train his own horses, but simply paid the bills” – made the praise of his wealth most appropriate, but there is more to it.⁹² Gelon had begun the Syracusan generosity to Delphi and Olympia. Herodotus (7.158–62) says that Gelon had been willing to help against Persia in 480, but only if he were made commander. His dedications perhaps continued his claims to hegemony, representing Himera as equivalent to Salamis and Plataea in preserving the freedom of the Greeks. Hieron went further, blending ritual and architecture to justify an expansionist kingship unlike anything in old Greece.⁹³ Likening Hieron to Croesus, as an ambitious ruler on the edge of the Greek world, with a special relationship to Apollo because of his gifts to Olympia and Delphi, fitted very well with the tyrant’s program. But Bacchylides immediately undermined this message. Croesus stood for wealth and piety, but also for lack of moderation. Apollo had not saved Lydia, and Croesus despaired of the gods’ *charis*, unwilling to wait any longer (3.38). Bacchylides’ Apollo points out that nothing can be foreseen. Men should be cheerful, because pious deeds (*hosia*) – apparently, *any* pious deeds – bring the highest gains. “I sing clearly for the wise,” explains Bacchylides (3.85). This is *ainos* poetry, giving the audience of the wise a story that ought to be chilling for a tyrant: the gods respect piety, regardless of wealth, and there is no guarantee that they will preserve the domain of any king if he forgets proper measure. McGlew concludes that “epinician seems to question, even as it proclaims, the happiness of the poet’s tyrant-patron.”⁹⁴

The emergence of Athenian tragedy around 500 was part of this Panhellenic trend. The tragedians’ confrontations between heroic individuals and civic-minded choruses parallel developments in non-Athenian epinician, although the tragedians found different resolutions; and the list of awards for the best tragedy is dominated by citizens of other states down to the 470s.⁹⁵ But the Panhellenic scale of changes is clearest in archaeology. Spending on aristocratic display, particularly burials, had increased slowly in many places in the sixth century, but everywhere this declined abruptly c. 500. Until about 425 burials were normally very simple, with few grave goods and no monuments. Fifth-century houses tended to be larger than those of the sixth century, but, so far as we can tell from excavation, there were hardly any differences in size and decoration between the houses at any site before the end of the fifth century. The literary sources also say that aristocrats gave up expensive clothes, fancy hairstyles, and jewelry. So little precious plate is known that some archaeologists suggest none was made during the fifth century. By 500, aristocratic efforts to differentiate themselves from other citizens in their rituals were declining. Votive offerings also declined, and the few spectacular offerings, like the temples themselves, were now normally made by the state.⁹⁶

Dahl’s Principle of Equal Consideration requires that all members of a group should agree that they are about equally well qualified to participate in making its decisions. The middling ideology was such a belief and had been important since the eighth

century; but at the end of the sixth century, all viable alternatives collapsed. No doubt many nobles, whether in Thebes, Aegina, or Athens, continued to believe that they were special beings, but they increasingly conceded that they needed to be judged not just by their peers, but also by the citizens of their home communities. Many of them must also have continued to believe that aristocratic government should guide the people, just as praise and blame should be channeled through professional poets. The collapse of faith in external sources of legitimation and the establishment of the Strong Principle of Equality did not automatically produce democracy, but it made democracy a possibility. Aristocrats had to make their way within a community of men who were, after all, about equally well qualified to participate in the decisions of the group.

VIII. Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to trace, within the archaic period, a set of ideological shifts that made Greek democracy a possibility. I have argued that the eighth century was in many ways the crucial moment. In this obscure period the polis was established as a community of *mesoi*, founded on something like what Dahl calls the Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests. *To meson* was not a class but an ideological construct, allowing *all* citizens to locate themselves in the middle. Like any construct, it was open to reinterpretation: I have suggested that Theognis appropriated it for the upper class more than he assimilated a “moderate” elite to the mass of citizens the way that Hesiod, Xenophanes, Solon, or Phocylides did. Nevertheless, I believe that it is wrong to imagine a slow evolution across the archaic period from royal to aristocratic to hoplite to thetic power. From the earliest sources, “the middle” includes all citizens: in Walzer’s terms the “one good thing” was citizen birth. To call a man rich or poor, to deny his middling status, was to cast him out of the ideal polis.

