

Ethics in Ancient Greek Literature

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Volume 102

Ethics in Ancient Greek Literature

Aspects of Ethical Reasoning
from Homer to Aristotle and Beyond

Studies in Honour of Ioannis N. Perysinakis

Edited by Maria Liatsi

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In honour of Prof. I.N. Perysinakis
(University of Ioannina)

Preface

This volume sets out to fulfill a major goal: to honor Professor Ioannis N. Perysinakis for his academic merit in his roles as a devoted researcher and teacher of the ancient classical tradition of Greek culture. Ioannis N. Perysinakis belongs to a rare circle of scholars who have actively contributed to our cultural tradition regardless of the tumultuous times we live. The contributors of this volume would like to thank him for all he has done to help preserve and sustain one of the most crucial testaments of mankind: the ancient Greek heritage.

We are grateful to the general editors of *Trends in Classics*, Franco Montanari and Antonios Rengakos, for hosting this Festschrift in their series, and to every single colleague who has actively cooperated to materialize this project. I would like to thank Evangelos Karakasis for his contribution to the first stages of the editing process. Unfortunately, for reasons of ‘contingency and chance’ I completed by myself the later stages of the editorial process. Nevertheless, I firmly believe we have all shared the same enthusiasm in our initial plan to leave a sign of everlasting appreciation for a remarkable man of scholarship and humanity.

Maria Liatsi

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Introduction

Maria Liatsi

Ethics in Ancient Greek Literature from Homer to Aristotle

An Overview – Setting the Issue in Context

1

When students of ancient Greek literature or philosophy write about *agathos* and *aretê* and other value terms of ancient Greek literature, they use them no doubt in the meaning they have gained in Plato and Aristotle. Large a measure of disagreement between us and ancient Greek authors, Plato in particular, can be traced to the frequent interpolation of unsuitable modern conceptions, among them: the faculty of will; the issue of free will and determinism; and the contrast of metaphysical and psychological freedom. Fallacies and paradoxes are designed to confound our preconceptions. Nowadays we are all Christians and Kantians. The best insights, therefore, can be found in those who have confined themselves to the terms of Platonic analysis or of each author's analysis.¹ This is the principle from which each of the contributions of the volume begins. Besides, the volume investigates Ethics (for which there is now a renewed concern) both in literary and philosophical texts.

Furthermore, 'Those of us who profess 'Greek literature' can be accused, I think with some justification (and, of course, with some important and very honorable exceptions), of doing Plato less than justice; both institutionally and in our academic practice he is too often left to 'the philosophers', and it is we who are both the losers in this and who are also in serious danger of misrepresenting not just his importance beyond the schools of philosophy, but also how the ancients understood his work, and how perhaps we should'.²

Ancient Greek thought studied together with politics, ethics and economic behaviour and justice, as conditions of political stability of the city-state. The role of morality and economy is parallel, down to the time of Aristotle. It was Aristotle who classified and divided ancient Greek thought in fields. When Plato blames Homer that no city has been better governed because of him and inquires about the most important and noblest things of which Homer undertakes to tell, he

1 O'Brien 1958 and 1967.

2 Hunter 2012, 10.

mentions ‘war and generalship and the governance of cities and the education of men’, that is, generalships, politics and education (moral values and political behaviour) or management and education of men’s affairs (599d–e; cf. 598e, 606e).

2

The society depicted in the Homeric epics is a literary society. One may doubt the historicity of any and every person and events therein portrayed in the *Iliad*. But on the other hand it is impossible for one ‘to believe that the bards of the oral traditions invented out of their own imagination a society with institutions, values, beliefs and attitudes all coherent and mutually appropriate’ as one can discern in the Homeric epics. With the more reason so, since the ancient Greeks of later periods certainly regarded the society and behaviour of the poems as historical, and as teaching them valuable lessons. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, of course, are not sociological documents, but poems; and we must ‘take into account the distorting effect of Homer’s aims as a poet’. However, the poet exploits in the plot of his poems values valid in the society he depicts; it is a matter of consistency of political behaviour and the plot.³

‘Being the most powerful words of commendation used of a man, the *agathos* and his *aretê* imply the possession by anyone to whom they are applied of all the qualities most highly valued at any time by Greek society’. ‘*Agathos* commends the most admirable type of a man; and he is the man who possesses the skills and qualities of warrior-chieftain in war and in peace together with the social advantages which such a chieftain possessed. To be *agathos*, one must be brave, skillful, successful in war and in peace and wealthy’. ‘To be *agathos* was to be a specimen of the human being at his best, making to society the contribution that society valued most; and the poorer citizens could not deny this’.⁴

