I

The Character–Personality Distinction

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THE DISTINCTION

In this chapter, I want to explore further a distinction which I have used elsewhere in connection with characterization in ancient literature. In one discussion, I used the distinction to discriminate between what I saw as the prevailing approaches of ancient and modern biographers to their subjects, associating the ancient approach with 'character' and the modern one rather with 'personality'.[1] In a subsequent discussion, I used a related distinction (between a 'character-viewpoint' and a 'personality-viewpoint') to identify different types of audience-response to the presentation of figures in Greek tragedy. I suggested that Greek tragedies are typically designed to invite a mixture of these types of response; and that, at certain key moments, the audience is invited to shift from a character-viewpoint to a personality-viewpoint.[2] In another context, I examined the use of the distinction between *ēthos* and *pathos* (and between 'ethical' and 'pathetic' styles) in ancient rhetorical and poetic criticism from Aristotle to Longinus, and especially the ancient contrast between the *Iliad* as a poem of *pathos* and the *Odyssey* as one of *ēthos*. One of my reasons for doing so, though an implicit one, was the desire to see whether there were points of analogy between the *ēthos–pathos* distinction,

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[1] 'The Question of Character-Development: Plutarch and Tacitus', *CQ* NS 33 (1983), 469–87, esp. 470–3; on the sense being given to 'character' and 'personality', see below.

[2] 'The Question of Character and Personality in Greek Tragedy', *Poetics Today*, 7/2 (1986) [Special Issue on 'Theory of Character'], 251–73.

as used by ancient critics, and the character–personality distinction, as I had been using this.[3] My aim here is closest to that in my article on Greek tragedy: I want to consider the utility of the character–personality distinction as a means of identifying different perspectives in figures within Greek epic and tragic poems. I also want to reflect further on the distinction, to consider some possible criticisms of it, and to outline a reformulated version in which I try to take account of those criticisms. Later in this chapter I shall apply this revised framework to certain passages in Homer and tragedy, in an attempt to establish, in a provisional way, whether this framework is genuinely useful for interpretative purposes.

Let me begin by summarizing the meaning I have given to this distinction in earlier accounts. I have associated the term 'character' with the process of making moral judgements; and I have taken this process to involve (i) placing people in a determinate ethical framework and (ii) treating them as psychological and moral 'agents', that is, as the originators of intentional actions for which they are normally held responsible and which are treated as indexes of goodness or badness of character. The term 'personality', on the other hand, I have associated with responses of a different type. I have connected it with a response to people that is empathetic rather than moral: that is, with the desire to identify oneself with another person, to 'get inside her skin', rather than to appraise her 'from the outside'.[4] I have also connected it with a concern with the person as a unique individual (or as the possessor of a 'real' or 'authentic' self) rather than as the bearer of character-traits which are assessed by reference to general moral norms. I have also associated it with a perspective in which the person is seen as psychologically passive; that is, as someone whose nature and behaviour are determined by forces which fall outside her control as an agent and perhaps outside her consciousness as well. In defining the distinction in this way, I have drawn on

[3] 'The *Ethos/Pathos* Distinction in Rhetorical and Literary Criticism', *CQ*, NS 34 (1984), 149–66, esp. 165–6, in which I indicate the larger critical implications of the distinction.

[4] In this chapter I use 'he/him' and 'she/her' indifferently as indefinite personal pronouns.

some commonplace connotations of the terms 'character' and 'personality', especially the association of 'character' with moral appraisal, and that of 'personality' both with unique individuality or identity and with 'scientific' approaches to the person. I am well aware that the meanings of the two terms, in so far as they are distinguished at all, are not always distinguished in quite this way.[5] My main aim has not been simply to reproduce ordinary usage but to regiment or simplify it, so as to define more clearly two different ways of viewing persons, both in real life and in literature.[6]

However, there are grounds for questioning whether the distinction, as I have formulated it so far, is wholly clear and coherent at the theoretical level. The side of the distinction associated with 'character' may perhaps seem cohesive (although some would dispute the idea that the moral viewpoint necessarily involves regarding people as psychological agents).[7] But the side of the distinction associated with 'personality' may well seem to combine two or three different, and even incompatible, strands. Is there any prima-facie reason, for instance, to connect (*a*) sharing another person's individual viewpoint with (*b*) seeing him as subject to psychological forces which fall outside his agency?[8] This question may help to focus a sense of general unease about the theoretical grounding of the distinction. Arguably, my previous formulations of this distinction run together (at least) three different types of distinction, which should be separately identified. These distinctions relate to different aspects of our understanding of other people (and of ourselves), namely (i) the explanation of actions, (ii) evaluation, and (iii) the adoption of a perspective.

[5] Contrast e.g. A. Quinton's use of the distinction in *Thoughts and Thinkers* (London, 1982), 21–2.

[6] Cf. e.g. A. Morton's use of the distinction to demarcate agent-centred and psychoanalytic conceptions of the person, in R. Wollheim and J. Hopkins (edd.), *Philosophical Essays on Freud* (Cambridge, 1982), 60–74. For the distinction between an intentional 'action' (performed by a psychological 'agent') and an 'event', see D. Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford, 1980), ch. 3.

[7] See e.g. B. A. O. Williams's critique of this assumption (esp. as articulated by Kant) in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge, 1981), ch. 2, and *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London, 1985), chs. 4 and 10; M. C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1986), ch. 1.

[8] This question was raised, in a clear and forceful way, by Julia Annas, commenting on an earlier account of the distinction.

Let me take these three aspects in turn, indicating their connection with the interpretation of character or personality in each case.

(i) One can explain a person's actions by reference to her beliefs and desires, or more generally her *reasons* for acting in a given way, and this line of explanation might be extended to take account of her character as an agent (that is, as a source of intentional actions). Alternatively, one might try to explain her behaviour as determined by psychological *causes* which are distinct in kind from her conscious motives, for instance by reference to the unconscious desires which are typical of a narcissistic personality.[9]

(ii) One can identify an evaluative framework in which people are judged by their capacity to conform to certain norms of conduct and character which apply uniformly to all members of the society, or to all bearers of specific social roles. Alternatively, one can identify a framework in which evaluative status is given to the expression of personal individuality or distinctiveness (the possession of a powerful 'personality', as one might say) even in cases where this expression runs counter to the demands of normal social standards. (Or, to mark a different shade of this distinction, in this alternative framework, taking up a distinctively individual stance on ethical questions and formulating an ethic *for oneself* are regarded as inherently admirable.)

(iii) Relatedly, one can isolate a standpoint which takes no special account of the particular point of view or perspective of the individuals concerned (or of any one individual concerned), but which aspires to be impartial or even impersonal (let me call this an 'objective' standpoint). Alternatively, one can take up a standpoint which is strongly expressive of one's own subjective viewpoint, or in which one identifies oneself with another's subjective viewpoint.[10] In the latter case (though not the former), it may be regarded as important to isolate a 'first-personal' viewpoint, which is distinctively *one's own* (or at least distinctively *someone's*), as regards perceptions, memories, and emotional responses, for instance, and which is

[9] On the reason–cause distinction, see e.g. Wollheim and Hopkins (edd.), *Philosophical Essays on Freud*, x–xii.

[10] On this type of distinction, cf. T. Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford, 1986).

distinct from another person's ('third-personal') view of oneself and one's experiences. (The 'first-personal' viewpoint is sometimes taken as constitutive of a person's unique identity or individuality.)[11]

It is arguably the case that my previous formulations of the character–personality distinction run together these, and perhaps other, distinctions. To do so is not unjustifiable if the features thus associated are compatible and are in fact connected in our customary understanding of persons. Thus, I think that the process of moral appraisal does often involve (i) treating the person as a psychological agent, (ii) judging him by general social norms, and (iii) viewing him objectively, that is, in a way that gives no special status to his subjective view of the situation.[12] Furthermore, I think one can plausibly connect the validation of personal distinctiveness or uniqueness and that of an individual's subjective point of view (the 'alternative' items in distinctions (ii) and (iii) above). Indeed, in partial qualification of a point made earlier, I think that giving attention to an individual's subjective viewpoint may sometimes be associated with seeing the person's behaviour as determined by forces external to her agency;[13] this is so when *the person concerned* sees herself as being in the grip of external forces.[14] Thus, in the following discussion, I shall sometimes continue to make such connections, and to associate the relevant items with the terms 'character' or 'personality', respectively. For analytic clarity, and for clarity of literary interpretation (which is the purpose for which I am using these distinctions here), I shall make these associations explicitly, and also explicate the sense I am giving to 'character' and 'personality' in each case.[15]

[11] On the 'first-personal' viewpoint, cf. e.g. A. Rorty (ed.), *The Identities of Persons* (Berkeley, 1976), 10–15; G. Madell, *The Identity of the Self* (Edinburgh, 1981), ch. 2; R. Wollheim, *The Thread of Life* (Cambridge, 1984), 64 ff.