But some aristocrats happily cast themselves out, forming alternative fellowships outside (and in their view above) the polis. They wanted to be a privileged supra-polis elite, dining and loving with the gods, heroes, and Lydians. The only problem was that many of their fellow citizens refused to recognize their superiority, preferring instead to mock them, and on occasion to kill them. But by 500 BC the elitist ideology was in disarray: powerless in the face of growing citizen confidence, aristocrats everywhere conceded the second proposition in Dahl’s Strong Principle of Equality, that no external source of authority made them so much better qualified than other citizens that they alone should automatically be entrusted with making the collective and binding decisions.

But it required more to make a democracy. Many *poleis* entrusted themselves to the guardianship of oligarchies throughout the classical period. On the whole, it seems that democracy was only tried out when a military crisis raised the stakes and made it impossible for the guardians to claim to represent the middle. In the seventh century, the obvious response had been to find a new, better set of guardians; by the end of the sixth, it could seem sensible to do away with guardians altogether, and to find some method for the citizens to make their decisions directly.

There were many ways to do this. Democracy cannot be defined solely by a decision-making assembly. It was also possible to allow smaller bodies, such as a

boulē (council) or a tribal assembly, to make some decisions.⁹⁷ Democracy is not something that a community either has or does not have: it consists of bundles of attitudes and institutions, and we should perhaps range the poleis along an imaginary spectrum. Some constitutions allowed citizens to make more of the binding decisions than did others, and the roles of elected representatives and other officeholders varied. Different states extended democracy into different spaces and allowed different kinds of assemblies to make the decisions. Each city-state moved around on this spectrum according to the outcome of local struggles, such as those in Athens in 510–507, 462, and 411–399.

Perhaps the best reason to seek the origins of Greek democracy is to understand its limitations. It took to an extreme the idea of a community of middling men but remained, in Dahl's terms, a guardianship of citizens over women, children, aliens, and slaves; in Held's, a "democracy of patriarchs"; and in Walzer's, "not communal freedom but oppression . . . Indeed, the rule of citizens over non-citizens, members over strangers, is probably the most common form of tyranny in human history."⁹⁸ But recognizing this does not require us to reject the significance of the Greek experience. Finley rightly stressed that "moral condemnation, no matter how well-founded, is no substitute for historical or social analysis. 'Rule by the few' or 'rule by the many' was a meaningful choice, the freedom and rights that the factions claimed for themselves were worth fighting for, despite the fact that even 'the many' were a minority of the whole population."⁹⁹ These archaic origins are important, not because Greek democracy ushered in a utopia or because it began an historical trajectory leading directly to us, but because it was *different*. Wealth justified dominance over a mass of subjects in many ancient states, but the Greeks – perhaps for the first time in history – substituted for it birth within a broad male citizen body, creating new inclusions and possibilities, and new exclusions and oppressions. The consequence of this was the Strong Principle of Equality; the consequence of that, Greek democracy.

NOTES

- 1 Unless otherwise indicated, I cite the fragments of the early Greek poets from the following editions (full documentation is in the References below):

Aeschylus fragments: Smyth, *Aeschylus II*.

Alcaeus, Sappho: Lobel and Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*.

Alcman, Anacreon, Simonides, Stesichorus: Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci*.

Archilochus, Callinus, Hipponax, Mimnermus, Semonides, Simonides (elegiac fragments),

Solon, Tyrtaeus: West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*.

Bacchylides: Snell and Maehler, *Bacchylidis, Carmina cum Fragmentis*.

Hesiod fragments: Merkelbach and West, *Fragmenta Hesiodica*.

Pindar fragments: Maehler, *Pindari, Carmina cum Fragmentis*.

Xenophanes: Diels and Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*.

- 2 Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 36–38; Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, 19–22; and Bleicken, *Athenische Demokratie*, 9, justify differing versions of this approach.

- 3 Particularly Giddens, *Central Problems*.