In the first book of the *Iliad* (275–276), Agamemnon, though he is *agathos*, is asked to return Briseis according to the *dikê*, as the Achaeans had offered her to Achilles as a prize. In the final book (24.52), Achilles, too, though he is *agathos*, is asked to return Hector’s body. That means that both Agamemnon and Achilles have the right to keep the girl or the body, respectively, without ceasing each of

³ Adkins 1971, 1, Long 1970, 122, Rowe 1983, 254 and 271 (n. 31).

⁴ Adkins 1960, 31, 32; 1972, 124. Adkins’ approach presupposed Dodds’ 1951, Finley’s 1956 and Snell’s 1953; and generated long and intensive criticism and defence. Cairns 1993 is a high-valued contribution to understanding of *aidôs* in the fields of Greek intellectual history, Greek popular morality or values, Greek literature and Greek philosophy.

them to be an *agathos*, but they are advised to return the former the girl and the latter the body. If they were obliged to return the girl or the body, they would be Kantians like us. In that case we should translate: ‘because you (or he) is *agathos*’, but this violates the Greek since the participle (ἐὼν) combined with the particle *περ* expresses no doubt opposition or concession. Nestor and Zeus call Agamemnon and Achilles for concession and co-operative behaviour.⁵ Agamemnon did not agree at least down to the nine book; Achilles did and wins our sympathy as a tragic hero. The same is the case with Poseidon (*Il.* 15.185–186). And all of these are ‘Zeus’ will’, that is the poet’s plot. The translation and interpretation of this formula ἀγαθός περ ἐὼν is (in my knowledge) the touchstone of criticism against Adkins; but the syntax is on his side.

But they are not Christians. On the contrary the *agathos*’ excellence, his being always best in battle and pre-eminent beyond all others (*Il.* 11.784, 6.208), makes him to be inclined to violate other *agathos*’ honour, seek for more power or wealth and show greed (*pleon echein, pleon-ektein*) all through Greek literature, so as to commit *hybris* and later imperialistic meddlesomeness. Greed ‘violated canons of fair distribution among equal individuals or groups. As a violation of equality and fairness, greed was inevitably linked to injustice and therefore identified as a leading cause of civic strife’. Clearly linked with *agathos* and *aretê* is the Homeric concept of *timê*, honour. To defend one’s own *timê*, if possible to acquire more, and at all events not to lose any of what own has, is the principal motivation of Homeric man, but not only of him. On the other side, ‘*hybris* is essentially the serious assault on the honour of another, which is likely to cause shame, and lead to anger and attempts at revenge...; *hybris* is essentially deliberate activity, and the typical motive for such infliction of dishonour is the pleasure of expressing a sense of superiority, rather than compulsion, need or desire for wealth’.⁶

Though the essence of the *philotês*- relationship appears as co-operation, *philein* in the Homeric world requires action and results rather than emotions or intentions. But to say that in its normal usage *agathos* has no co-operative moral connotation is not to say that co-operative excellences were not valued at all. We are informed a third counsel of Peleus to Achilles, this time on co-operative values: ‘My child, for the matter of strength, Athene and Hera will give it if it be their will, but be it yours to hold fast in your bosom the anger of the proud heart, for consideration (φιλοφροσύνη, 256) is better.’ (*Il.* 9.254–258, Lattimore). The term

5 Cf. for the matter Long 1970, 127–128, Adkins 1971, 8–9; 1960, 49–52, Rowe 1983, 264–265.

6 On honour: Adkins 1960a; wide-ranging semantic study on *hybris* in Greek literature and society is Fisher 1992 and reference work on greed in Athenian political thought is Balot 2001.

φιλοφροσύνη is famous for those who doubt the competitive values or excellences in Homer: the co-operative values certainly exist, but they are not the most powerful; the *Iliad* is a poem on anger. When *agathos* and *dikaios* were linked, *dikaios* has adopted the logic of *agathos*, since *agathos* is the stronger partner.