[12] To say this is not to say that moral appraisal ought to take this form (cf. the criticisms referred to in n. 7 above), only that it often does so.

[13] i.e. the 'alternative' items in distinctions (i) and (ii) above.

[14] Cf. the cases of Eteocles and Medea, discussed below. This is not the kind of case envisaged in Julia Annas's objection (n. 8 above); she envisaged the two types of explanation as being both different in kind and mutually exclusive, as is normally the case.

[15] It may be helpful at this point to tabulate these distinctions, marking the association with either 'character' or 'personality'. (The fact that I am presenting the distinc-

Spelling out these distinctions in this way may have additional advantages for my purposes here. For one thing, doing so underlines the point that our understanding of the notions of character and personality presupposes a complex set of related distinctions; and we cannot assume without argument that those notions or the related distinctions hold good in other cultures or historical periods. In attempting to deploy these notions and distinctions in connection with Greek literary texts (as I shall do later), I am not using them as transcultural absolutes but rather—as Steven Lukes puts it in another context—as 'floating bridgeheads' in our attempt to communicate with the concerns and concepts of Greek culture.[16] Secondly, unpacking these distinctions enables me to reconceive what I have been calling the 'character-' and 'personality-viewpoints' in ways that may be more perspicuous and more helpful for the interpretation of literary texts. For instance, one might suggest that the various features I have been associating with 'character', when embodied in literary form,[17] combine to make the literary work concerned one that is ethically affirmative, in so far as it confirms ethical attitudes and assumptions that are prevalent in the culture. (At least, this is true when those features correspond to the attitudes which *are* prevalent in the culture.) On the other hand, the features I have been associating with 'personality', when these predominate in a literary work (or when they are conjoined, unexpectedly, with 'character' features) will tend, I think, to make the work ethically

tions in this formulaic way should not be taken as an indication that I intend to apply them mechanically when discussing Greek texts.)

(i) Explanation of action in terms of an agent's beliefs and desires ('character'). Explanation of action in terms of causes falling outside personal agency ('personality').

(ii) Evaluation by reference to general social norms ('character'). Evaluation by reference to personal distinctiveness or individuality, or by reference to a distinctively individual ethic ('personality').

(iii) 'Objective' standpoint, which aims at impartiality (even impersonality) as regards individuals ('character'). 'Subjective' standpoint, which gives special status to a person's individual (esp. 'first-personal') perspective ('personality').

I should also note that I shall present the terms 'character' and 'personality' in quotes when I am using them with reference to the distinctions outlined above.

[16] M. Carrithers, S. Collins, and S. Lukes (edd.), *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (Cambridge, 1985), 298; Lukes is referring to the use of the notions of person and self in the exploration of the conceptual framework of other cultures.

[17] On the question of what is involved in such literary embodiment, see below.

non-standard or interrogatory in its impact, questioning rather than validating existing cultural assumptions.[18]

In what way do I suppose that drawing these distinctions can help us to understand characterization in Greek literature? It is important, first of all, to be clear about which aspects of the study of characterization we have in view. I make this point because the study of characterization in literature should not be regarded either as unitary and homogeneous (since it constitutes a nexus of related enquiries) or as surgically detachable from the study of other aspects of the literary work. The most obvious aspect of the subject is the study of what might be called 'character-markers', including character-indicating speeches and actions by the relevant figures and significant statements about them by the narrator or other figures. But clearly, in identifying what are to count as significant character-markers, we bring to bear a whole complex of psychological and social assumptions, in the light of which we 'read' the significance of these markers.[19] These assumptions also, of course, inform our 'reading' of persons in real life.[20] In applying these assumptions to literature (and other artistic forms) we also deploy a set of presuppositions about the way in which features such as motivation and status are 'encoded' in a given work and genre. The question of what is significant for characterization is closely related to the question of what is significant for plot or theme;[21] and it is understandable, therefore, that the semiotic study of character has developed out of structuralist attempts to analyse character as a function of plot-types or as part of the 'grammar' of narrative.[22] Literary theorists have

[18] For the distinction between affirmative and interrogatory uses of characterization, cf. e.g. J. Bayley, 'Character and Consciousness', *New Literary History*, 5/2 (1974), 225–35, esp. 226.

[19] Cf. J. Frow, 'Spectacle Binding: On Character', *Poetics Today*, 7/2 (1986), 227–50, esp. 227–8 and 232–5.

[20] This point is well brought out by P. E. Easterling, in her criticism of J. P. Gould (ch. 4 below, text to nn. 34–8). To this extent, Barthes's distinction between the (literary) *figure* and the (real) *person* (noted by S. Goldhill, ch. 5 below, text to n. 34) needs some qualification.

[21] O. Taplin notes this point (ch. 3 below, first paragraph) and illustrates it in his discussion of Homer's Agamemnon.

[22] Cf. Frow, 'Spectacle Binding', 230–2; U. Margolin, 'The Doer and the Deed: Action as a Basis for Characterization in Narrative', *Poetics Today*, 7/2 (1986), 205–25; and more generally, J. Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (London, 1975); id., *The Pursuit of Signs* (London, 1981).

also explored the use of character as a means of identifying the centre of interest in a narrative, and as a way of defining a dominant point of view or consciousness.[23] A related topic is the analysis of audience- or reader-response to the presentation of figures, whether in the form of an ideal or implied response signalled by the work itself, or in the form of the history of the actual reception of a given literary work.[24]

To which of these aspects of the study of characterization is the 'character–personality' distinction designed to contribute? Principally, I have in view the related topics of the audience's assumptions (deployed in the reading of 'character-markers'), and the audience's responses to the figures thus characterized. To be more exact, I am concerned with trying to define the kinds of assumptions and responses which the works themselves seem to expect, rather than with the assumptions and responses which we, as contemporary readers, tend to provide, or with the history of such responses in classical scholarship.[25] It may seem to be a difficulty for this project that I am attempting to use modern notions and distinctions to define the expectations implied in ancient texts. I do not underestimate this difficulty (which is, of course, a difficulty which affects a great deal of 'historicist' interpretation of ancient texts). But I shall try to alleviate it by using the concepts I have discussed as (to reuse this term) 'floating bridgeheads' in the attempt to make contact with the ideas and assumptions of Greek culture rather than as normative or absolute categories.[26] Furthermore, while my primary focus is on the assumptions and responses to figures which the work seems to presuppose, that subject is not wholly

[23] Cf. S. Chatman, 'Charactors and Narrators', *Poetics Today*, 7/2 (1986), 189–204, who discusses Genette's use of the notion of the character as 'focus' or 'focalizer'.

[24] Cf. *Arethusa*, 19/2 (1986) [Special Issue on 'Audience-Oriented Criticism and the Classics'], esp. the contribution of P. J. Rabinowitz, 'Shifting Stands, Shifting Standards: Reading, Interpretation, and Literary Judgement', 115–34; and R. C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London, 1984), esp. 78–81, on H. Jauss, 'Levels of Identification of Hero and Audience', *New Literary History*, 5/2 (1974), 283–317.

[25] Thus, I am presupposing that one can intelligibly discuss the question of what 'the works themselves seem to expect', a presupposition some would dispute (cf. Rabinowitz, 'Shifting Stands', esp. p. 126), although in doing so I accept the fact that one's views on this question are inevitably informed, to some extent, by contemporary concerns and by the reception of the works in classical scholarship.

[26] See n. 16 above; also S. Collins, 'Categories, Concepts or Predicaments?', in Carrithers *et al.* (edd.), *The Category of the Person*, 46 ff.

detachable from (or fully intelligible without) the study of the way in which 'character', in the senses noted above, is embedded in the form and structure of the literary work as a whole.[27] While I shall not go very far in this chapter towards exploring the interconnections between these various aspects of the study of character, I am deeply aware of the need to take account of them in working out the implications of the distinctions I am using.

It is because of this latter consideration (the need to study character as embedded in the form and structure of particular texts) that I want to focus, for most of the remainder of this chapter, on a number of specific, and often rather famous, passages in Homer and Greek tragedy. I want to discuss these passages in terms of the twofold approaches or frameworks I have associated with 'character' on the one hand and 'personality' on the other.[28] In using these passages in this illustrative way, I shall have to presuppose certain interpretations rather than arguing fully for them. But I hope it will seem acceptable to take the interpretations presupposed on trust, as it were, so as to enable the exploration of the interpretative utility of the distinction.

