

EPIC FACEWORK

*Self-presentation and
social interaction
in Homer*



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My first thoughts about face in Homer were put forward in lectures at Universität Münster and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in May 2001, and chapter 4, ‘Ransom and revenge’, was given in various revisions at Denison University, the University of Colorado, Bowdoin College, and the University of Oxford from 2004 to 2007. I have profited from questions and comments from all these audiences. All the mistakes, of course, are my own.

PREFACE

This book attempts to understand what Homeric characters say about what they do. Its goal and object is the *Iliad* as a poem and a story. However, what I am trying to understand is social behavior: I try to set particular speeches and actions against their background of expectations. This is, however, a messy business, not only because we have only the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as material, but because I am trying not to assume that any particular example is normative and others are deviant. Arthur Adkins notoriously dismissed usages that did not fit his scheme as ‘persuasive definitions’.¹ In my view, all usages of evaluative language constitute persuasive definitions, since social norms are constantly being reaffirmed, reinterpreted, and renegotiated in action.

It is an intensely personal book, although I hope that readers who skip this preface will not realize that. It came into being in part thanks to a paper by Michael Lloyd at the Banff Euripides conference in May 1999 on the opening of Euripides’ *Trojan Women* and politeness theory.² I had never heard of politeness theory, and I was intrigued. After my return home I read not only Brown and Levinson’s *Politeness* but related studies in both pragmatics and Goffman’s sociology. These readings, in turn, resonated with my recent and current experiences in the politics of the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Michigan and in working with colleagues. Meetings are unpredictable. Arguments that persuade some have the opposite effect on others. Whether things go well or badly often depends on how well people handle face-threats to themselves and others. What has happened can often be described in very different ways.

These experiences, in turn, constantly reminded me of the personal interactions in the *Iliad*. For a long time, I had felt that many interpretations were simply too simple. For example, I had read many claims that Achilles is absolutely right to reject the Embassy or absolutely wrong, and I had felt uneasy with both for a long time. I began looking for anthropological models for a richer view of Homeric society, which I found, in different ways, in the work of Bourdieu and Herzfeld. In Herzfeld’s famous study of Cretan villagers, men define themselves not just by stealing sheep, but by stealing, conducting negotiations afterward, and telling the stories of their thefts with panache and a deft sense for the appropriate.³ Bourdieu offers a picture of people who do not have fixed rules that they either follow or violate, but

who seek to achieve their goals through strategies that depend on the exact situations in which they stand. If a younger son has devoted himself to his brother's family instead of marrying himself, his affection for his nieces and nephews may be entirely genuine, and he is also being exploited.⁴ Most of the book, though, does not refer overtly to these models, and some readers may find it under-theorized.

By now, I no longer know whether I use Homer to understand the small-group politics of my life or whether I use these politics to understand Homer. It is not that I am ignorant that my colleagues and I do not have the beliefs and values of Homeric heroes. As Goffman says, however, different cultures draw their face-saving habits from 'a single logically coherent framework of possible practices'.⁵ The human repertory of problems in interaction is limited and so are the varieties of solution that can be found for them. The *Iliad*, in particular, shows possible people believably causing themselves immense trouble because they don't manage face-difficulties well.

The book moves uneasily along the margins of some central debates. It is, emphatically, not about the real society of the eighth century, although it cites some scholarship that is concerned to reconstruct the real background of the poems. Since M.I. Finley in *The World of Odysseus* applied Mauss' *Le Don* to Homeric society, studies of gift-exchange have been important in Homeric scholarship.⁶ This scholarship has often sought to understand how the gift functions socially and symbolically in contrast to commodity exchange, and to use gift-giving practices to help define where Homeric society stands in the process of state-formation. Since the interest of such research has lain in the system itself, it has been less concerned with locating gift-exchanges within particular narrative sequences and with their individual complexities.⁷ Furthermore, it relies very heavily on comparative evidence, and looks for the realities hidden behind Homer's idealization of most exchanges. This book is not about institutions, although it examines certain institutionalized practices, especially gift-giving, ransom, and reparation.