- 4 Most books review developments from Solon to Cleisthenes (e.g., Meier, *Discovery*, 29–52; Bleicken, *Athenische Demokratie*, 13–169; Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 55–75; Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, 27–36), but very few make historical explanation of archaic social dynamics a key issue in their understandings of democracy (Manville, *Origins*, is a notable exception).
- 5 Hansen, *Athenian Democracy*, 320; cf. 71–72, 319.
- 6 Dahl, *Democracy*, 30–31, 98.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 55, 85–86, 167.
- 8 Morris, *Darkness and Heroes*.
- 9 Stein-Hölkeskamp, *Adelskultur*, 86–138, is an important recent exception, providing a more nuanced account of aristocratic ideology in Theognis.
- 10 Abercrombie et al., *Dominant Ideology Thesis; Dominant Ideologies*.
- 11 Foucault, *Language*, 139–64; Chartier, *Cultural Origins*, 7.
- 12 Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*, 343.
- 13 For these features see Aesch. 1.42; 3.11, 218; Dem. 21.183; 29.24; 54.15, 17; Din. 2.8; Hyp. 4.21; Isoc. 7.40; Lys. fr. 73; see Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 257–59, 297–99. *Philia*: Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1157b35, 1158b11–1159a5, 1171b32–1172a8, with Sahlins, *Economics*, 193–230. On the varied senses of “middle class,” see Giddens, *Class Structure*, 30–32, 42–45, 61–64, 177–97. In favor of a hoplite middle class, see Spahn, *Mittelschicht*, 70–83, 174–78; Meier, *Discovery*, 29–52; on the hoplite as a model, Loraux, *Invention*, 34, 37, 98, 151; and on hoplite values, Hanson, *Western Way of War*, passim. Hanson, this volume [*Demokratia*], offers a sophisticated combination of these models.
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- 22 In this section I summarize very briefly the arguments of Morris, *Darkness and Heroes*, chs. 5–8.
- 23 Morris, *Burial; Darkness and Heroes*, chs. 5–7; Whitley, *Style and Society*, 116–62, 181–83, 191–94.
- 24 Sanctuaries: Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*, 317–40, de Polignac, *Naissance*; and recent finds in Mazarakis-Ainian, *Rulers’ Dwellings*; and Hägg et al., *Cult Practice*.
- 25 Snodgrass, *Archaic Greece*, 52–63, 99–100; “Economics.”
- 26 Whitley, “Diversity;” Morris, *Darkness and Heroes*, ch. 5.
- 27 Morris, *Burial*, 205–10; *Darkness and Heroes*, ch. 8.
- 28 Nagy, *Mythology*, 48n.40.
- 29 Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer*, 52–115, 174–98, 418–37; “Questions,” 38–41. Nagy emphasizes broad evolutionary forces rather than individual rhapsodes, as I do here.
- 30 Chronology: Theog. 773–82, 891–94, 1103–4. Attributions, Theog. 145–48, 153–54, 227–32, 315–18, 719–28, 793–96, 1003–6, 1017–22, 1253–54. See Nagy, “Theognis,” 51, but cf. West, *Studies*, 40–61. Anacreon: Rosenmeyer, *Imitation*.
- 31 Quotation: Miralles and Pòrtulas, *Archilochus*, 22. The names have often been discussed. See, e.g., West, *Studies*, 25–29; Burnett, *Archaic Poets*, 15–32; Nagy, *Achaeans*, 243–52; *Pindar’s Homer*, 430–32.
- 32 Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*; Herzfeld, *Place in History*, 205.
- 33 Pittacus: Alc. frs. 67.4, 75.12, 106.3, 129.21, 348.1, cf. Diog. Laert. 1.81; Kurke, “Crisis,” 69–75, 83–92. On the historicity of these charges, see, e.g., Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus*, 169–79; Kirkwood, *Monody*, 67–76. Compromises: Dover, “Archilochus,” 199–212; Rosen, “Hipponax.” Demosthenes: Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 268–79.
- 34 Mazzarino, *Occidente*, 191–246; Kurke, “Politics.” On forms see West, *Metre*, 29–56. The choral/monodic distinction makes little difference to cultural assumptions (Davies, “Monody”). Choral context: Burnett, *Bacchylides*, 5–14. Monodic: Kirkwood, *Monody*, 1–19.