HOMER

In ancient criticism, as I noted earlier, the *Odyssey* was sometimes contrasted with the *Iliad* as being an epic of *ēthos* rather than *pathos*;[29] and, while I would not want to make quite so sharp a contrast in the terms I am using, I think that the frameworks I am associating with 'character' are more consistently appropriate to the *Odyssey* than they are to the *Iliad*. The *Odyssey* typically presents its figures as agents who show their (ethical) character by their considered responses to certain key situations, in which a clear choice of action is demanded of them. This presentation is exemplified above all in Odysseus'

[27] Cf. the cautionary advice, for those wanting to study the history of moral and psychological ideas in Greek poetry, of K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford, 1974), ch. 1, esp. 14–18; id., 'The Portrayal of Moral Evaluation in Greek Poetry', *JHS* 103 (1983), 35–48; also Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 424–5 n. 20.

[28] See n. 15 above.

[29] Arist. *Poet.* 24, 1459^{b}13–15; Longin. 9. 15; cf. Gill. '*Ēthos/Pathos* Distinction', 149–50.

recurrent, and often noted, role as 'testing' those he encounters, so as to judge, by their responses, whether they are 'violent, savage, and unjust, or hospitable and godly in their mind (νοῦς).'[30] The placing of figures in an ethical framework is promoted by the use of approbatory stock epithets on the one hand, such as 'sensible' and 'restrained' (περίφρων, ἐχέφρων, and πεπνυμένος), and disapprobatory adjectives on the other, such as 'arrogant' (ὑπερφίαλοι) and 'outrageous' (ἀτάσθαλοι).[31] The poem promotes confidence in the application of these terms by the consistency with which they are applied (it is not only Odysseus and his human supporters who describe the suitors as 'engaging in lawless violence, (ὑβρίζοντες), but also Athena and sometimes the narrator),[32] and also by a clear correlation between the application of the terms and the kinds of action to which they refer.[33] As regards the characteristic perspective of the poem, it is obvious that certain figures—Odysseus, Telemachus, and Penelope—have a special claim on our attention and concern, and that the story is told (sometimes literally) from their standpoint. But this does not mean that these figures are 'privileged' in the sense of being exempted from the norms of ethical judgement applied elsewhere in the poem. As Richard Rutherford has brought out, Odysseus' retrospective judgements of his own past actions are in line with those which others would make on him, and which he would make on others. For instance, in the course of his narrative, he underlines his own folly in insisting, against his men's advice, on staying in the cave of the Cyclops and on taunting him when blinded; and his account enables us to see why Eurylochus subsequently refers to these acts as ones in which Odysseus destroyed his men by his 'reckless acts' (ἀτασθαλίῃσιν).[34] To use two of the distinctions I have discussed earlier, Odysseus

[30] See e.g. *Od.* 6. 120–1, 9. 175–6, 13. 201–2.

[31] Cf. S. Saïd, 'Les Crimes des Prétendants', in Saïd *et al.*, *Études de litterature ancienne* (Paris, 1979), esp. 9. The stock epithets of the *Iliad* (on which see W. Whallon, *Formula, Character and Context* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), ch. 1) are not ethically value-laden in the same way.

[32] See e.g. *Od.* 1. 227 (cf. 32–4), 17. 481–2, 21. 285.

[33] Cf. R. B. Rutherford, 'The Philosophy of the *Odyssey*', *JHS* 106 (1986), 145–62, esp. 145–7; E. A. Havelock, *The Greek Concept of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978); A. Thornton, *People and Themes in Homer's Odyssey* (London, 1970), esp. chs. 4 and 7.

[34] *Od.* 9. 224–30, 492 ff., esp. 500–1, 10. 437 (for the phrasing of 10. 437, cf. 1. 7, 34); cf. Rutherford, 'The Philosophy of the *Odyssey*', 150–1.

accepts that his actions are open to assessment by general social norms; he does not claim that they should be judged by the standards of a private, individual ethic, or by a vision of the common ethic which only he really understands.[35] Although these actions are presented 'subjectively', in the sense that Odysseus' narrative draws on his own reported memories, there is no suggestion that his version of the relevant events is (simply by virtue of being *his* version) radically different from anyone else's version and distinctively 'first-personal'.[36]

The features I have underlined in Odysseus' narrative of the Cyclops episode, and in the *Odyssey* as a whole—the focus on agency, the framework of general social norms, the 'objective' perspective—are the ones I am associating with 'character' rather than 'personality'. These features might be illustrated by any number of passages in the poem, but I shall note just two. The first comes at the start of *Odyssey* 20 (9 ff.), when Odysseus holds back his initial impulse to take a premature revenge on his promiscuous serving-women. The passage presents Odysseus very much as a psychological 'agent' (a source of intentional or deliberated actions), who is here exerting agency with respect to his own plans and feelings. He does so, in part, by reminding himself of his own past agency in this respect: "τέτλαθι δή, κραδίη · καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ' ἔτλης . . . σὺ δ' ἐτόλμας . . . " τῷ δὲ μάλ' ἐν πείσῃ κραδίη μένε τετληυῖα | νωλεμέως ['"Endure, heart, once you endured something still worse . . . but you bore this" . . . and the heart in great obedience endured and remained firm . . .'] (18–24). This passage is often seen as unusual, in the context of Homeric vocabulary, for its psychological complexity and 'innerness', a quality which is produced by such features as the exceptional concentration of decision-making formulae and by the couching of the address to the heart (κραδίη) in highly personal terms.[37] But the overall effect of these features is not to make the speech of Odysseus subjective or 'first-personal', in the sense that he articulates a view of

[35] See distinction (ii) in n. 15 above, and contrast Achilles in *Il.* 9 (at least in some interpretations), discussed below.

[36] See distinction (iii) in n. 15 above.

[37] Cf. J. Böhme, *Die Seele und das Ich im homerischen Epos* (Leipzig, 1929), 66–9; Chr. Voigt, *Überlegung und Entscheidung* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1934), 87 ff.; J. Russo, 'Homer Against his Tradition', *Arion*, 7 (1968), 275–95, esp. 289–94.

himself (and of his present and past experience) which is radically different from that which other people might give. Odysseus in this speech identifies, and reaffirms, the characteristics that make other people call him 'much-enduring' (πολύτλας or ταλασίφρων). Similarly, the judgements he makes on other people in the course of this 'inward' passage (on the 'overbearing suitors' or the 'violent and uncontrolled Cyclops') are not uniquely personal ones but are based on common moral norms; and they are judgements which the poem as a whole invites its audience to endorse.[38]

The impact of the second passage I want to note in the *Odyssey* also depends on our accepting that the stand Odysseus makes is not a purely personal one but one that relies on common moral standards and that we are inclined to endorse. This is the speech in *Odyssey* 22 (61–4) in which Odysseus rejects Eurymachus' offer of material compensation for injustices done by the suitors.

> Εὐρύμαχ', οὐδ' εἴ μοι πατρώϊα πάντ' ἀποδοῖτε,
> ὅσσα τε νῦν ὔμμ' ἐστὶ καὶ εἴ ποθεν ἄλλ' ἐπιθεῖτε,
> οὐδέ κεν ὣς ἔτι χεῖρας ἐμὰς λήξαιμι φόνοιο
> πρὶν πᾶσαν μνηστῆρας ὑπερβασίην ἀποτῖσαι.

Eurymachus, not if you gave me all your family estate, whatever you have now and might add from elsewhere, not even so would I hold my hands from killing, until I had made the suitors pay for all their criminal acts.

The overall pattern of phrasing, and some of the specific wording, recalls the speeches in the *Iliad* in which Achilles rejects first Agamemnon's offer of compensatory gifts and then Hector's offer of ransom for his own burial.[39] But the differences are also marked, consisting not only in Odysseus' more restricted and less passionate language, but also in the fact that Odysseus presents his act in more 'objective' terms, as a response to the transgression of shared moral standards (ὑπερβασίην) rather than to a deeply felt ('heart-grieving') personal insult (θυμαλγέα λώβην, *Il.* 9. 387).[40] This presentation of

[38] *Od.* 20. 12, 19; cf. refs. in nn. 31 and 33 above.
[39] *Il.* 9. 378–87, esp. 380 and 386–7, 22. 349–54.
[40] Cf. Odysseus' self-presentation in *Od.* 22. 287–91, 312 ff., and esp. 411–18. On *Il.* 9. 378–87, see below. The phrase 'heart-grieving insult' *is* used in connection with Odysseus (Od. 20. 284–6), but not by him or in this context.

his act is one which we are disposed to accept (despite the problematic violence and scale of Odysseus' reprisal) because the suitors have been consistently presented as 'arrogant' and as 'engaging in lawless violence' (ὑπερφίαλοι and ὑβρίζοντες), and as committing the kind of criminal acts (ὑπερβασίην) that merit punishment.[41]

The same considerations do not apply to the parallel speech in *Iliad* 9 (378–87) in which Achilles rejects Agamemnon's offer of compensation:

> ἐχθρὰ δέ μοι τοῦ δῶρα, τίω δέ μιν ἐν καρὸς αἴσῃ.
> οὐδ' εἴ μοι δεκάκις τε καὶ εἰκοσάκις τόσα δοίη
> ὅσσα τέ οἱ νῦν ἔστι, καὶ εἴ ποθεν ἄλλα γένοιτο,
> οὐδ' ὅσ' ἐς Ὀρχομενὸν ποτινίσσεται, οὐδ' ὅσα Θήβας
> Αἰγυπτίας . . .
> . . . .
> οὐδ' εἴ μοι τόσα δοίη ὅσα ψάμαθός τε κόνις τε,
> οὐδέ κεν ὣς ἔτι θυμὸν ἐμὸν πείσει' Ἀγαμέμνων,
> πρίν γ' ἀπὸ πᾶσαν ἐμοὶ δόμεναι θυμαλγέα λώβην.