It is also not about whether we should call the society depicted in the poems a 'shame culture', or what calling it that implies, or about its view of human responsibility; it is not primarily a contribution to the history of ethics or of the personality. In recent years classical scholarship has taken a lively interest in the history of the emotions, and here, again, this book does not quite belong in this category, but has affinities with it. Because its central concern is how characters try to control how others evaluate them, it inevitably takes positions, implicit or explicit, about questions of responsibility and ethical norms. Scholarship on the emotions is relevant. Above all it seeks to understand certain sequences of speeches in the *Iliad*: the quarrel, the Embassy (particularly Odysseus' speech and Achilles' reply), the

reconciliation between Achilles and Agamemnon. These are the scenes about which there is most disagreement, and most of the rest of the discussion is background for these. So I hope that those who are engaged in these debates will forgive my oblique and inadequate treatment of the problems that they most care about, and that the problems that I care about will interest them. This is not the first study to refer to Goffman and face in trying to understand Homeric ethics.⁸ I hope that I have achieved something new, however, above all in my emphasis on the grey areas and difficulties in how Homeric characters assess others and expect to be assessed.

Also, I hope that readers will be able to disagree with every particular interpretation of a Homeric passage, but still think they have not wasted their time. Indeed, as long as readers find my interpretations at least possible but do not accept them, their disagreement should make the central argument of this book more persuasive, since my point is precisely that the events and characters do not have entirely fixed meanings and proper evaluations. Sometimes I may have slipped into attributing possible motives to characters too simply on the basis of what seems plausible to me, without enough attention to the kinds of motives that the poems state or imply.

One small, final note: one of my special concerns throughout has been with the motives of Agamemnon. Agamemnon is not a sympathetic character, and I am not trying to argue that we should like him (I do believe that liking fictional characters is perfectly appropriate). We are supposed to be on Achilles' side – mostly. But I hope that I show that Agamemnon is not a cardboard villain, but an ordinary second-rate man with a bad temper in a job too difficult for him. Nestor can often get him to do the right thing. I am not, in general, an admirer of the kind of book that tells managers how to read the classics for lessons in dealing with personnel. Still, I think that thinking about Agamemnon has been useful to me as a model of how not to behave in power, and of how to handle a certain kind of dean (not, I should say, the deans I have worked with recently at the University of Michigan). The value of the model, though, depends on the realization that Agamemnon's mistakes are easy to make. I am certain that many scholars who have criticized Agamemnon have behaved just as foolishly as he in their own lives, although their mistakes have had lighter consequences for themselves and others.

Notes

¹ Adkins 1960a, 38–40.

² <http://www.fp.ucalgary.ca/grst/conferences/abstracts.htm#lloyd>

³ Herzfeld 1985.

⁴ Bourdieu 1990, 147–61.

Preface

⁵ Goffman 1967, 12–13.

⁶ Finley 1979, 46–66, 120–3; von Reden 1995, 18–57.

⁷ For example, Tandy 1997.

⁸ Cairns 2003, 40; van Wees 1992, 69–71. Minchin 2007 uses politeness theory. Kaster 2005 is another superb application to antiquity of Goffman's 'face'.

THE ECONOMY OF HONOR

Evaluating heroes

In the eighth book of the *Iliad*, Zeus plans to give success to Hector and the Trojans. The other Greek leaders quickly retreat, but Diomedes (whose chariot is being driven by Nestor) attacks ferociously, until Zeus throws a thunderbolt directly before the chariot, and the horses panic. However, the narrator does not tell us that anyone except Nestor and Diomedes sees the thunderbolt or smells the sulphur:

Νέστορα δ' ἐκ χειρῶν φύγον ἡνία σιγαλέοντα,
 δέϊσε δ' ὃ γ' ἐν θυμῷ, Διομήδεα δὲ προσέειπε·
 'Τυδεΐδη, ἄγε δ' αὖτε φόβον δ' ἔχε μώνυχας ἵππους.
 ἦ οὐ γινώσκεις ὅ τοι ἐκ Διὸς οὐχ ἔπετ' ἀλκή;
 νῦν μὲν γὰρ τούτῳ Κρονίδης Ζεὺς κῦδος ὀπάσσει
 σήμερον· ὕστερον αὖτε καὶ ἡμῖν, αἴ κ' ἐθέλῃσι,
 δώσει· ἀνὴρ δέ κεν οὐ τι Διὸς νόον εἰρύσσαιτο
 οὐδὲ μάλ' ἴφθιμος, ἐπεὶ ἦ πολὺν φέρτερός ἐστι.'