In the *Odyssey*, it is agreed,⁷ Zeus is interested in justice according to the plan and the programmatic principle of the opening of the poem (1.32ff.). Throughout *Odyssey* the suitors are termed *agathoi* or *amymones*, either they lay in ambush to murder Telemachus or when the battle began in the hall of Odysseus' palace. In neither case, and nowhere in the *Odyssey*, when the suitors are termed *agathoi* or *amymones*, is Homer expressing moral approval for their acts, for which indeed there should be strong social disapproval. They fall in *hybris* because they 'eat up Odysseus' substance without compensation'; there is a proper way to go wooing, and this is not it. But none the less the suitors remain *agathoi*, for they have irrefutable claims to the title.⁸

3

Hesiod advises Perses to 'listen to *dikê* and do not foster *hybris*; for *hybris* is bad for a poor man and not even a rich man can easily bear its burden, because he is weighed down, by reason of *hybris*, when he has fallen into *atê*. But there is a better way to go towards the *dikê*; because finally *dikê* prevails over *hybris*; and when one has suffered he learns' (*Op.* 213–218). Here *dikê* mainly is justice, but by reason of its ambiguity it also denotes: 'trial', 'what was due to' Perses (his share of the patrimony) and 'verdict'. Accordingly, *hybris* is injustice and all the means Perses is prone to use in order to win the trial (e.g. bribe). Hesiod dwells on preliminary terms, which constitute the consciousness of the new social and political possibilities. If one has realized all things, i.e. first of all the lesson on *aretê* and *kakotês*, and generally has grasped the new conditions, he is *panaristos*. Also he who listens to a good adviser is an *esthlos*. But that who neither thinks for himself nor keeps in mind what another advises him, is an *achreios*

7 Dodds expresses the common opinion on the *Odyssey*: The suitors by their own wicked acts incur destruction, while Odysseus triumphs against the odds: divine justice is vindicated (1951, 32–33). Adkins argues (1960, 62, and elsewhere): "The gods as portrayed generally in the Homeric poems are far from just. Though right triumphs in the main plots of both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, it does not do so because it is right". Lloyd-Jones disputes Adkins' view that right triumphs in the *Iliad*, but not as such, because it is right (1971, 1, 7).

8 Adkins 1960, 32.

(useless and unprofitable) man (293–297). *Achreios* is the man who does not labour and has not realized or does not understand what is taking place on the scene of history.⁹

4

Like a chorus in tragedy, Archilochus advises the man of the Lyric age to endure incurable woes; ‘the gods have set powerful endurance as an antidote’ and addressing his *thymos* exhorts himself to ‘know what sort of pattern (*rysmos*) governs mankind’ (13W, 128W, Gerber). Democritus argues that teaching transforms (μεταρρομοί) a man’s nature (B 33 D.-K.). For Tyrtaeus: this is excellence (*aretê*) ‘if a man is good in war and can endure the sight of bloody slaughter, and standing close, can lunge at the enemy’ (12W.10–13, Gerber). For Callinus: ‘it is a splendid honour for a man to fight on behalf of his land, children, and wedded wife against the foe’, while ‘if he suffers some mishap, is mourned by the humble and the mighty’ (1W.6–7, 17, Gerber).

The World of Odysseus ends with Zeus’ authority and words to Athena, for the Ithacans and Odysseus: ‘let them be friends with each other, as in the time past/, and let them have prosperity and peace in abundance’ (*Od.* 24.485–486, Lattimore). This is a conciliation of the king and the noble aristocrats (the suitors’ kin). Hesiod starts with this admonition: become rich by means of work; only so would the common people whom he addresses enjoy the advantages of being rich and escape pressure and exploitation. After the law of Zeus to punish the transgressor, the *pathei mathos* doctrine in *Agamemnon* (177, 1564; *Eum.* 313), the chorus in the *Eumenides* after the reconciliation sings: ‘farewell/ farewell in just apportionment of wealth/ farewell, people of the *asty*’ (996–997, Latt.); *dikê* is restored. Nevertheless, the revenge motive for Agamemnon’s death is the main motive in the form both in Sophoclean and Euripidean *Electra*.¹⁰

The established Homeric aristocratic society was broken when the merchant class arises thanks to colonization and coinage during the Lyric Age of Greece. The equation of wealth with nobility breaks down when the aristocratic landowner become impoverished and the merchant class arises as a result of colonization and coinage during the Lyric Age of Greece. Alcaeus’ *dictum* that ‘money, money, makes man’ (360 PMG), repeated by Pindar (*I.* 2.11), is a concession of the

⁹ Perysinakis 1986, 107, 110, Fisher 1992, 194–195.