His gifts are hateful to me, and I have no respect for him. Not if he gave me ten and twenty times as much as he has now, and more besides from some other source, not if he gave me as much as comes into Orchomenus, as much as comes into Egyptian Thebes . . . not if he gave me as many gifts as there are grains of sand and dust, not even so would Agamemnon win over my heart until he had paid me back all his heart-grieving insult.

I think one can see in a passage of this kind what makes it difficult to place Achilles in a determinate ethical framework, and hence to evaluate him as a 'character', in my sense. The passage also indicates why one might be inclined to say rather that we respond to Achilles both as 'character' and 'personality'. On the one hand, we can see in these lines the kinds of attitude and tone that lead Achilles' fellow chieftains (speaking from a standpoint of 'reactive' involvement with him,[42] and judging him by the norms governing relationships between men of their

[41] Cf. refs. in nn. 30–3 above. In *Od* 22. 45 ff. Eurymachus himself concedes that the suitors have performed many 'outrageous acts' (ἀτάσθαλα, 47), but claims that Antinous was wholly responsible for them.
[42] For the idea that judgements of moral character reflect the 'reactive attitudes' we adopt towards those with whom we are involved in interpersonal relationships, cf. P. F. Strawson (ed.), *Studies in the Philosophy of Thought and Action* (Oxford, 1968), 71–96, esp. 76 ff.

class) to characterize him elsewhere as 'terrible', 'pitiless', and 'harsh'.[43] We can see all too clearly why Diomedes later sums up the result of the embassy in these terms: 'He is a proud man anyway (ἀγήνωρ), and now you have driven him further into his pride' (9. 699–700). On the other hand, from a position less 'reactively' engaged in the situation, we can recognize in these lines the qualities which (as Friedrich and Redfield point out) make Achilles' speeches so distinctive in the context of Homeric discourse. These lines exhibit the verbal extravagance (in the accumulation of items in a hyperbolic list), the vivid 'lyrical' quality, the 'passionate and highly personal' tone that they describe as characteristic of Achilles' language.[44] In so far as we also respond, in a more aesthetic way, to the special quality of Achilles' 'voice', we are responding to him as a 'personality' in one of the senses in which I am using this term (that of a distinctive and unique individual) at the same time, though not with the same attitude, that we share his fellow chieftains' misgivings about his 'character' as a partner in war.

But there is more to the ambivalence of our response to Achilles' lines than this; another and deeper ambivalence arises from the difficulty I have mentioned of placing his speech in a determinate ethical framework. That such a difficulty exists comes out in the radical disagreements between Homeric scholars about how to understand, and to appraise, Achilles' rejection of the gifts. Some hold that, by his rejection, Achilles 'puts himself in the wrong' by refusing an offer that is consistent with the standards of co-operative behaviour endorsed elsewhere in the epic.[45] Others hold that it is rather Agamemnon who has put himself in the wrong, by the nature and style of his attempt to 'buy Achilles back', and that Achilles' rejection constitutes a proper reproof of Agamemnon.[46] There is dispute about whether Achilles' assertion that Agamemnon would not

[43] *Il.* 11. 653–4 (δεινός), 16. 33–5, 203–4; cf. 1. 177, 24. 40–5.

[44] P. Friedrich and J. Redfield, 'Speech as a Personality Symbol: The Case of Achilles', *Language*, 54 (1978), 263–88; cf. J. Griffin, 'Words and Speakers in Homer', *JHS* 106 (1986), 50–6.

[45] See e.g. H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley, 1971), 18; C. M. Bowra, *Tradition and Design in the Iliad* (Oxford, 1930), 19; M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*² (London, 1977), 117–18. Achilles is sometimes taken to concede this point himself in *Il.* 9. 644–5; but see further on these lines n. 56 below.

[46] See esp. D. Claus, '*Aidōs* in the Language of Achilles', *TAPA* 105 (1975), 13–28.

win over his heart (*thumos*) until he had paid back all his 'heart-grieving insult' (θυμαλγέα λώβην, 386–7) is an impossible demand, or one which Agamemnon could meet by further suffering or self-abasement.[47] Indeed, there is no general agreement about the precise ethical basis of the quarrel between the two men. Should it be seen as a dispute conducted within a specific code of values (whether we call them 'competitive', 'co-operative', or 'heroic')?[48] Or does Achilles' rejection of the gifts constitute a rejection of that code; and if so, is his stance purely negative, or positive at least in the sense that it asserts the right of an individual hero to determine *his own* response to a given situation?[49] I do not propose to try to adjudicate between these competing positions here. But I cite them because I think they reflect not only differences in critical assumptions—though they do reflect such differences—but also a real complexity in the speech itself. To put the position much too simply, Achilles' speech cannot be appraised properly either in terms of a purely social or a purely 'individualistic' ethic, because it probes the relationship between these, and to that extent explores their basis. In the way he discusses the question, 'Why should I fight for Agamemnon (given the way Agamemnon treats me)?', he raises further, more fundamental questions, about the reasons why any individual should risk his life in co-operative warfare.[50] The difficulty, then, in placing Achilles as a 'character' turns partly on the fact that Achilles himself questions the nature of the kind of ethical framework in terms of which we might be inclined to judge him.

Furthermore, in so far as we follow, and respond to, Achilles'

[47] See, on the one side, M. D. Reeve, 'The Language of Achilles', *CQ* NS 33 (1973), 193–6; and on the other, O. Tsagarakis, 'The Achaean Embassy and the Wrath of Achilles', *Hermes*, 99 (1971), 257–77.

[48] M. Schofield, '*Euboulia* in the *Iliad*', *CQ* NS 36 (1986), 6–31 brings out the point that the values of the *Iliad* are sufficiently complex to allow for disputes to take place within them. For J. Redfield, in *Nature and Culture in the Iliad* (Chicago, 1975), 104 ff., Achilles' stance is an expression of tensions that are already inherent in the heroic ethic.

[49] Cf. A. Parry, 'The Language of Achilles', *TAPA* 87 (1956), 1–7 (=G. S. Kirk (ed.), *The Language and Background of Homer* (Cambridge, 1964), 48–54); C. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1958), ch. 9, esp. 213.

[50] Cf. esp. *Il.* 9. 315 ff., 367 ff.; to put it differently, Achilles here makes a distinctive (individual) contribution to a shared (common) dialogue about the grounds and objectives of the expedition, a dialogue which pervades the whole poem: I hope to elaborate elsewhere this way of reading the speech.

ethical probing, he acquires a special kind of claim on our attention and concern (in addition to any claim that accrues from the fact that we can recognize his 'point of view' in the dispute).[51] He becomes the vehicle through which we, so to speak, think through these issues (just as, elsewhere, he serves to articulate the sense of pathos we feel at the tragic waste of life, as the course of the epic unfolds).[52] To use John Bayley's distinction, he takes on the role of acting as a certain kind of 'consciousness' (and one which we, partly, share) rather than of being a certain kind of 'character', whom we view and 'place' within the world of the poem.[53] To use one of the distinctions I drew earlier, we view Achilles 'subjectively', in so far as we merge our point of view with his, rather than situating him 'objectively' in his context.[54] I hope this example will clarify why I suggested earlier that the combination of viewpoints I am associating with 'personality' rather than 'character' (and especially the shift from the latter to the former viewpoint) serves as an index of an exploratory or interrogative mode of writing, rather than a confirmatory or affirmative one.[55]

Before going on to consider some illustrative passages in tragedy, I should like to make it plain that I am not suggesting that the figures of the *Iliad* are uniformly presented from the same kind of viewpoint (and with the same subtle combination of viewpoints) as Achilles is presented in his great speech in book 9. For instance, in book 19 Agamemnon makes his celebrated claim (86–7) that: *ἐγὼ δ' οὐκ αἴτιος εἰμι, | ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς καὶ Μοῖρα καὶ ἠεροφοῖτις Ἐρινύς* ['I am not responsible, but Zeus and Fate and the Fury that walks in mist']. I should not want to suggest in this case (what I shall suggest in some cases in tragedy) that Agamemnon's presentation of himself as psychologically passive is designed to produce in the audience a sense of empathy with Agamemnon's subjective ('first-personal') view of himself.[56] I am persuaded by Oliver Taplin's claim, outlined elsewhere in this volume, that we are intended to take Agamemnon's statement as an attempt at unjustified self-exculpation, an attempt which carries implications for our reading of his character and its inadequacies.[57] The large and dubious inferences about Homeric ethics and psychology often based on this passage (which Taplin notes) derive not so much from reading the passage, wrongly, in moral terms, as from doing so in a way that fails to situate the passage within the complex ethical and psychological framework of the poem. This example should serve to make it plain that I do not regard the distinction between 'character' and 'personality' (and between the frameworks I am associating with this distinction) as providing a formula to be applied mechanically to a given poem, or as a substitute for critical discrimination between the different perspectives or registers within a given poem; rather, I regard the distinction as a reminder that such perspectives exist, and as a starting-point towards identifying them.