(Il. 8.137–44)

The shining reins escaped from Nestor's hands, and he took fright in his mind, and he spoke to Diomedes: 'Son of Tydeus, come on, turn your whole-hoofed horses to flight. Don't you realize that defensive power from Zeus is not following you? For now Zeus son of Cronus is bestowing *kudos* on this man – for today. But later, if he wants, he will give it to us in our turn. A man could in no way divert the intention of Zeus, not even a strong man, since Zeus is much more powerful.'

Nestor claims, not unreasonably, that the will of Zeus is transparent and that there is no purpose in opposing it.¹ We may remember, however, that Paris used a similar argument when he tells Helen not to rebuke him:

μή με, γύναι, χαλεποῖσιν ὀνειδέσι θυμὸν ἔνιπτε·
 νῦν μὲν γὰρ Μενέλαος ἐνίκησεν σὺν Ἀθήνῃ,
 κείνον δ' αὖτις ἐγὼ· πάρα γὰρ θεοὶ εἰσι καὶ ἡμῖν.

(Il. 3.438–40)

My wife, do not reproach my spirit with harsh words. For now Menelaus has won, with Athena's help, but I in turn will beat him. For there are gods by our side too.

Athena did not actually help Menelaus in his combat with Paris, and Menelaus prayed only to Zeus.

Chapter 1

Clearly, we do not respond to Nestor as we did to Paris, both because Zeus has overtly intervened against Nestor, and because Nestor's valor is not questionable. Diomedes, however, is unwilling to yield, because he fears what Hector will say:

Τὸν δ' ἡμείβετ' ἔπειτα βοῆν ἀγαθὸς Διομήδης·
‘ναὶ δὴ ταῦτά γε πάντα, γέρον, κατὰ μοῖραν ἔειπες·
ἀλλὰ τόδ' αἰνὸν ἄχος κραδίην καὶ θυμὸν ἰκάνει·
Ἔκτωρ γάρ ποτε φήσει ἐνὶ Τρώεσσ' ἀγορεύων·
“Τυδεΐδης ὑπ' ἐμείο φοβεύμενος ἵκετο νῆας.”
ὥς ποτ' ἀπειλήσει· τότε μοι χάνοι εὐρέϊα χθών.’ (Il. 8.145–50)

Then Diomedes, good at the shout, answered him: ‘Certainly, all that you have said, old man, is appropriate. But this terrible pain comes to my heart and spirit. For at some time Hector will say in a public speech among the Trojans, “The son of Tydeus went all the way to the ships fleeing before me.” That’s what he will boast. Then may the broad earth open to swallow me.’

Diomedes first acknowledges that Nestor is right, but then explains that he feels pain at the thought of giving Hector material for a future boast. There is a gap between his rational assessment of the situation and his emotional response to it, not unlike that of Achilles in response to Ajax’ speech in Book 9 (9.644–8), when Achilles says that Ajax has spoken in accord with his own mind, but that his anger does not allow him to act in agreement with the speech. Hector’s boast will imply a harsh assessment of Diomedes, though it will not be accurate, since Diomedes is considering flight only because of the manifest hostility of Zeus. Diomedes wishes for the earth to swallow him when Hector says this, even though he will not be present to hear it; similarly, Agamemnon utters the same wish when he imagines a Trojan’s boasting over the tomb of Menelaus (Il. 4.178–82). The wish expresses the intensity with which the speaker feels the shame with which he would react to words that he imagines being spoken in his absence. The shame is probably so intense precisely because the speaker imagines himself as absent and unable to make any response.

Nestor does not dismiss Diomedes’ pain at the thought of retreat, but instead explains that this grief is not well-founded, and is, indeed, absurd:

Τὸν δ' ἡμείβετ' ἔπειτα Γερήνιος ἱππότης Νέστωρ·
‘ὦ μοι, Τυδέος υἱὲ δαΐφρονος, οἷον ἔειπες.
εἴ περ γάρ σ' Ἔκτωρ γε κακὸν καὶ ἀνάλκιδα φήσει,
ἀλλ' οὐ πείσονται Τῶες καὶ Δαρδανίωνες
καὶ Τρώων ἄλοχοι μεγαθύμων ἀσπιστάων,
τάων ἐν κονίῃσι βάλες θαλεροῦς παρακοίτας.’ (Il. 8.151–6)

The Gerenian horseman Nestor answered him: ‘Oh really, son of capable Tydeus, what a thing you have said. For even if Hector will say that you are

cowardly and without valor, still, the Trojans and Dardanians will not believe, and the wives of the great-spirited Trojan spearmen whose vigorous husbands you threw into the dust.'