¹⁰ On form cf. Easterling in the ‘paper trilogy’ (1997).

aristocratic ideals, in recognizing the power of the newly-rich people when wealth ceased to coincide with birth. Sappho's attitude to wealth is that only combined with noble birth and manners is wealth an unharmed neighbour (148 PMG).

Theognis summarizes well the sixth century condition. With kind thoughts (*esthla*) Theognis advises Cynrus such as he himself learned from *agathoi* while he was still a child. Cynrus has to be wise (have self-knowledge) 'and do not at the cost of shameful or unjust acts, seize for himself prestige, success or wealth' (27–30, Gerber); that is, whatever action with the *kakoi* (e.g. such as marriage with the daughter of a wealthy *kakos*) is injustice. Referring obviously to verses 27–37 and to v. 35 ('from the noble you will learn noble things') Aristotle says: 'As Theognis points out, a sort of training in virtue emerges from good people's living in each other's company' (*EN* 1170a11–12, Crisp). Theognis means traditional *agathos*; Aristotle means the moral *agathos*. Cf. also Democritus (B 33 D.-K.). Denying any connection of the common newly-rich people with *aretê*, Theognis identified it completely with wealth. Those who lived outside the city are now noble (*agathoi*), 'while those who were noble (*esthloi*) before are now base (*deiloi*); Who can endure the sight of this?' (56–58, Gerber). He denies strongly any connection of the common newly-rich people with *aretê*. But 'it is money people honor; one who is noble marries the daughter of one who is base and one who is base marries the daughter of one who is noble. Wealth has mixed up blood' (189–90, Gerber). The more Theognis tries to keep together wealth and *aretê*, the more reality proves their dissociation. But as he denies any relationship between newly-rich and the aristocratic ideals and morality embodied in *aretê*, the moral meaning of the relevant terms (*agathos*, *aretê*), which was to be adopted by the later philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, (and Christianity), appears for the first time.

According to Theognis 'the whole of *aretê* is summed up in *dikaiosynê*: every man is *agathos* if he is *dikaios*' (147–148). 'Were it accepted, it would have the immediate result that, *dikaiosynê* and *aretê* being identical, there would be no need any longer to justify the pursuit of *dikaiosynê*, for the pursuit of *aretê* is a desirable end'.¹¹ Describing general *dikaiosynê* in *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle terms the couplet a proverb and calls justice as complete virtue in co-operative meaning (1129b25–30), as his most commentators do. Aristotle is speaking in Plato's and his own concept of co-operative *dikaiosynê*. But one has to remember

¹¹ Adkins 1972, 42–43; 1960, 78–79; Adkins, as many others, is under Aristotle's influence. But cf. Perysinakis 2012, 467–470.

that *dikaïosynê* is the abstract noun of *dikaïos*, which denotes ‘referring or belonging to *dikê*’. Therefore the famous v. 147 says at all events that all virtues, that is, all the parts of virtue, are contained in *dikaïosynê*, i.e. one accepts and upholds *dikê*, the established claims and rights of the *agathos* and maintains the stability of his status quo. *Dikaïosynê*, then, here keeps the traditional competitive meaning of *dikê*.

Solon analyses greed and injustice of *agathoi* and the substance of the making money technique when he says that there is no limit in the pursuit of wealth and that every rich man seeks to double his wealth- in fact an application of the *agathos*’ demand ‘to be pre-eminent beyond all others’. Unjust gained wealth causes ruin (13W.71–76). But though he analyses the operation of wealth he also recognizes its results in society, its order and harmony and their opposites. Applying natural *phaenomena* to social condition says: ‘If none wind moves the sea, it is the evenest of all things’ (12W). In Solon *dêmos* has not the meaning of the word in the fifth and fourth century Athens: it refers either to the whole society or to the lower classes in contrast to the notables of the wealthy class (*gnôrimoi*); however, *dêmos* is not the poor (*penichroi*), the traditional *kakoi* (4.W7, 5.1, 6.1). He did not like to share the country’s rich land equally between the lower and upper classes (34.W8–9). Against to the demands of *agathos*, Solon did not become tyrant: ‘If I spared my homeland and did not grasp tyranny and brute force, bringing stain and disgrace on my reputation, I am not ashamed. For I think that in this way I shall be more able to outstrip everyone’ (32W, Gerber). This is the first recorded conscious step to co-operation against competitive surroundings. ‘Solon explains his lack of *aidôs* by affirming his confidence of greater glory to come, and this suggests that one aspect of the *aidôs* he rejects might be related to future damage to his reputation’.¹²