[51] In the case of Ajax and Eteocles, discussed below, I suggest that seeing their point of view (when the other stage figures do not) gives us a sense of privileged access to their thoughts. I would not want to make quite this claim here, although I think that our relative detachment from the situation enables us to engage with Achilles' probing in a way that would be impossible for his fellow chieftains, whose concerns are more immediate and pressing.

[52] Cf. e.g. *Il.* 21. 106–13, 24. 525–48.

[53] See n. 18 above.

[54] See n. 15 above. Contrast the case of Odysseus, discussed above, in which the question of tension between 'subjective' and 'objective' views, as of 'social' and 'individualistic' ethics, does not arise in the same way.

[55] Cf. discussion above, and n. 18.

TRAGEDY

In the case of tragedy, as of Homer, I shall focus on specific passages as a way of indicating how these distinctions may promote such critical discrimination. In the corpus of surviving tragedies, there is variety of perspective both between different

[56] I think such a claim might more plausibly be made in connection with e.g. *Il.* 9. 645–8 and 16. 52–5, where Achilles ascribes his perpetuation of the quarrel with Agamemnon to the fact that his 'heart swells with bile', and that 'a terrible pain comes on [his] heart and spirit', when he thinks of Agamemnon's ill-treatment of him. The former passage is more often read (in terms of 'character') as one in which he criticizes his 'passionate nature' (so e.g. J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford, 1980), 74); but a reading of the words (in terms of 'personality') as vouchsafing access to his 'subjective' sense of being the victim of his own emotions is at least as plausible. However, more plausible again is a reading which takes the comment about the 'swelling heart' to be Achilles' statement of his grounds for perpetuating the quarrel; i.e. Achilles regards his emotional response not as a personal defect or misfortune but as itself constituting *a reason* (though a problematic one) for maintaining his anger. On this reading (which I shall defend more fully elsewhere), Achilles' comment (like his great speech) evades neat categorization in terms of 'character' or 'personality' alone.

[57] Cf. ch. 3 below, text to nn. 14–16; the case is argued more fully in an unpublished paper, 'Explanation and Self-Justification in the *Iliad*'.

plays and within particular plays. But I think that the *Iliad* is, in general, a better guide than the *Odyssey* towards understanding the perspectives that are characteristic of tragedy; and that the complexity of Achilles' great speech in *Iliad* 9 gives us a model of the kind of complexity with which the main figures of tragedy are typically presented at key moments. As Bernard Knox above all has shown, a recurrent tragic pattern is one in which the main figure, like Achilles in book 9, appears to his companions extreme and unreasonable, by the normal standards of social co-operation, but in which we are made aware that his stance depends on a deeper and more probing response to his situation than that of the companions who judge him by those standards.[58] The division in our responses which such a presentation invites (in so far as we engage sympathetically both with the main figures and his companions) is sometimes underlined in the plays by having the main figure's real thoughts or feelings misinterpreted, or ignored, by his companions, thus accentuating our sense of privileged access to them.[59] Furthermore, we find in tragedy, to a greater extent than in epic, I think, a special complexity in the presentation of the main figure as regards psychological agency and passivity, and an emphasis on the paradoxes which arise out of a combination of these psychological modes.[60] This complexity takes various forms; for instance, in one type of case, the figure is judged by his companions as a psychological agent (and a bad one), while he presents himself as wholly or partly passive.[61] In another type of case, to which I shall give special attention, the figure presents himself as one who plays an active role in bringing about his own psychological subjection. This complexity as regards psychological agency and passivity is itself sometimes linked to a complexity as regards the ethical framework and perspective in which we are invited to view the figure concerned; and these forms of complexity cumulatively militate against a straightforward 'placing' of the figure within a single,

[58] B. M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper* (Berkeley, 1966), chs. 1 and 2.

[59] See n. 51 above.

[60] Of course, 'double motivation' in epic involves such a combination (cf. A. Lesky, *Göttliche und menschliche Motivation im homerischen Epos*, (*Sitzungsber. Heid. AK. Wiss.* 1961/4), esp. 22–32); but the paradoxes entailed seem to be underlined more clearly in tragedy.

[61] e.g. Clytemnestra in A. *Ag.* 1497 ff., discussed below.

normative framework of reference. The net result, as I have already suggested in the case of the *Iliad*, is to make the plays ethically, and sometimes psychologically, exploratory or interrogatory rather than affirmative.[62]

I think that the kind of complexity of presentation I have in mind comes out clearly in the case of the so-called 'Deception Speech' in Sophocles' *Ajax* (646–92). Like some other critics, I take it that this speech is intended to be 'heard', or interpreted, by the audience in two different ways: as Tecmessa and the chorus hear it (a way in which Ajax allows them to deceive themselves about his meaning), and as Ajax himself intends it.[63] This double 'hearing' sets up one of the types of duality I am interested in (that of perspective): the audience, detecting the ironies in Ajax's apparent change of heart, has a sense of privileged access to him, and of sharing his subjective view of himself and his situation, even while it also hears, and understands, the reactions of the other figures to him. This ambivalence of perspective relates closely to the ethical duality articulated in the speech itself. On the surface, Ajax embraces the kind of ethic which (as he sees it) he needs to adopt if he is to respond to Tecmessa's appeal for pity, namely the ethic of common sense and pragmatic compromise (as Ajax puts it, 'being sensible', σωφρονεῖν), which is often associated with Odysseus, from the *Iliad* onwards.[64] But the speech also implies, through the extravagance with which that ethic is articulated, Ajax's ironic distance from it and his 'Achillean' adherence to the interpretation of 'nobility' (εὐγένεια) that requires him to act on his earlier decision to die 'finely' (καλῶς).[65] In these ways, the speech invites us to maintain a dual perspective on

[62] S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1986), esp. 55–6, 285–6, also emphasizes the interrogatory and 'open-ended' quality of Greek tragedy, though some of his reasons for doing so are different from those given here.

[63] B. M. W. Knox, *Word and Action* (Baltimore, 1979), 135 ff.; R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles: An Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1980), 46–56. This is not to say, of course, that Ajax's own intended meaning is unequivocally clear even to us, as the continuing controversy about the speech shows (cf. most recently P. T. Stevens, 'Ajax in the *Trugrede*', *CQ* NS 36 (1986), 327–36), but it seems clear that a second meaning of some sort is intended to be audible.

[64] S. *Ai.* 650–3, 666–77, 485 ff. On Odysseus as the paradigm of σωφρονεῖν in this sense, in contrast to Achilles' 'heroic' obduracy, cf. H. North, *Sophrosune* (Ithaca, 1966), 1–2 and (on Ajax) 58–61.

[65] Cf. *Ai.* 479–80 (and 522–4); also Knox, *Word and Action*, 135 ff.; Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles*, 46–56.