Nestor recasts Diomedes' imagined speech of Hector to make clear what Diomedes really fears. Hector's claim that Diomedes fled before him is not just an assertion about one event in the past, but is a characterization of Diomedes as cowardly and without valor. Nestor admits that Hector may in the future say this, but insists that the Trojans will not believe it, because they have experienced the effects of Diomedes' prowess. So Diomedes would not need to reply to Hector.

Because Nestor recasts Hector's disparagement of Diomedes in general terms – repeating what Hector will imply rather than what Hector will say – his argument does not quite address how he thinks the Trojans will understand Hector's actual narrative. Perhaps they will not believe that even if Diomedes once fled before Hector, Diomedes even on that occasion behaved like a coward and weakling. Instead they will infer something like the truth, that Diomedes once retreated under extraordinary circumstances that no warrior could have resisted. Alternatively, they may accept that Diomedes behaved in a cowardly fashion once, but because he has shown his courage and strength so many times, they will not conclude that he is typically a cowardly weakling or that Hector can appropriately be confident that he will flee again. Both reactions are possible because Hector's audience can test his story against what they know about Diomedes. In the first case, however, the Trojans use this knowledge to construct a particular version of what actually happened when Diomedes retreated. In the second, they may follow Hector's version, but deny it great significance in the larger view they have of Diomedes. It may, indeed, mean that they lower their estimate of Diomedes' valor – he is capable of behaving in a cowardly way – but because their estimate is so high, his reputation is not seriously damaged.

For Nestor's argument to succeed, he does not need to clarify the exact nature of the Trojans' disbelief; he need only convince Diomedes that his overall reputation among the Trojans is not in danger. Even the most negative public speech does not matter, it seems, if the audience does not believe it. Indeed, Nestor implies that Hector will not benefit from making threats on the basis of claims that his audience will not believe, but will look foolish. The Trojans do not need to refute Hector directly. Indeed, the widows, whose judgment is the most important here, are unlikely to be present when Hector delivers his boast. Presumably men will tell them what Hector has said, and they may either say that they do not believe, or indicate their disbelief by a gesture, or simply remain silently unconvinced. Nestor does not describe how they will demonstrate their lack of belief, and perhaps they do not

need to display it. What matters is what they think. Homeric characters can qualify general statements about how people will evaluate behavior with a restriction: 'nobody *who is right-thinking*' would dishonor Paris' achievement in battle (*Il.* 6.321–2); 'nobody *who knows how to speak fittingly*' would criticize Odysseus' *aretē* (*Od.* 8.239–40).² So the situation Nestor imagines is a recognized fact of the social world. Some people engage in wrongful bad talk, and lose credit themselves in the eyes of the sensible. These situations, however, show why Diomedes' anxiety is not unwarranted. There is no guarantee that the judgment of the sensible will prevail.

Speakers can also imagine misdirected praise. Penelope, having heard about the suitors' plot to murder Telemachus, tells Antinous at *Od.* 16.418–20 that he has a reputation for excelling his agemates in counsel, but that she has now realized that he is not like that and never was. Her speech among the suitors attempts to counter Antinous' false reputation (perhaps the other suitors will realize that killing Telemachus was not a good idea after all). She does not succeed, since Antinous continues to lead the suitors until the moment Odysseus kills him; but of course we cannot know whether Penelope actually knows that Antinous has such a reputation except among the suitors, or whether she is wrong, or whether she is exaggerating or even inventing to make her point rhetorically stronger. Evidently, however, evaluations can be disputed.

The encounter between Diomedes and Hector clearly demonstrates that the Homeric hero places his public standing at risk in every encounter, but that this risk is limited by the larger story in which each encounter takes place. Even if the circumstances were exactly the same as those in which Diomedes finds himself, a lesser hero could not expect that he could flee without losing standing. However, a lesser hero would not have to fear that he would be at the center of Hector's boast, either. This risk is therefore hard to quantify. Diomedes is deeply pained at the thought of being described as cowardly, even among enemies, where such bad talk could have no real consequences. Yet the hero's reputation does not depend on what the hero actually does or what others see him do, but on how they describe it and how they integrate it into a larger narrative. In Hector's version as Diomedes imagines it, Diomedes flees before Hector. However, Nestor insists that this event cannot have real effects on how the Trojans view Diomedes, whether because they will recognize that 'fleeing before me' is not an adequate description of what happened, or because they will understand that one episode of flight is not enough to justify a description of Diomedes as cowardly. Furthermore, this integration of a single event into a larger narrative does not have to be accomplished in a public performance; individuals can do it for themselves, and if many individuals have a similar basis of knowledge and experience, a consensus will arise automatically.