5

The contest of the elements in the Presocratics mirrors the social and political life of the *agathos*. Anaximander is contemporary of Solon, with whom the latter is connected by means of the imagery of the sea which is *dikaïotatê* if none wind moves it (12W) and the famous expression ‘trial conducted by Time’ or ‘assessment of Time’ (36W.3). The existing things ‘pay penalty and retribution to each

¹² Cairns 1993, 166.

other for their injustice according to the assessment of Time' (B 1 D.-K.). 'The interplay of opposites is basic in Heraclitus, who seems to have deliberately corrected Anaximander by his paradox strife is justice' (B 80 D.-K.).¹³

For Xenophanes the athletic virtue does not contribute to a better law and order in the city, for this does not fatten the city's treasury (2W). For Simonides any man is good, when his luck is good; when it is bad he is bad. He is satisfied with the man who understands the justice that helps his city; he is a sound man (542.17–18, 35–36, PMG). Traditional *agathoi* are the subjects of Pindar's odes. An *agathos* does 'not desire to keep great wealth hidden away in a palace, but to succeed with what he has and be praised for helping friends' (N.1.31–32, Race). For an *agathos*: 'Success is the first of prizes; and renown the second portion; but the man who meets with both and gains them has the highest crown' (P.1.99–100, Race). Nevertheless, war virtue is not absent: 'He who wins luxurious glory in games or as soldier by being praised gain the highest profit, the finest words from tongues of citizens and foreigners' (I.1.50–51, Race). *Agathos* has always to succeed but also to be praised for his deeds by the poet: 'great deeds of valor remain in deep darkness when they lack hymns. We know of a mirror for noble deeds in one only one way, if, by the grace of Mnemosyne with the shining crown, one finds a recompense for his labors in poetry's famous songs' (N.7.12–16, Race); for 'a noble deed dies when left in silence' (fr. 121.4, S-M, Race).

In a *makarismos* Hieron is praised, for his power and wealth, for his beneficences and magnificence by Bacchylides: 'Ah a thrice-fortunate man, who got from Zeus the privilege of ruling over the greatest number of Greeks and knows how not hide his towering wealth in black-cloaked darkness. The temples abound in feasts where cattle are sacrificed, the streets abound in hospitality; and gold shines with flashing light from the high elaborate tripods standing in front of the temple' (*Ep.* 3.10–19, Campbell). Bacchylides anticipates (better offers to) Aristotle's description of magnificence (1122a18 – 1123a33). Best way of life, as with Cephalus in the opening of the *Republic*, is: 'gladden your heart by doing righteous deeds: this is the highest of gains' (*ib.* 83–84). Like Theognis, he says 'that the greatest glory belongs to excellence (*aretê*): wealth may consort even with the worthless and loves to inflate a man's ideas'; and like Tyrtaeus (12W.35–44): 'He whose heart is disturbed by trivial anxieties acquires time only during his lifetime. *Aretê* demands toil, but when completed aright it leaves a man even when he is dead an enviable monument of fame' (*Ep.* 1.159–163 and 179–184, Campbell and Adkins).¹⁴

¹³ KRS 1990, 119–121 and 193–194.

¹⁴ For the survey of Lyric poets: Perysinakis 1982, 791–799; 2012, 421–422 and *passim*.

6

During the fifth century, and especially in the later fifth century moral values and political behaviour in Ancient Greece were in crisis. ‘The behaviour of these value-words both affected and was affected by the nature of the society in which their usage developed... But only with a complete understanding of the implications and significance of these words can the essence of the Greeks and their society be grasped’.