Ajax, seeing him both as his immediate society sees him, with the ethical standards this implies, and as he sees, and judges, himself. Thus we see him from the perspectives of both 'character' and 'personality' (in two of the senses I have distinguished).[66]

What is also interesting about the *Ajax*, for my concerns here, is that the issue raised by the speech, that of the perspective and ethical framework in which Ajax should be viewed, becomes a dominant one in the latter part of the play, and pervades the debate about Ajax's right to burial. What is also striking in this debate is not just the variety of perspectives employed, but the variety of *types* of perspective. The Atreidae are the most ready to cast judgement on Ajax and to do so in assertively evaluative terms. His attempted attack on them is taken as an act of lawless violence (ὕβρις) which constitutes a breach of 'discipline' (which is what they understand by σωφρονεῖν), and one which Teucer perpetuates by his defence of Ajax's claims.[67] Their comments constitute a judgement, of a kind, on Ajax's character (in an ethical sense), but one which makes no attempt to situate the action they have in view (his recent attack on them) in the context of his life as a whole, and thus to make a fair estimate of his character. Odysseus, on the other hand, does attempt to make that kind of estimate, weighing against his recent attack (by which Ajax made himself Odysseus' greatest enemy (ἔχθιστος)) the earlier achievements that made Ajax ἄριστον Ἀργείων . . . πλὴν Ἀχιλλέως and ἐσθλόν ['the best of the Greeks . . . except for Achilles' and 'noble'].[68] This defence of Ajax's right to burial is based (as is appropriate for the judicial context) on an appraisal of Ajax's 'character', that is, of the merits and demerits of Ajax's actions, as judged by the normal standards of behaviour in his social group.[69] But it seems also to be informed by a different, and less evaluative, response: that of pity for, and to an extent 'identification' with, Ajax. In the

[66] For these senses, see distinctions (ii) and (iii) in n. 15 above; here as often elsewhere, the two senses are closely associated.

[67] See *Ai.* 1061, 1071 ff., 1236 ff., esp. 1258–9; cf. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy*, 193 ff.

[68] *Ai.* 1336, 1340–1, 1345 (cf. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles*, 58–9), 441–4 (Ajax's own judgement on himself).

[69] On 'character', in this sense, as relevant to a judicial context, cf. e.g. Arist. *Rh.* 1. 2. 3 and 1. 9; G. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (London, 1963), s.v. *ēthos*.

opening scene of the play, Odysseus, through Athena's contrivance, is given special insight into Ajax's state of mind and situation. He responds with a speech of remarkable generosity of spirit, placing himself imaginatively in the position of his humiliated enemy, a response which is sharply counterpointed by Athena's crude moralizing about Ajax's lack of 'self-control' (σωφροσύνη, 121–33). That response seems to be echoed in the way in which, in the final scene, he places himself in imagination in Ajax's position (a response palpably misinterpreted by Agamemnon at 1365–7).

This strand in Odysseus' responses is distinct from his fair-minded appraisal of Ajax's 'character', and is not dependent on that.[70] But I should not be inclined to describe it as a response to Ajax's 'personality' (even in the extended sense in which I am using this term). Odysseus' response is rather a sense of fellow-feeling with *anyone* (even an enemy) who finds himself 'yoked to disaster (ἄτη) or who is in need of burial; it is thus a response to Ajax's situation rather than to the person himself. But in the lamentation at Ajax's death by Tecmessa and the chorus there are moments when it seems right to say they are responding to Ajax as a person, and indeed as a distinctive personality. Thus, for instance, when the chorus trace back Ajax's κακὰν μοῖραν ['evil fate'] to his bitter sorrow at the award of the arms to Odysseus, they seem to be stressing not just their sense of the logic of events but also the relentless way in which Ajax's own nature, 'tough-minded' and 'raw-minded' as it is (στερεόφρων and ὠμόφρων), has worked towards his own destruction (925–36). The tone, I think, is not so much of condemnation of Ajax's response (although it has worked to their disadvantage) as of sorrowful recognition of the way in which Ajax's own distinctive, extreme nature has made its own destiny. A speech by Tecmessa in the same context has a similar tone (961–73). She is, more directly than the chorus, disadvantaged by the suicide she tried to prevent, as she herself indicates. But her mood now is not that of criticism but of sorrowful recognition that he has won the death *he* wanted.

[70] In *Ai* 121–6 Ajax's character is not mentioned, only his status as Odysseus' enemy, *in spite of which* Odysseus pities him; even in the later scene, Odysseus' imaginative self-association with Ajax (1365–7) is not explicitly linked to the appraisal of his character (1338–45).

And in her dismissal of the expected exultation of his enemies, she seems to be, as it were, 'protecting' the private and special quality of his death *for Ajax*.[71] In her remarks, and those of the chorus, there is more than simply a response to Ajax's individuality; her remarks, in particular, need to be understood in terms of the ethics of friendship and enmity. But the reactions include an unjudging acceptance that Ajax's death was, distinctively, *his* chosen end, and, in this respect, their response is to his 'personality', in two of the senses I have attached to that term.[72]

So far, in talking about the interplay between 'character' and 'personality' in tragedy, I have focused on the aspects of the distinction that relate to values on the one hand and perspectives on the other, rather than the aspect of psychological agency and passivity. The relationship between psychological agency and passivity can clearly serve as a theme on its own in tragedy; but it is sometimes brought into connection with at least one other aspect of the distinction, and in a way that produces the characteristically tragic combination of 'character' and 'personality'. As an example of this, I want to consider especially a famous dialogue in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* (653–719); but I shall approach this by noting two other famous Aeschylean passages which help to bring out what is most striking in that dialogue. In all three passages, the feature I want to focus on is the relationship between psychological explanation and point of view. I suggested earlier that there was a clear prima-facie distinction between explaining acts by reference to the beliefs and desires of the person as agent, and doing so by reference to causes which are seen as determining behaviour in ways other than through the person's conscious agency.[73] Either type of explanation can, in principle, be

[71] ἐμοὶ πικρὸς τέθνηκεν ἢ κείνοις γλυκύς · | αὑτῷ δὲ τερπνός. ὧν γὰρ ἠράσθη τυχεῖν | ἐκτήσαθ' αὑτῷ, θάνατον ὅνπερ ἤθελεν. | τί δῆτα τοῦδ' ἐπεγγελῷεν ἂν κάτα; | θεοῖς τέθνηκεν οὗτος, οὐ κείνοισιν, οὔ. ['His death was bitter to me rather than being sweet for them; and it gave pleasure to the man himself. For he obtained what he desired for himself, the death he wanted. So why should they jeer at him; he died for the gods, not for them, no.'] (966–70.)

[72] They respond to him *qua* unique individual not *qua* 'character' (assessed by common moral standards), and to his distinctively personal, 'subjective' wish, though a wish for something that is 'objectively' bad; see n. 15 above.

[73] See discussion above and n. 9.

employed by the person concerned, or by an outside observer; but there is an obvious way in which it is more natural to expect the person concerned to explain her acts by reference to her beliefs and desires, and to expect the mode of explanation by external causes to be used by an outside observer.

In the chorus's recreation of Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice his own daughter (*Ag.* 205–27), though there is much that is curious and paradoxical, this (more natural) distribution of types of explanation is, for the most part, maintained. The antistrophe articulates Agamemnon's response, as a deliberating agent, to his dilemma, culminating in his appalling conclusion that 'it is right to desire with exceedingly impassioned passion the sacrifice of the maiden's blood, to stop the winds'.[74] The following strophe sustains this understanding of Agamemnon's act, namely as an intentional 'action'[75] ('he dared (ἔτλα) to become the sacrificer of his daughter', 224–5), and one that Agamemnon, in some sense, deliberates and 'owns' as his ('blowing his thought in an impious change of direction . . . he changed his mind and turned to thinking the all-daring', 219–21).[76] It is true that the language in which the chorus describe this motivation gives us the impression that Agamemnon is, and perhaps sees himself as, bowing to overwhelming pressure;[77] but the description, like the preceding utterance of Agamemnon, is that of someone carrying out an action that is, in some sense, deliberate, and 'owned' as his. However, the chorus add their own explanatory comment on the act and its motivation: 'For (γάρ, marking their remark as explanatory) men are made bold by wretched madness (παρακοπά) that gives men bad

[74] As Nussbaum emphasizes, *Fragility*, 35–6, the curious phrase ὀργᾷ περιόργως ἐπιθυμεῖν (216–17) underlines Agamemnon's emotional involvement with the act of sacrifice. The speech the chorus attribute to Agamemnon has a strongly 'narrative' feel, esp. in 214–17, and it seems to serve as a prelude for their analysis of his motivation in 218 ff.; but their quasi-narrative recreation of his speech is still that of someone functioning *as an agent*.

[75] On the distinction between an 'action' and an 'event', see n. 6 above.

[76] Trans. Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 36.