Diomedes' expectations of Hector are accurate. Indeed, Hector does not wait for a future assembly, but mocks and threatens Diomedes as soon as he turns to flight:

τῷ δ' ἐπὶ μακρὸν ἄϋσε μέγας κορυθαίολος Ἕκτωρ·
'Τυδεΐδη, περὶ μὲν σε τίον Δαναοὶ ταχύπῳλοι
ἔδρη τε κρέασίν τε ἰδὲ πλείους δεπάεσσιν·
νῦν δέ σ' ἀτιμήσουσι· γυναικὸς ἄρ' ἀντὶ τέτυξο.
ἔρρε, κακὴ γλήνη, ἐπεὶ οὐκ εἴξαντος ἐμεῖο
πύργων ἡμετέρων ἐπιβήσεται, οὐδὲ γυναῖκας
ἄξεις ἐν νήεσσιν· πάρος τοι δαίμονα δώσω.'

(Il. 8.160–6)

Great Hector of the glittering helmet shouted loudly at him: 'Son of Tydeus, the Achaeans with fast horses honor you greatly, with a seat of honor, and meat, and full cups. But now they will dishonor you. You were created the equivalent of a woman. Take off, worthless toy, since you will not climb onto our towers – I am not yielding – and you will not lead away our women in your ships. I will give you your fate first.'³

Hector says that the Danaans will deprive Diomedes of the visible signs of his high standing. Diomedes fantasized what Hector would say among the Trojans, while Hector fantasizes a more concrete reaction among the Danaans, going beyond what they say or think to the actual manifestations of status. In calling him a substitute for a woman, he offers a more vivid rephrasing of exactly what Nestor had predicted he might say, that he is cowardly and without valor. Hector shouts loudly, so that we can assume that others hear him, both Greeks and Trojans. Diomedes is unsure whether to turn and fight him; three times he thinks about it, and each time Zeus sends thunder from the peaks of Ida (Il. 8.167–71). Not surprisingly, the threat that Diomedes could tolerate in an abstract future is very hard for him to tolerate in the present, and only repeated signs from Zeus can deter him from responding to it. When Agamemnon's prayers induce Zeus to send a sign favoring the Achaeans, Diomedes is the first to turn and kill a Trojan (Il. 8.245–60).

Hector's taunt, with its direct reference to the usual markers of high status in seating, meat, and wine, marks the complete absence of such concerns in Diomedes' earlier expression of anxiety about what Hector will say to the Trojans. When Agamemnon wishes that the earth swallow him when a nameless Trojan boasts over Menelaus' tomb, the Trojan brags about Agamemnon's failure in the Trojan War (4.178–82). The hearer can easily assume that he is distressed not just by this particular fantasy, but by everything it implies; the boast is true, and everyone in the world will know that Agamemnon failed. Diomedes' grief is not quite so easy to explain. If Hector boasts that Diomedes fled from him among the Trojans, Diomedes

does not lose status among the Danaans. Diomedes' long-term fame, his *kleos*, also depends on what his own tradition, not his enemies, says about him. Diomedes is evidently profoundly concerned that his enemies respect him, and he cares not only what Hector says, but what Trojan widows think.

A final complication lies in the competitive element in the taunts. When Hector says that the Danaans will dishonor Diomedes, he is asserting that Diomedes will lose status relative to other Danaans, who will presumably take the seats, best cuts of meat, and cups of wine that he will lose. Hector here seems to have a choice between incompatible moves: if Diomedes is no better as a warrior than a woman, he will lose honor on his own side, but Hector's success in driving him to flight is less impressive, since we can surely assume that there is more prestige to be won by defeating a strong and brave fighter than there is in success over a bad one. When Diomedes' imagined Hector boasts and threatens Diomedes among the Trojans, his boast makes it very clear that Hector is trying to gain prestige by taking it away from Diomedes. Diomedes fled ὑπ' ἐμείο, 'at my hands'. Nestor's restatement, though, by defining Diomedes as a weakling, in itself potentially diminishes Hector's achievement in making him flee. If the Trojans believed that Diomedes was not really a great warrior and that Hector, therefore, would be able to kill him, the speech Hector imagines would be very good for Trojan morale, but would not necessarily make Hector seem greater in battle. Finally, Nestor's certainty that the Trojans will not believe Hector rests on the disparity between what Hector says and the brute fact of the Trojans he has killed. If the Trojans do not believe Hector, they must see him as deluded, exaggerating his success, emptily boasting, and he will lose some public respect as a result. Yet Diomedes does not obviously gain because Hector speaks foolishly. If there is another Trojan speaker who answers Hector, he might win the respect Hector loses, but Nestor does not mention such a speaker.

