2

Traditional Greek Conceptions of Character

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I

In Prodicus' parable 'The Choice of Heracles', epitomized in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (2. 1. 21–33), the figure of Virtue tells the adolescent hero, as he sits contemplating the ethical divergence of 'roads' which defines the possibilities of his adult life: 'I approach you, Heracles, with knowledge of who your parents were, and having learnt your own nature (*phusis*) in the course of your education. As a result, I hope that if you take the road which leads to me, you will certainly become an excellent agent of fine and proud deeds' (2. 1. 27). The words of Virtue intimate, in the first place, a typical Greek admiration of, and faith in, εὐγένεια, the 'breeding' which marks a man's familial status, links him with his ancestors, and forms the matrix of his own identity. The import of the allegory perhaps allows us to interpret Heracles' good birth as indicative not just of this strictly aristocratic factor, but also of that part of any man's make-up which is 'given', innate, or inherited, rather than acquired. But εὐγένεια, as is apparent, is not a static possession, and certainly not enough to shape all the qualities of a person's active life. It is a component of identity which needs to be recreated, realized, and fulfilled in the positive development of the individual's own 'nature'.[1] This 'nature' is itself a dynamic potential, requiring to be tended and brought to fruition, like Pindar's 'vine-plant of *aretē*' (*Nem.* 8. 40), through careful processes of nurture and education.

Heracles' capabilities of choice, then, as he experiences the competing appeals of Virtue and Vice, have already been

[1] That Heracles' 'nature' is distinguishable from, yet related to, his parentage is clear from Virtue's words at 2. 1. 27. Cf. n. 22 below.

partly engendered and formed by his lineage, his natural endowments, and his upbringing. These influences give Virtue reason for confidence in the young hero, but they do not wholly predetermine the outcome of his choice of life. There remains, as the allegory indicates, an irreducibly personal element of responsibility: Heracles, now in control of his own life (αὐτοκράτωρ), goes out to a secluded spot, to ponder alone (21). Without this element—whose locus is the individual consciousness of, and deliberation on, matters of pleasure and pain, honour and shame, good and evil—the story would lose its essential significance for the understanding and evaluation of human living. Prodicus' parable allegorizes the process of ethical commitment emergent from the mind's reactions to the world which confronts it. But this process is not an exercise of 'pure' will (even supposing we believe in such a thing). Prodicus portrays his female personifications of Virtue and Vice with expressive details of style and deportment, in order to suggest the complex of factors involved in the choice of lives before Heracles, and the way in which they engage his emotions, his perception, and his rational cognition. The voices of Virtue and Vice are pressures and allurements in the world in which Heracles must move, but also internal voices in the 'dialogue of the soul' which represents his conscious responses to that world.

So the parable can be read as the condensed story of the formation and exercise of character in the growing person's active experience of the world. I have begun with this quasi-dramatic example because character is not a subject which we can afford to explore from the starting-point of a fixed definition or a set of terminology. We can, however, provisionally mark out its sphere of importance for Greek culture by describing it, in the terms dramatized by Prodicus, as a matter of the shaping of a human life by an ethical motivation and agency ascribed, at its core, to the individual himself, and for which he may be held responsible, albeit in a context of forces (inherited status, natural capacities, nurture and education, and, not least, the larger order (27–8) of a world controlled by the gods) which help to create, and to limit, the conditions within which such agency and its attendant responsibility can operate.

The factors and issues broached by these remarks on 'The Choice of Heracles' will all be taken up again in the second part

of this chapter, where I shall explore some of the assumptions, themes, and preoccupations which repeatedly recur in the presentation and evaluation of character in Greek texts of the archaic and classical periods (and, indeed, beyond). The continuing availability of certain beliefs and standards is the phenomenon covered by the word 'traditional' in my title, though I shall inevitably have to offer representative rather than extensive evidence for the continuity of this tradition. Much of my case will later be structured around consideration of a single document, Isocrates' *Evagoras*, but I shall use this as a framework within which to adduce relevant material from a variety of other sources. My hope is to keep the argument close to the particularity of individual texts, while allowing at the same time for an engagement with some strands in the Greek conceptualization of character.