[77] Esp. 'he put on himself (ἔδυ) the harness of necessity' (218); and the image of 'blowing his thought' (219) seems to evoke the earlier description of Agamemnon 'blowing with the pressure of circumstances' (ἐμπαίοις τύχαισι συμπνέων, 187), a connection R. D. Dawe would like to underline by rearranging the text to bring the two passages close together: 'Some Reflections on Ate and Hamartia', *HSCP* 72 (1968), 89–123, esp. 110–11.

advice (αἰσχρόμητις) and is the beginning of sorrows (πρωτοπήμων)' (222–3). As Dawe points out, the use of παρακοπά instead of the more familiar ἄτη (delusion) suggests that Agamemnon's 'mental processes are ... *knocked sideways*';[78] and this underlines the fact that the explanatory comments presents Agamemnon as psychologically passive, subject to a madness that 'forces' his mind in the wrong direction.[79] In this respect, the passage maintains the distinction I described earlier: the participant is envisaged as understanding his act in terms of personal agency; the observers, while confirming that way of understanding the act, also explain the motivation for Agamemnon's act in terms of a cause external to his agency ('madness'), of which he is presumably unaware. Later in the same play, the two modes of explanation are deployed in a different but related way. Clytemnestra, having initially presented her murder of Agamemnon, in iambics, and in emphatic terms, as a deliberated personal action (especially 1377 ff.), now, in lyric exchange with the chorus, explains—and in a way justifies—her act as the work of the τριπάχυντον | δαίμονα γέννης ['thrice-fattened spirit of the family'] (1476–7) and of the παλαιὸς δριμὺς ἀλάστωρ | Ἀτρέως ['ancient harsh avenger of Atreus'] (1501–2). Her explanation of her action is retrospective; she now looks at it from outside, participating in the chorus's attempt to find deeper levels of explanation for the appalling act (see especially 1468 ff.). In another way she is using the explanation itself as a subsidiary source of justification for her act, as being a way of taking vengeance for past wrongs in the house.

What is strikingly different about Eteocles' stance in the dialogue with the chorus before going to battle is that, before taking action, while he is still (in some sense) 'deciding' what to do, he presents the causal type of explanation as a kind of motive (or, perhaps, as taking the place of motivation) for killing his brother. The dialogue has been much discussed recently; but only A. A. Long's account brings out fully its paradoxical quality in this respect.[80] This centres on the fact that Eteocles only presents himself as a psychological agent (acting on motives which he 'owns' and justifies) as regards the soldierly aspect of his act, namely going to meet his brother *as the enemy leader*, avoiding the 'cowardice' of not doing so, and thus winning glory.[81] But his justification of the act glosses over the obviously 'miasmic' character of the killing of his brother. The chorus repeatedly accuse him of being activated by a positive, hideous desire for fratricide, a desire they urge him to resist;[82] and at one point Eteocles seems to concede the truth of this accusation.[83] But, both at this point and elsewhere, Eteocles' own account of his attitude to the fratricide does not bear out their accusations. He presents the killing of his brother (which he sees as involving his own death) as being something that is inherently bad (κακόν).[84] What drives him to this act is his father's curse (which he earlier saw as the mark of a family 'driven mad by the gods') which 'besets' him 'with its dry, unlamenting eyes'. This curse, as he sees it, makes useless any lamentation of his own at what he must do, maintaining (what he accepts) that the only 'profitable' course of action is an honourable, though appalling, death.[85]

Eteocles' tone, as he utters these sentiments, does not seem to be that of a person suppressing a covert passion for fratricide, but rather of someone experiencing a nightmarish loss of will (in the ordinary sense) and surrendering to (what he sees as) irrational forces at work within himself.[86] It is true that his

[78] Ibid.

[79] However (nothing is simple in this stanza), the 'madness' involved seems to allow *some* role for personal agency in so far as it operates by 'advising' men to perform bad acts (αἰσχρόμητις) and 'emboldens' them to do so (θρασύνει); i.e. men know what they are doing, and (perhaps) know that it is bad (or 'base'), but not that they are driven by 'madness' to do so.

[80] A. A. Long, '*Pro* and *contra* Fratricide: Aeschylus' *Septem* 653–719', in J. Betts (ed.), *Studies in Honour of T. B. L. Webster*, i (Bristol, 1986), 179–89.

[81] See *Th.* 658–75 (esp. 674–5, in which the unemphatic inclusion of 'brother to brother' between 'leader to leader' and 'enemy to enemy' elides its significance (cf. Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 38)), 683–5, 697, 716–17; on the connotations of 'shame' and 'profit' in these lines, cf. R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge, 1983), 35 ff.

[82] *Th.* 677–8, 686–8, 692–4, 698, 718. Some critics accept that the chorus's description of Eteocles' motivation is a correct one, though they allow that Eteocles' alleged 'madness' is not fully reflected in his own words: see e.g. Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 432–3 n. 46; Aeschylus, *Septem contra Thebes*, ed. G. O. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1985), 148.

[83] 695 (taking the γάρ as concessive: 'Yes, for ...').

[84] 683, 685, 719; contrast the attitude of Polyneices, who, as reported in 636, seems positively to want mutual fratricide, or at least to accept it readily as the price of vengeance.

[85] 695–7; cf. 653–7, 683–5.

[86] Cf. Long's comment in 'Fratricide', 186: 'He is a Kafka-like figure, who sees all and is totally trapped by his own vision.'

words, as the dialogue continues, admit some degree of agency; he rejects the chorus's urging not to give way to these forces, and in that sense he persists in giving way to them.[87] But he still sees himself as psychologically passive with regard to the fratricide, even if this very passivity is one he himself accepts. As I noted earlier, what is unusual—even bizarre and surd—in the dialogue is the way in which what would more naturally figure as an outsider's *explanation* for his act is presented by the participant as a *motive*, though one which functions by subduing or replacing the participant's own desire rather than constituting it.

So far, the complexity, or duality, I have examined in this scene relates wholly to the curious interplay between agency and passivity in Eteocles' motivation. But this is related to other kinds of duality, of a sort we have considered elsewhere. Within the dialogue, we find a version of the dispute about values we have seen in other contexts. The chorus, taking the desire for fratricide to be in some sense his, advocate a kind of pragmatic self-control, if only in the form of not giving way to the irrational forces that threaten to master him. But Eteocles, like Achilles or Ajax, insists that 'nobility' (as he understands this) involves rejecting this advice; although his acceptance of the 'badness' entailed in achieving the 'profit' of nobility rather undercuts this insistence.[88] Furthermore, the fact that the chorus partly misread Eteocles' state of mind, first in failing to recognize its passivity, and then in underestimating his adherence to his passive state, serves to create a sense of privileged access or complicity that is not unlike our response to Ajax, in his Deception Speech, or, in a different way, to Achilles.[89] Thus, in these respects too, the exchange provides a combination of the responses I am associating with 'character' and 'personality'; although the sense of special access to Eteocles is, I think, qualified by the peculiar, surd quality of his state of mind. That a fratricidal desire can be explained by reference to

[87] See 698, 705–8; and cf. refs. in n. 82 above.

[88] Cf. nn. 81–4 above; the undercutting is stronger and more overt than in Ajax's (ironic) disowning of 'manly' obduracy in S. *Ai.* 650 ff. Achilles' only concession (if it is one) on the rightness of his stand comes in *Il.* 9. 645–8 (on which see n. 56 above).

[89] For the two stages of chorus's reaction, see A. *Th.* 677–94, 698 ff.; on this complicity elsewhere, see discussion above, incl. n. 51.

a 'family curse' makes some kind of sense; but that such an explanation can count as a motive is deeply puzzling.

In these respects, the case of Euripides' Medea is instructive both as a parallel and a contrast with Eteocles, especially in her great monologue (1021–80).[90] For instance, in Medea's dialogue with the chorus in 811–19, and still more in her debate with herself in 1021 ff., we find the familiar contrast between the voice of common sense and shared humanity (expressed by Medea when she speaks as a sorrowing mother), and that of the extreme, 'individualistic' heroism that demands infanticide as a means of avenging dishonour.[91] We also find, as in the case of Eteocles, a striking combination of psychological agency and passivity, and one with several points of similarity. Like Eteocles, she sees the killing of kin as being, in itself, bad (κακόν) and not the object of her desire; like him, she presents the act as justifiable (and herself as an agent) only with regard to the goal of the killing, namely redeeming her honour through vengeance.[92] Like him, she sometimes presents the kin-killing as something that will occur by its own momentum and against her will; like him, she sometimes presents herself as psychologically subject to the force within her that activates this killing.[93] Her monologue ends with these famous lines: *καὶ μανθάνω μὲν οἷα δρᾶν μέλλω κακά, | θυμὸς δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων, | ὅσπερ μεγίστων αἴτιος κακῶν βροτοῖς* ['I know that what I am going to do is bad, but anger, the source of mankind's greatest miseries' (or 'bad things') 'is master of my plans']. These lines convey a similar sense of conscious, but helpless, self-surrender to that conveyed by Eteocles' declaration that he is beset by his father's curse, 'with its dry,

[90] On the question of the authenticity of this speech, I find the position of D. Kovacs in 'On Euripides' Great Monologue (E. *Med.* 1021–80)', *CQ*, NS 36 (1986), 343–52, in which he argues for the excision of 1056–64, more credible than that of those who argue for a larger excision; but for present purposes, I treat the speech as wholly Euripidean.