- (a) ‘Greek society developed more rapidly than did its values, or the presuppositions on which the values were based. By the end of the fifth century the Greeks faced serious problems, not because they had abandoned traditional values to which they needed to be recalled, but because they retained them in a situation far different from that in which the values had developed and were appropriate’.¹⁵
- (b) ‘From Homer onwards the chief problem of Greek values was the need to discover a means of relating *dikaïos* to *agathos*, *aretê* and associated words in such a way as to make *dikaïosynê* either the whole or the part of *aretê*, and hence render it an essential element of the most attractive group of values; or alternatively, as a second best, to demonstrate or assert that to be *dikaïos* is a necessary ... means to becoming or remaining *agathos*, to the desired state of existence in this world, or to happiness in the next’. The values of the Homeric world in fact persist throughout the fifth century. But they do not persist unchallenged.¹⁶ This problem is the subject of the *Republic*. *Eu di-oikein* e.g. in the *Meno* means administering efficiently, not administering justly. *Dikaïosynê* in the first book is the introduction to the *Republic*; this *dikaïosynê* is in accordance to the traditional *agathos*. The discussion about *dikaïosynê* in the *Republic* is not about justice in itself, but about how one should live: i.e. instead of the archaic way of life. The *Republic* is the process of making justice and rendering it the whole of *aretê*, according to which the philosopher-king rules.
- (c) *Aretê* and other words related to virtues were being re-evaluated as co-operative values and were being internalized; in fifth century Athens under the influence of democracy and the Empire the traditional competitive values were revaluated into co-operative values. The *Old Oligarch* is eloquent on this point. In the liturgies, wealthy citizens assimilate the private virtue to public

¹⁵ Keynote of Adkins’ approach, cf. Adkins 1972, 146–147.

¹⁶ Adkins 1960, 153, 259–260.

service because public service is regarded as most laudable (Lys. 21.19). In the courts of democratic Athens, to be *agathos* had always been more important than merely to be *dikaios*, and one's injustice did not traditionally impair one's *aretê*. In accepting *aretê* more important than *dikaïosynê* they were treating the well-being of the city as more important than the injustice of an individual.¹⁷

7

Certain aspects of the *agathos*-standard in fifth-century writers suggest that the problem is being solved itself. An infiltration of moral values and political behaviour was taking place in the later fifth century writers. 'Anyone who was not ἀγαθὸς φύσει- the majority of the citizens of Athens, or any other Greek state- would be pleased to learn that he could become ἀγαθὸς also by training, or even acquire a new, improved φύσις, a word rendered very attractive by its traditional implications. Such a promise must have gained the sophists much good will and custom from those who, while not belonging to the families traditionally prominent in politics, now aspired to take an active part (and could afford sophistic education)'.¹⁸

Tragedy derives its reliability and authenticity in the first place from the validity of the mythological tradition itself, which even the modernist Euripides himself does not question. The tragedians make History tragic myth, or 'mythified history'. Aeschylus vested the rulers of History with the dress of tragic myths. Herodotus on the other side makes the tragic myth history. Tragedy is a representation of actions of *spoudaioi* men; *spoudaioi* are the traditional *agathoi*. A person of good reputation and good fortune or distinguished men from great families (rulers, kings and tyrants), involves a change to misfortune because of some error (*hamartia*): this constitutes the best kind of tragedy (Arist. *Poet.* 1453a7–17; 1452a22–23). The process of this change is described in the *mesode* of the *Persae* and in the 'council of the best' in the *Historie*, an application 'on stage' of the *mesode*. The categorical imperative of the traditional *agathos* became the main motif for the tragedy and the motive for the tragic hero.¹⁹

¹⁷ Adkins 1960, 212; 1972, 124. Trials and rhetorical means of persuasion in the democratic Athens is (among other) of the main concerns of Chris Carey and Mike Edwards.

¹⁸ Adkins 1973, 11.

¹⁹ On the relation of tragedy to archaic thought cf. Cairns (ed.) 2013; *Id.* 'Values', in: Gregory (ed.) 2005, 305–320.

Euripides' plays are full of speculations as to the relations between wealth, nobility, *physis* and virtue: traditionally nobility is ancestral wealth; in other cases, nobility is represented as something different from wealth, but less valuable. Orestes' speech 367–390 in the *Electra* is a re-evaluation of *aretai*. Euripides rejected many other qualities in virtue of which men have hitherto been termed as *agathoi*, and claimed that self-control renders a man *agathos*, a complete departure from traditional usage.²⁰ Aristophanes, on the other hand, pursues the maintenance of the traditional moral values and political behaviour, because Euripides' modern ideas destroy the heroic Athenian society. Aristophanes stands as the contemporary representative of Homer and of the values of the Homeric epics and insists on the maintenance of traditional values. Euripides and Socrates must have been intellectually engaged with one another; their affiliation and apparent intellectual affinity became part of the humorous inventory of old comedy. Plato was familiar with Euripides' dramas. The philosopher had considerable acquaintance with the works of the dramatist (but cf. criticism of Euripides in *Rep.* 568a8 – b4). The greatest impression must have been made on Plato when these revolutionary works were produced for the first time.²¹