- 35 Cf. frs. 95, 96, 98. His “biography” is similarly ambivalent: the *Anth. Pal.* (7.18, 19, 709) calls him Lydian as well as Spartan, but the *Suda* says he was descended from slaves.
- 36 Alc. fr. 347; Hes., *Op.* 582–96. See Burnett, *Three Archaic Poets*, 132–34; Petropoulos, *Heat and Lust*.
- 37 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 40, 47–50, 88, 92–93.
- 38 Family: 376–80, 695–705. Bulls: 436–37. Slave: 405–6 (unless *ktētēn* is interpolated: West, *Works and Days*, 260). Laborer: 602–3. *Dmōes*: 470, 502, 559–60, 573, 597, 607–8. Women: *Op.* 58–92, 519–25, 695–705, 753–55; *Th.* 570–612. Work: *Op.* 303–14, 381–82. Begging: *Op.* 397–400. Cf. Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 220–21.
- 39 *Op.* 23–24, 343–45, 349–51, 370–72, 706–14. Neighbors: Alc. fr. 123; Theog. 302; Anac. fr. 354; Pindar *Nem.* 7.87–89. Fourth century: Cohen, *Law*, 85–90.
- 40 *Op.* 717–18; *Th.* 26–28, with Svenbro, *Parole*, 50–59; Nagy, *Mythology*, 274–75.
- 41 *Basilēes*: *Op.* 38–39, 202–12, 263–64; *Th.* 79–93. Respect, Shame, and hubris: *Op.* 174–201, 213–18, 225–64, with Fisher, *Hybris*, 185–200, 213–16.
- 42 Martin, “Hesiod, Odysseus”; Kurke, “Sixth *Pythian*,” 104–07.
- 43 Griffith, “Personality”; Lambertson, *Hesiod*, 1–37; Nagy, *Mythology*, 36–82; Martin, “Metanastic Poetics,” 12–16. Cf. Zeitlin, “Thebes,” and Dougherty, this volume [*Demokratia*], on Delphi.
- 44 Detienne, *Maitres*, 34–50, 68–78, emphasizing *Th.* 27–28.
- 45 Nagy, *Mythology*, 67. Exterior insider: Martin, “Metanastic Poetics,” 14.
- 46 Szegedy-Maszak, “Legends”; Nagy, “Theognis,” 31–32.
- 47 Ostwald, *Nomos*, 55. Arch. fr. 232 has a tantalizing reference to someone “learning the Cretan *nomoi*,” apparently said in mockery.
- 48 Parallels: West, *Theogony*, 40–48; *Works and Days*, 3–15; Walcot, *Near East*; Millett, “Hesiod,” 93–106. The Ptolemaic *Instructions of Onqshesbonquy* has still more striking parallels with the *Op.*, and Walcot, “Instructions,” suggests that it imitated Hesiod. However, it is in any case more hierarchical than the *Op.* (e.g., 7.12–15; 8.11; 17.17, 25; 18.7–8, 12). The Egyptian texts are translated by Pritchard, *Texts*, 407–10, 421–25, and Lichtheim, *Literature I*, 169–84; II, 146–63; III, 159–84.
- 49 Nagy, *Mythology*, 9–17.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 270. Audience: Walsh, *Varieties*, 22–36; Nagy, “Theognis,” 22–27.
- 51 See Xenoph. fr. 1, and Archil. fr. 124b; Xenoph. fr. 22; Theog. 469–98, 503–10, 837–44; Phoc. fr. 11; cf. Anac. fr. 356.
- 52 Loraux, “Solon au milieu,” makes a series of excellent points about the theme of the middle in Solon’s poetry.
- 53 Cf. Solon, fr. 5, 24.1–4; Theog. 219–20, 331–32, 401–6, 543–46, 693–94, 719–28 (= Solon fr. 24); North, *Sophrrosyne*, 12–18. Moderate wealth: Phoc. fr. 7. Women: Phoc. fr. 3; Theog. 457–60; Semon. frs. 6, 7, with Loraux, *Children*, 72–110. Constraints of poverty: Theog. 173–82, 383–98, 649–52, 1062. All despise the poor: Theog. 267–70, 621–22, 699–718, 927–30; cf. Alc. fr. 360. Belly: Archil. fr. 124b; Hipp. fr. 128, with West, *Studies*, 148.
- 54 No limits on wealth: Solon fr. 13.71–76 = Theog. 227–32; unrighteous gain, Solon frs. 4.5–6; 13.7–11; Theog. 145–48, 465–66, 753–56. On hubris, cf. Theog. 603–4, 731–52, 833–36, 1103–04; and Archil. fr. 45, “hanging their heads they spewed up their hubris.” Even if this refers to the suicide of the Lycambids (contra, West, *Studies*, 125), it is also a general comment on destructive hubris. See Fisher, *Hybris*, 201–16.
- 55 Morris, “Use and Abuse,” 115–29. As Nagy observes (“Questions,” 52), this is not inconsistent with an evolutionary model. Quotation from Fisher, *Hybris*, 176. For the other views cited, see Donlan, *Aristocratic Ideal*, 20–23; Rose, *Sons of the Gods*, 43–140; Thalmann, “Thersites”; Thornton, *Homer’s Iliad*, 144–47.