[91] See esp. E. *Med.* 791–7, 807–10, 816–19, 1046–55, 1059–61; cf. Knox, *Word and Action*, 297 ff.; (on Medea's two 'voices') C. Gill, 'Two Monologues of Self-Division: Euripides, *Medea* 1021–80 and Seneca, *Medea* 893–977', in M. Whitby, P. Hardie, and M. Whitby (edd.), Homo Viator: *Classical Essays for John Bramble* (Bristol, 1987), 25–37, esp. 26 ff.

[92] See E. *Med.* 1078–80; also 1021–39, 1067 (in which the κακά for herself and the children are fully realized); also refs. in n. 91 and nn. 81–4 above.

[93] E. *Med.* 1240–1 (= 1062–3), and *Med.* refs. in preceding note (see further Gill, 'Two Monologues', 26–8); cf. A. *Th.* 653–7, 683–4, 689–91, 695–7, 702–4, 709–11, 719.

unlamenting eyes', urging him to the fratricidal act he sees as bad (κακόν).[94] As with Eteocles, it is in so far as we share Medea's view of herself as trapped in her situation, and as a psychological victim, that we feel most keenly a sense of special access to her, and sympathy with her, and thus respond to her as, in my terms, a 'personality'.[95]

However, there are also important differences between the two cases. For one thing, Medea, as well as playing a more active role than Eteocles seems to do in engineering the situation by which she eventually feels trapped, also plays a more active role in promoting the 'heroic', vengeful side of herself, to which she finally feels subject.[96] And although Eteocles' state of mind is not unambiguously clear (the chorus, as we saw, view it rather differently from Eteocles himself), it is less obvious than it is in the case of Medea that he is experiencing inner conflict. Furthermore, although she too (in 1079–80) talks about her act, as a quasi-observer, in causal terms, her 'subjection' to *thumos* (anger) does not have the same psychologically opaque or surd quality as we found in Eteocles' case. The preceding monologue, and especially the dialogue between her alternative 'selves', in 1040 ff., articulates much more fully the way in which she persuades herself into the state of mind to which she eventually feels 'subject'. Both the 'mastering' *thumos*, and the motherly feelings which are mastered, are given voice by Medea, and thus 'owned' by her;[97] the *thumos* forms an integral part of her motivation, and is not introduced, like Eteocles' curse, *in place of* a normal pattern of motivation. In this respect, and others too (if we think of the nurse's earlier comments on

[94] E. *Med.* 1078–80 (on the psychology of which cf. C. Gill, 'Did Chrysippus Understand Medea?', *Phronesis*, 28 (1983), 136–49); A. *Th.* 695–7, 683–5.

[95] This sense is accentuated, as in Ajax's Deception Speech, by the fact that we hear her speaking *across* the children, first to the chorus, her confidantes (1043), and then, for the most part, to herself. The degree of sympathy also varies according to the 'self' who speaks, being strongest in 1021–39 and 1065 ff.; cf. Gill, 'Two Monologues', 26 ff. On the sense of 'personality' involved, see n. 15 above, distinction (iii).

[96] See refs. in nn. 91–2 above. Eteocles 'chooses', in the ordinary sense of the word, to go to meet his brother, but he does so in a situation that has more obvious external and internal 'constraints' (esp. the curse) than in Medea's case. See further (on Medea's manipulation of her situation) P. E. Easterling, 'The Infanticide in Euripides' *Medea*', *YCS* 35 (1977), 177–92; (on Eteocles) *Septem*, ed. Hutchinson, 142–3, 148–9, 160–1, xxiii–xxx.

[97] See E. *Med.* 1040–8 (the motherly voice), 1049–55 (the avenging voice)—a sequence replayed (if the lines are authentic; see n. 90 above) in 1056–8 and 1059–64.

her 'wild character and the hateful nature of her harsh mind'[98]), we feel that we know Media, both as 'character' and 'personality', and that her tragedy originates from this, in a way that is not so true of Eteocles and many other tragic figures. Indeed, if we press this point, we might be inclined to reserve the use of the terms 'character' and 'personality' for a case of this kind, and to analyse the other cases in rather different terms (such as those of 'agency and passivity' and 'conflicts of value'). However, my practice here, presenting all these as aspects of a single, if complex, distinction (between 'character' and 'personality') has the merit of underlining the connections between these different aspects, and of emphasizing that our understanding of dramatic character (or personality), is typically made up of these, and related, strands.

CONCLUSION

I shall end this chapter by indicating certain ways in which this discussion of the 'character–personality' distinction might be brought into connection with certain other, and more familiar, approaches to characterization in Greek literature. Many of the passages I have noted are often used as material in the attempt to construct a process of development in Greek moral thinking, that of the 'evolution of the will', for instance, or of an alleged shift from a 'competitive' to a 'co-operative' ethic.[99] If the suggestions made here have any validity, it would seem important that any developmental model of this kind should not 'flatten out', as it were, the types of duality or complexity which seem to be an integral part of the presentation of figures in many Greek tragedies, as in the *Iliad*; and that, at the same time, it should not eliminate their distinctively interrogatory or exploratory impact. The use of Athenian tragic material for the

[98] ἄγριον ἦθος στυγεράν τε φύσιν | φρενὸς αὐθάδους (103–4); cf. μεγαλόσπλαγχνος δυσκατάπαυστος ψυχή ['her splenetic temperament, hard to keep in check'] (109–10). The nurse's comments imply that the children are endangered by a kind of instinctive, 'animal' irascibility (cf. 90 ff.) in Medea; but the later scenes disclose 'character' (and 'personality') in a deeper and more complex sense. Attempts to 'read' Eteocles' character (e.g. *Septem*, ed. Hutchinson, xxxv ff.; Nussbaum, *Fragility*, 39–40) need to draw on less obviously relevant material.

[99] See e.g. A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford, 1960), chs. 6–9; J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece*, trans. J. Lloyd (Brighton, 1981), ch. 3; S. Saïd, *La Faute tragique* (Paris, 1978), pt. 2.

construction of these models of moral development constitutes, to some extent, an assimilation of the tragic theatre to an adjacent area of discourse, that of the lawcourts; and the tragic genre is sometimes treated for this purpose as being, in effect, an application of Greek judicial thinking to the 'hard cases' of the mythological tradition. Whatever the general merits of this procedure, it is important to underline that the tragic theatre constitutes a meeting-place of several types of discourse and concern, including the religious as well as the judicial. And it seems clear that some at least of the dualities I have discussed derive, in ways too complex to pursue here, from this composite character of the tragic genre.[100]

The aspect of my distinction which is perhaps least familiar is that of types of perspective; and the idea of a perspective which gives a special importance to an individual's subjective view may seem distinctively modern and not obviously relevant to Greek literature. However, I think there are features of the *Iliad* and of many Greek tragedies which promote such a perspective, including the fact that certain figures in these works enjoy a special (sometimes semi-divine) status in their society or world, as well as having a privileged claim on our attention because of their role as narrative focuses;[101] and that this special status invites a sympathetic concern which is at odds with the response these figures also arouse by the morally worrying or unacceptable character of their actions, if these are viewed in a more impartial or objective way.[102] I also think that this perspective should be connected (to a greater extent than I have attempted here) with the way in which certain poetic forms, such as the passionate monologue, or the lament, invite a

[100] This is most obvious in the case of the duality of psychological agency and passivity (on which cf. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Tragedy and Myth*, 11–14), and, perhaps, in the case of the duality of social and 'individualistic' (or 'heroic') ethics (on which cf. Knox, *Heroic Temper*, 53 ff.); on the tragic theatre as a festal arena for the questioning of civic values, cf. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy*, 75–8.

[101] On this aspect of characterization, see n. 23 above.

[102] These features are sometimes seen as derivative from the status of the figures as 'heroic' (e.g. by Knox) or, in structuralist terms, as 'marginal', and on the borders of humanity and divinity or bestiality (e.g. by C. P. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 8 ff). But this does not invalidate the description of these features in the terms used here; indeed, all three types of critical framework seem to be defining a rather similar type of tension in our responses to 'problematic' figures, though one which is rather differently conceived.

heightened degree of audience involvement with the expression of deeply felt personal sentiments of a kind which are often morally non-standard and problematic in their implications.[103] I realise that my remarks here are sketchy and promissory in the extreme;[104] but I hope that, taken in conjunction with my discussion of specific passages, they will be sufficient to suggest that the deployment of the distinction between 'character' and 'personality' in this connection need not be as anachronistic or aridly theoretical as it might seem.

[103] See e.g. Achilles' great speech in *Il.* 9, and the laments for Ajax (S. *Ai.* 925–32, 966–70) discussed above. Such forms serve as vehicles for what the ancient critics sometimes called *pathos*; cf. n. 3 above.

[104] I hope to redeem some of the promises made or implied in this chapter in a forthcoming book, *Character and Personality in Greek Literature and Philosophy*.

Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature

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