Honor and face

A close examination of the complexities of this one episode points to some of those of the society depicted in the Homeric epics. This society, scholars agree, is profoundly concerned with *timē* (usually translated 'honor'), and it is intensively competitive. Indeed, the Homeric hero's need not just for honor, but for visible manifestations of honor, is one of the most striking characteristics of the world in which the epics take place. As a recent textbook in Greek history says,

Timē is always public recognition of one's skills and achievements. It always involves some visible mark of respect: the seat of honor and an extra share of meat at a feast, or an additional share of booty, or valuable prizes and gifts, including land.⁴

The *Iliad* is about a quarrel over such a mark of respect, Achilles' prize, Briseis. When Hector taunts Diomedes, he assumes that the Danaans provide him with a special place to sit, with an extra share of meat, and with good wine, and that if he fails to meet their expectations, they will dishonor him by taking these away.

Scholars have also tended to assume that Homeric *timē* is a zero-sum system – that is, that there is a fixed quantity of it available, and that one person or group can acquire more only at the expense of someone else.⁵ Although some important contributions have argued against this assumption, it is still very common.⁶ So Mark Edwards has written of Homeric honor, 'It is a zero-sum game...in which one must lose what the other gains', and David Tandy comments in reviewing a discussion of *timē*, '...it seems to me that the zero-sum nature of a number of such social commodities is rather obvious...'⁷ If *timē* must invariably be externally marked, it must inevitably be zero-sum – that is, for any individual to increase his honor (it is mostly males about whom we are speaking), someone else must lose. The supply of material goods cannot be unlimited. Even if we look beyond these material tokens of *timē* to those that are social behaviors, such as standing up when a superior appears (as the gods do before Zeus), such displays of special deference also must be limited (they lose meaning if they are not). Thus van Wees suggests that 'the violence of Homeric society is due...to the fact that competitiveness is combined with the notion that deference is an integral part of status'.⁸

Indeed, scholars also believe that Homeric society has no measurements of value other than the allotments of these social goods. So Muellner remarks:⁹

...in the society represented in epic there is no notion of value other than relative value and no notion of relative value other than publicly witnessed and approved exchange value such as that defined in a communal division.

Kleos, 'fame', is closely related to *timē*, and M. Nagler says that 'in modern terminology *kleos* constitutes an extreme case of a "zero sum" system in which all value...that is added on one side must be taken from another'.¹⁰ Many who do not use the term nonetheless make similar assumptions.¹¹ That is, it tends to be assumed that in the last instance all the most desirable social properties that an individual can possess in the Homeric world – *timē*, *kudos* ('glory' or 'charismatic splendor'), and *kleos* (however the concepts are distinguished among themselves) – are strictly limited, so that nobody can improve his own standing without lowering that of someone else. Not only is the honor system zero-sum, its most important component, battle, is winner-take-all: each participant in one of the single combats that are the central feature of Homeric fighting stakes both his life and his chance at glory, and the victor

takes both.¹² Further, most interpreters believe that the participants in the system, Homer's characters, recognize this. Scholars also tend to describe transactions, especially battle, as winner-take-all; one side gets all the glory, the other loses.

Yet although this view of *timē* has helped us understand Homeric society much more clearly, it is not complete, and we should always be suspicious of sweeping terms such as 'always' and 'no notion of value'. Whatever Diomedes thinks he would lose if Hector abuses him among the Trojans, it is hard to separate it from *timē*, but Diomedes would not be losing any of the external signs of his status.