After Solon's (13W.71–76), Herodotus initiated the classical discourse of the greed of imperialism in describing the rise and fall of Croesus (1.73.1, 46.1) and in particular in the Council of the Best in the opening of the seventh Book (7.8–11). Artabanus recapitulates the situation: Xerxes choose the proposition increasing violent insolence and teaching the soul always to seek to have more than it has (16.a2; cf. 18.2). Artabanus in fact describes the way *atê* works. Themistocles' greed for money was insatiable; and making Andros his base he got money from the rest of the islanders (8.112.2). This *πλεονεκτέων* is 'to teach the soul always to seek to have more' (7.16a2; 18.2), which is a stage of *hybris*. These correspondences must warn the Athenians of their empire. Thucydides later describes the greed and the breakdown of political community.²²

Socrates re-evaluates traditional moral values from Homeric epics down to tragedy of the second half of the fifth century and attempts to give moral content to the old values and virtues. The elenchus is taking place under the prospect of a new definition of *aretê*. His interlocutors think they know what virtue is (in traditional standards), but they do not (in innovative ones). What Socrates (appears

²⁰ Adkins 1960, 172, 176–178 and 195; 1972, 115–117. On fragmentary plays very close to *Electra* cf. fr. 495.40–43 N² = Kan. (*Melanippe*), fr. 336 N² = Kan. (*Diktys*), 282.23–28 N² = Kan. (*Autolykus*).

²¹ Wildberg 2006, Sansone 1996.

²² Cf. Balot 2001, 99–135, 136–178; esp. 117–120.

that he) does not know are the new virtues, which he tries to define by means of the elenchus.

In Plato, the progressive process of re-evaluation is equivalent to that of the prisoner after the cave: Therefore education would be a craft of this turning around ‘concerned with how this instrument can be most easily and effectively turned around, not putting sight into it. On the contrary, it takes for granted that that sight there, though not turned in the right way or looking where it should look, and contrives to redirect it appropriately’ (518d3–8, Reeve). The constitution they have described in discourse will exist whenever it is that the muse of philosophy gains mastery of a city and replaces the muse of poetry.

Polemarchus’ first definition of justice ‘rendering to each what is due is just’ (331e) or ‘rendering to each what is fitting is just’ (332c)²³ particularizes the traditional meaning of *dikê* ‘what is due to someone’, from the root of *deik-* (of the verb *δείκνυμι*) ‘show, mark, limit, boundary mark; appointed portion, proper limit’ in the fields and political behaviours.²⁴ To render to each what is due or fitting means that one renders, recognizes what is due in accordance with *dikê*. Therefore this definition not only accords with but comes from the archaic competitive moral values and political behaviours. Led by Socrates Polemarchus agrees with him in an alternative definition: therefore ‘justice is helping friends and harming enemies’ (332d and 332e), which is repeated in Socrates’ and Polemarchus’ conversation (334b8–9, 336a2–3) and later by Glaucon (362c1) in what seems to be the definition of the traditional *agathos* (in Homer, archaic poets, tragedy, Presocratics) with competitive values.²⁵

Thrasymachus’ second definition that ‘justice is the interest of the stronger’ (338c and 339a) expresses the standard claims of *agathos* (338c1–2 and 339a). Refuting Socrates’ argument that no ruler ‘considers or command what is of advantage to himself, but the advantage of the ruled, for which he himself acts as craftsman’ (342e and c), Thrasymachus argues ironically that Socrates is so far off about justice and the just, that he does ‘not even know that justice and the just are really ‘another’s good’, an advantage of the stronger who rules but his own peculiar harm to him who obeys and serves. Injustice is the opposite’ (343c, repeated in 367c). Injustice become sufficient, is stronger and more free and more befitting a master than justice (344c). More ironical than Thrasymachus appears to be Aristotle who speaking about general justice argues: ‘This type of justice,

²³ Unless otherwise stated translation of *Rep.* is Allen’s 2006, sometimes with slight alterations.

²⁴ Palmer 1950, 157, 159, 164; *dikê* cannot mean ‘pronouncement’ of the judge. Latin: *index, indicare*.

²⁵ See Blundell 1989, ch. 2, 26–59 *passim*.