- 56 Antonaccio, *Archaeology of Ancestors*, presents the evidence in detail, and the extensive modern literature. I set out my own views in Morris, "Tomb Cult" and develop them further in *Darkness and Heroes*, ch. 6. Helen: Hes. fr. 358; Stes. fr. 192, with Sisti, "Palinodie," 307–8; cf. Hdt. 2.112–20. Lord, *Singer*, 194, believed that there was such variety that a version of the *Iliad* existed in which the embassy in book 9 was successful.
- 57 Hes. *Op.* 26, 654–59; *Tb.* 22–35, with Walsh, *Varieties*, 26–33. Ford, *Homer*, 92.
- 58 The issues remain controversial; Snodgrass, "Hoplite Reform," and van Wees, "Homeric Way of War," are the most recent discussions.
- 59 See Burnett, *Archaic Poets*, 123–26. Page (*Sappho and Alcaeus*, 222) makes the important point that the terminology used for these heroic arms is very like that which Herodotus (1.34) uses for Lydian armor, suggesting the kind of heroic-oriental link that I discuss below.
- 60 Quotation from Gentili, *Poetry*, 83–84. Delicacy: Sappho frs. 2.14; 30.4–5; 44.8–10; 46; 81; 92; 94.12–22; 98; 192; Alc. frs. 1.64–68; 3.77; 56.3; 91; 117; Alc. fr. 130B.17–20; Anac. frs. 388.10–12; 481; Kurke, "Politics," 93–99. Divine luxury: Sappho frs. 1.7–8; 2; 33; 54; 96.27–28; 103.6, 13; 123; 127. Sappho and Aphrodite: Nagy, *Mythology*, 223–62. Burnett, *Archaic Poets*, 243–76 and 161, suggests that Alcaeus "stands in an almost priestly relation" to Zeus, Hera, and Dionysus in fr. 129. Sappho explicitly associates luxury with the heroic age in fr. 44.5–10.
- 61 C. Morgan, *Athletes*, 45.
- 62 Catling, "Workshop and Heirloom"; Matthäus, "Heirloom or Tradition?" Tin content: Filippakis et al., "Bronzes." Imports: Snodgrass, *Archaic Greece*, 105–6; Kilian-Dirlmeier, "Weihungen"; Muscarella, "Cauldrons."
- 63 Bolton, *Aristeas*, 134–41, 179–81. Hdt. 4.13–16 fully believed these stories. Religious borrowings: Burkert, *Revolution*; Carter, "Masks," 91, with de Polignac, "Influence," 114–17.
- 64 Murray, "Symposium." Koukounaries: Schilardi, "Paro," 247; Grave markers: Boardman, "Differentiation"; Catling and Lemos, *Lefkandi II.1*, 25–26. Knossos: Coldstream, "Gift Exchange," 204–6.
- 65 Lydian luxury: Sappho frs. 16.17–20; 39; 96.7–8; 98a.10–11; 132.3; Alc. frs. 1.64–65; 13c; 16. Cf. Alc. frs. 49.5; 69.1–6; Anac. fr. 481; eleg. 3; Alc. fr. 13d. Symposia: Fehr, *Gelage*; Dentzer, *Banquet*; Boardman, "Furniture."
- 66 Cf. Curtin, *Trade*; Appadurai, "Introduction."
- 67 Kyrieleis, "Babylonische Bronzen," argues that in fact most of the Oriental imports in Greek sanctuaries were given by Eastern kings, while Ström, "Evidence from the Sanctuaries," suggests that the priests organized trade with the Near East to guarantee themselves Eastern ritual paraphernalia. Neither theory accounts very well for either the imported finds or the imitations; I assume here that most of the objects were dedicated by users of the sanctuaries, primarily Greeks (Morris, *Darkness and Heroes*, ch. 6). Borell, *Schalen*, 93–96, and Markoe, *Bowls*, 121–22, have important comments on Eastern influences.
- 68 Burkert, *Orientalizing*, 16. Phoenicians: Shaw, "Phoenicians"; Negbi, "Presence," 607–9. Immigrants: Boardman, *Greeks Overseas*, 56–62. Protogeometric B: Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*, 68–70, 99–102. Differences from mainland: Markoe, *Bowls*, 82–83, 110–17; Morris, *Darkness and Heroes*, chs. 5–7.
- 69 Simon, "Votive Offerings," 4–165, 410–21; Philipp, "Archaische Gräber."
- 70 Murray, "Symptotic History," 7.
- 71 Boutros, *Phoenician Sport*. Interstate elite: Herman, *Ritualised Friendship*, 118–65. Young, *Olympic Myth*, 107–70, argues that not all athletes were aristocrats, but also emphasizes the scale of rewards (pp. 115–33). Training: Poliakoff, *Combat Sports*, 11–19. Agonal society: Burckhardt, *Greek Culture*, 53–56, with Poliakoff, *Combat*