Agamemnon tells Idomeneus that he honors him exceptionally, in warfare, in other actions, and at the feast:

Ἴδομενεῦ, περὶ μὲν σε τίω Δαναῶν ταχυπόλων
 ἤμην ἐνὶ πτολέμῳ ἢ δ' ἄλλοίω ἐπὶ ἔργῳ
 ἢ δ' ἐν δαίθ', ὅτε πέρ τε γερούσιον αἶθοπα οἶνον
 Ἀργεῖων οἱ ἄριστοι ἐνὶ κρητῆρι κέρωνται.
 εἴ περ γάρ τ' ἄλλοι γε κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοὶ
 δαιτρὸν πίνωσιν, σὸν δὲ πλεῖον δέπας αἰεὶ
 ἔστηχ', ὥς περ ἐμοί, πίνειν ὅτε θυμὸς ἀνώγοι. (Il. 4.257–64)

Idomeneus, I honor you more than the Danaans who drive fast horses, in war, and in other work, and in the feast, when the best of the Argives mix in the mixing bowls the red wine for the councillors. For while the other long-haired Achaeans drink their portion, your cup always stands full, as does mine, to drink when the spirit bids you.

That can hardly mean that Agamemnon goes around bestowing tokens of honor on Idomeneus. In fact, except that he invites Idomeneus to the feast of the Greek leaders directly after Nestor at *Il.* 2.405, this is the only passage where he honors Idomeneus at all, and he honors him by saying that he honors him. Commentators since antiquity assume that Agamemnon is describing displaying honor to Idomeneus at the feast, so that he is saying that other heroes receive a fixed amount of wine, while Idomeneus' cup is always kept full.¹³ If this is right, it is surely an exaggeration: Hector's allusion to the 'full cups' Diomedes receives is surely not misplaced. All the best men receive 'full cups' at feasts; that is a reward for being a hero. How does Agamemnon honor Idomeneus in war, or for other actions? In *Il.* 1, Agamemnon lists Achilles, Ajax, and Odysseus as those whose prize he might take (138–9), but adds Idomeneus to these as someone who might lead the embassy to return Chryseis (*Il.* 1.145–6). So he may have special respect for Idomeneus as a reliable leader. Still, there seems to be slippage between the occasions where Idomeneus wins Agamemnon's respect, and the feast where Agamemnon shows it; and his demonstration is not as meaningful as

he suggests. By announcing that he always honors Idomeneus, Agamemnon defines his behavior towards Idomeneus as honor. The external signs are open to rhetorical manipulation.

Again, the assumption behind boasting, that Diomedes' loss is Hector's gain, is consistent with a zero-sum system. However, the same episode complicates this economy, since it appears that if Hector takes too much *timē* away from his opponent, he deprives himself (there is little honor to be won by defeating an opponent who has no valor). It does not look like a winner-take-all. Furthermore, if the Trojans believe that Hector is falsely boasting, Hector loses something that is also hard to distinguish from *timē*, but nobody else gains anything, so the episode suggests that not all gains and losses in *timē* are zero-sum.¹⁴

Finally, and perhaps most important, scholars have tended to believe that the 'heroic code' is a simple and straightforward guide to action, that heroes do not need to deliberate about what they should do and do not recognize ethical dilemmas.¹⁵ It is true that most Homeric assemblies and discussions do not really debate the best course of action.¹⁶ Most speeches aim at resolving conflict or inspiring courage, not at puzzling out difficult decisions. Most debates, whether the internal debate in a character's monologue or a debate among characters, concern either a choice between a heroic and a prudential alternative (retreat or stand one's ground), or are entirely about practical choices, not about goals and values. Yet even if a hero's goal is always to maximize his *timē*, he is not free of difficult decisions. There are reasons why the assembly, like the battlefield, is a place where a hero can win splendor.

Homeric heroes seek *timē* and *kleos* when they speak as much as they do when they fight. Yet there is an inevitable tension in their competitiveness. Malcolm Schofield has used a helpful analogy for heroic competition in counsel, distinguishing a '[real] goal' from an 'intended result'.¹⁷ On a football team, the goal is to play well (for the hero, to win honor in speaking); the intended result is to win the game (to succeed in the object of the speech). One can play brilliantly, be seen to play brilliantly, and not win. Yet there is a tidy fit between goal and intended result, for the most part; while the occasional show-off may play for himself instead of the team, typically play that wins praise also leads to winning. Schofield argues that there is a basic ambiguity in the heroic code, because being good in counsel means considering the intended result (Polydamas, for example, always looks to the intended result), but the code encourages the heroes to try to win honor, and goal is not always aligned with intended result. Where honor and the intended result conflict, as they do for Hector when he faces Achilles in *Il.* 22, honor wins, but this does not mean that the heroic code itself provides a simple rule requiring that honor win.