I wish to proceed first, however, by laying down some principles of interpretation of a kind which will involve the rejection of an influential modern view of the development of Greek culture and thought. It is my initial contention that we could hardly begin to enquire into any culture's conceptions of character unless we could recognize and assume certain basic constituents in the understanding and evaluation of human behaviour. If it were possible, for example, to sustain the remarkable proposition that 'our own *basic antithesis* between self and not-self does not yet exist in Homeric consciousness' (my italics), we would not even, I submit, be in a position to affirm that there *was* any humanly intelligible 'Homeric consciousness' open to our inspection, still less to entertain simultaneously the idea that 'Homeric man . . . felt himself as a unitary being'.[2] Since my two quotations come from the same source, the first can surely only prompt us to ask of the second: Without any notion of 'self' (for one cannot have a notion of that which is indistinguishable from its contradictory), how could 'Homeric man' regard 'himself' as anything at all?

It will be an axiom of my argument that the assessment of psychological and ethical conceptions operative in another culture requires at least a limited postulate of what one might call anthropological 'realism': unless we can presuppose certain

[2] H. Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (Oxford, 1975), 80, 76.

fundamental factors in human experience, there will be no basis on which to identify and comprehend significant cultural traits and distinctions in the interpretation of character. The nature of these factors must here be indicated summarily, but without, I think, begging or underestimating any questions about the more specific categories of self-understanding to be found in different cultures (or indeed shifts in these categories within the same culture).[3] The chief elements I have in mind are as follows: first, a basic recognition of the psychological identity of individuals, which is not to be equated with a theory of individualism and which does not override social or status-based components of identity; second, the ascription to individuals of at least some powers of choice and self-directed agency; third, the existence of criteria, however rudimentary, of rationality (in particular, criteria bearing on the *reasons* which can be given for choices of action); fourth, some conception of human responsibility, involving a sense of standards of applicability of praise and blame to agents and their actions.

Two important qualifications must be made at once; one has been already touched on. First, the above set of principles is not meant to exclude or prejudge the significant kinds of variation which may exist between cultures, or within a culture, in the emphasis and ordering of beliefs about human behaviour and character. The extent of interest shown in the life of the mind, the precise ways in which it is deemed to contribute to the understanding of persons, the degree to which individual identity and agency are conceived as discrete forces or, alternatively, as subordinate to larger forces—these and many other matters involve culturally variable phenomena which I do not underestimate. Secondly, these baldly stated prerequisite conditions for the existence of notions of character represent assumptions which may in some cases operate below the level of fully explicit or articulated formulation, as well as below the level of conscious consistency. The term 'conceptions' in my title should be understood to allow for this qualification, which expresses a rejection of the idea that conceptions can be identified primarily

[3] Many issues pertinent to this question are discussed in M. Carrithers, S. Collins, and S. Lukes (edd.), *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (Cambridge, 1985). I should emphasize that my own basic postulates do not purport to address particular *theories* of the person (behaviourist, Buddhist, etc.).

by reference to particular lexical items in a language. The importance of this last point will emerge clearly enough in what follows.