- Sports*, 104–15. Athenian juries: Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 144. Renewing household: Kurke, *Traffic*, 15–62.
- 72 Rose, *Sons of the Gods*, 160. Phalanx: Call. fr. 1; Tyr. frs. 10; 12; Theog. 1003–6.
- 73 Xenoph. frs. 10–16; 2. See also Arch. frs. 16; 130; Semon. fr. 1; Solon frs. 13.65–74; 16; Theog. 133–42, 155–60, 557–60, 585–90 (=Solon fr. 13.65–74), 1075–78; Xenoph. frs. 18; 34.
- 74 Fränkel, *Poetry*, 138.
- 75 See also frs. 32; 38; 42; 72.7; 79; 125.
- 76 Against athletes, in favor of more useful types: Tyr. fr. 12.1–12; Xenoph. fr. 2; Solon, in Diod. 9.2.5. On aristocrats as outsiders, see Herman, *Ritualised Friendship*; Stein-Hölkesskamp, *Adelskultur*, 233; generally, Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
- 77 Classical equality, freedom: Raaflaub, *Entdeckung*, 313–27; this volume [*Demokratia*]. Rich, poor, and tyranny: Solon frs. 4.7–8, 23; 9.3–4; 33; 36.20–25; Theog. 39–52. On the *dēmos* see Donlan, “Changes,” and on tyranny, McGlew, *Tyranny*, 87–123. Alcaeus and Solon both feared tyrants, but Pittacus had more in common with Solon than with Solon’s tyrant: e.g., Simon. fr. 542.13; Diog. Laert. 1.77, 79; Arist. *Pol.* 1285a37–39; Strabo 13.2.3; Diod. 9.12.3. These are poor sources for a “historical” Pittacus but illustrate the negotiation of long-term traditions opposing luxury.
- 78 Indeed, as I argue in *Darkness and Heroes*, in certain ways it can be said to go back to the late eleventh century.
- 79 For further sources see Zimmermann, “Ansätze,” with Ostwald, *Nomos*, 161–67. Sartori, “Verfassung,” and Berger, *Revolution*, 15–56, present the western evidence.
- 80 Hölkesskamp, “Demonax” is the most recent skeptical discussion, with references to others.
- 81 Ober, “Revolution.”
- 82 The performance context is disputed. See K. Morgan, “Pindar.”
- 83 Crotty, *Song and Action*, 109–10; de Jong, “Voice.”
- 84 Professionalism: Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer*, 188–90; Kurke, *Traffic*, 240–50; K. Morgan, “Pindar.” Defining praise: Carson, “*Protagoras*,” 119–24. The power of gossip is an old theme, going back to the middling poets (e.g., Hes. *Op.* 701, 719–21; Archil. frs. 13, 14; Mimn. frs. 6 [=Theog. 793–800], 7, 15, 16; Phoc. fr. 6; Theog. 367–70), and continuing into the fourth century (Cohen, *Law*, 90–95; Hunter, *Policing Athens*, 96–119). Citizens’ views: Pindar, *Ol.* 5.16; 7.89–90; 13.2–3; *Pyth.* 2.81–82; 4.295–97; 11.28–30; *Nem.* 7.65–67; 8.38–39; 11.17; *Isthm.* 1.50–51; 2.37–38; 3.1–3; fr. 109. Technique: Most, *Measures*, 23–24. Envy: Pindar *Ol.* 2.95; 11.7–8; *Pyth.* 2.89–92; 7.18–19; *Nem.* 8.21–23; *Isthm.* 2.43; Bacchyl. *Ode* 13.199–203, although cf. *Pyth.* 1.85. Kurke, *Traffic*, 86–90, 135–47, points out that by referring to *xeinoi* (e.g., *Ol.* 7.89–90; 13.3; *Pyth.* 3.69–71; *Isthm.* 1.50–51; 6.66–72) Pindar assures the victors of the existence of an elite community as well as incorporating them into the citizen community; and that when relating to a victor, even other aristocrats were “ordinary” men who might fall prey to *phthonos*. Cf. Goldhill, *Poet’s Voice*, 130–32, 138–42.
- 85 Middle: Pindar, *Nem.* 11.47–48; *Isthm.* 6.66–72; *Paeon* 1.2–5; 4.32–53. The belly theme appears at Pindar, *Isthm.* 1.49, and poverty at Pindar fr. 109; Bacchyl. *Ode* 1.168–71. Living justly, and in proportion: Pindar, *Pyth.* 2.86–88; 3.107–08; 5.14; 10.67–68; *Nem.* 7.87–89; cf. *Ol.* 7.90–92; *Pyth.* 4.284–285; 8.8–20; 11.54–56; *Nem.* 7.65–67; *Isthm.* 3.1–3; fr. 180.3; Bacchyl. *Ode* 13.44–45, against hubris.
- 86 Most, *Measures*, 75. Links with gods and heroes: Pindar *Ol.* 7.20–24; 10.16–19, 43–77, 102–5; *Pyth.* 4.253; 9.39–42; 10.1–3, 49–53; *Isthm.* 5.26–27; 6.19, with Nagy, *Pindar’s Homer*, 116–56; Rose, *Sons of the Gods*, 160–62. *Megaloprepeia*: Kurke, *Traffic*, 163–224. Poem as recompense: Most, *Measures*, 72; Kurke, *Traffic*, 102, 116. Victory in the common interest: Pindar *Ol.* 5.4; 7.93–94; 9.19–22; *Nem.* 2.8; Bacchyl. *Ode* 6.15–16; 13.77–83.

- Charis*: MacLachlan, *Age of Grace*, 87–123, again adapting a middling theme (*ibid.*, 73–86), which continued into fourth-century Athens (Ober, *Mass and Elite*, 226–33).
- 87 Wise spending: Pindar *Ol.* 2.53–56; 5.23–24; *Pyth.* 2.56; 5.1–2, 14; 6.47. Hoarding: Pindar *Ol.* 2.55–56; *Nem.* 1.31–33; *Isthm.* 1.67–68; 4.29; Bacchyl. *Ode* 3.13–14; Kurke, *Traffic*, 225–29; Most, *Measures*, 90–91.
- 88 Divine wealth: Pindar *Ol.* 6.39–40, 104–5; 8.51; 9.32–33; 13.65–66; *Pyth.* 1.1–2; 3.9–10, 89–90, 93–95; 4.53–54, 178; 5.9, 104; 9.6, 9, 56, 59, 109; *Nem.* 5.2–4; 6.37–38; 7.77–79; *Isthm.* 1.1; 2.1–2, 26; 4.60; 6.75; 8.6–7; *Paeon* 6.1; frs. 29.1, 3; 30.1–2, 6; 75.14; 139.1, 9; 195; Bacchyl. *Ode* 9.1, 100; 11.4, 37–38, 49; 13.194–95; *Dith.* 3.34–36; 5.22; fr. 15.12; Simon. fr. 577b. Heroic wealth: Pindar *Ol.* 7.64; *Pyth.* 4.232; 10.40; *Nem.* 8.27; *Isthm.* 6.19; fr. 166.3; Bacchyl. *Dith.* 1.4. No achievement without the gods' help: Pindar *Ol.* 8.67; *Pyth.* 8.76–78; 12.29–30; *Nem.* 10.29–30; *Isthm.* 3.4–6; 5.52–53; Bacchyl. *Dith.* 3.117–118; fr. 24; Simon. fr. 526. Cannot equal the gods: Pindar *Ol.* 5.23–24; *Pyth.* 2.49–53, 88–89; 3.59–62; 10–21.29; *Nem.* 7.55–56; 11.13–16; *Isthm.* 3.17–18; 5.14–16; Bacchyl. *Ode* 5.94–96.
- 89 Lydia: Pindar *Ol.* 5.19; 14.17–18; *Nem.* 4.45; 8.15; fr. 125 Maehler; Bacchyl. fr. 14. Pindar *Nem.* 8.16–18 may be an exception, with Pindar offering Ajax a Lydian *mitra* (headband) decked with song, which is then linked with a mythical priest of Aphrodite. We can only speculate on what Aeschylus intended in fr. 29 (Smyth). Recent scholarship on the East as a mirror in which “Greekness” was constructed has perhaps exaggerated the role of the Persian Wars; in her excellent treatment, Hall (*Inventing the Barbarian*, 17–19) does not do justice to the archaic material, and Miller (“Parasol”) shows that even after 479 a few Athenians continued to look to the East for legitimacy.
- 90 Detienne, *Maitres*, 125, 137.
- 91 Gentili, *Poetry*, 63–71; Detienne, *Maitres*, 105–19; Carson, “*Protagoras*”; Crotty, *Song and Action*, 33–40.
- 92 Burnett, *Bacchylides*, 66. See Carson, “Burners,” 116–19, on 3.87.
- 93 Krumeich, “*Dreifüsse*”; Dougherty, *Poetics*, 83–102.
- 94 The uncertainty of life had been a popular middling theme (Archil. frs. 16, 130; Semon. fr. 1; Solon frs. 13.65–74 [=Theog. 585–90]; 16; Theog. 133–42, 155–60, 557–60, 1075–78) and was also used in Pindar *Ol.* 7.24–26; 12.10–12; *Pyth.* 3.103–6; 8.92–97; 10.63; 11.42–46; *Isthm.* 3.17–18; 4.5–6; Simon. fr. 521. McGlew, *Tyranny*, 49, although his overall argument (35–51) is rather different from mine.
- 95 Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy*, 23–48.
- 96 Morris, *Death-Ritual*, 118–29, 145, 151–53. Housing: Hoepfner and Schwandner, *Haus und Stadt*, 1–26, 256–67; Hoepfner, “Architekturforschung.” Votives: Snodgrass, “Economics.”
- 97 See Ruzé, “*Plethos*”; “*Tribus*”; Sealey, *Republic*, 91–98; Dahl, *Democracy*, 135–52.
- 98 Dahl, *Democracy*, 96, 97; Held, *Models*, 23; Walzer, *Spheres*, 62.
- 99 Finley, *Politics*, 9.

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