From the great texts of Homeric and Hesiodic poetry onwards, Greek literature has its means, both descriptive and dramatic, of conveying conceptions and judgements of character. These conceptions rest on, without being cleanly restricted to, versions of the fundamental premisses of agency, rationality, and responsibility indicated above. Even where countervailing ideas of human passivity or irrationality, environmental influences, divine impingement, etc. enter the picture, it is to be stressed that these ideas themselves, by negative implication, often entail the possibility of precisely the conceptions in question: when Priam excuses Helen at *Iliad* 3. 164, or Agamemnon excuses himself at 19. 86–7, we can observe that, particular issues of interpretation aside, the very terms of the exculpations imply the thinkable alternatives that these humans (who are identified, we notice, with their personal histories) *were* actively responsible and blameworthy. Agency, rationality, and responsibility, however imperfectly realized in practice, cannot be understood without some sense of psychological integrity, that is, of the mind as a coherent locus of consciousness and motivation within the person. But integrity does not mean indivisible homogeneity, and we can trace from the beginnings of the Greek literary tradition a strong awareness of the ways in which the mind can contain disparate, even contradictory, forces, variable in the degree to which they can be subjected to conscious control. It is plausible, in fact, that at a deep level these two ideas—psychic integrity and psychic conflict—are complementary (a Platonic insight, incidentally). A unitary notion of mind which did not allow for the practical reality of psychic complexity would be descriptively inadequate, while the recognition of the diverse energies that can be at work in consciousness requires the supposition of a basic mental coherence within which to perceive and define the nature of psychic discord.

The complementary nature of these two psychological principles, and their coexistence as active principles from the beginnings of Greek literature, have been strongly denied by a number of influential modern scholars who have seen a progressive evolution in archaic and classical Greece from the 'primitive' and 'fragmented' psychology of the Homeric poems, in which there is allegedly no sense at all of psychic unity, towards much more cohesive views of the nature of mind and personality. Such contentions, particularly associated with Bruno Snell's *The Discovery of the Mind*, carry an initial plausibility from the undoubted development of new *theories* of mind and soul in the course of the archaic and classical periods. But in their attempts to deny to the Homeric epics, and, by doubtful extrapolation from them, to the world in which they were produced,[4] a recognition of the basic unity of human consciousness, Snell and others have applied a faulty method and drawn unwarranted conclusions from it. I shall try briefly to make good these criticisms, and shall pass from them to some demonstration of the two psychological principles I have mentioned at work in Homer. In addition to the intrinsic importance of this issue for the interpretation of the Homeric epics, it has a substantial bearing on the continuity of the subsequent Greek tradition of characterization.

The claim that Homer lacks a unitary concept of mind or soul depends on considerations of two kinds, one negative and one positive: first, the absence of any particular term in Homer which we can translate unequivocally as 'mind'; secondly, the Homeric manner of describing psychological processes and events by reference to different 'organs' (νόος, θυμός, φρένες, etc.) which, according to one formulation, 'are not felt as part of the self' but show themselves as 'detached entities'.[5] Both halves of this argument are impaired by what one might call a lexical bias—an assumption, to which I have already referred, that individual lexical items and locutions, or the lack of them, are the most significant facts about the way in which a language shapes the conceptions expressible within it. This assumption is often hazardous, but particularly so in the

[4] A. W. H. Adkins, *From the Many to the One* (London, 1970) after reasonably identifying 'Homeric man' with 'the human beings . . . portrayed in the Homeric poems' (13), suggests that 'Homeric language . . . would have *tended to encourage* the fragmentation of Homeric man's psychological experience' (23, my ital.), a proposition which implies that Homeric man and his language existed outside the poems. Similarly with the idea of Homeric speech as a 'direct record' of experience (22). Cf. A. A. Long, 'Moral Values in Homer', *JHS* 90 (1970), 122.

[5] E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), 16.

psychological sphere. It may be right to suppose that the language used to describe or analyse psychological experience is partly constitutive of the nature of that experience, but it is one-sided to translate this supposition into the principle that individual lexical items in themselves carry a greater weight than the total discourse of which they form a part. In Homer's case, it should not be one particular area of vocabulary, but the entire narrative and dramatic style of the poet, and the images created by this style, which give expression to a view of men and the workings of their minds.

The kind of lexical analysis which ignores this principle can readily produce the conclusion that in Homeric psychology 'the parts are more in evidence than the whole',[6] for such analysis is *itself* only an account of the parts. In fact, close and sensitive scrutiny of the functions of *νόος*, *θυμός*, etc. in Homer will actually confirm that the sense of mental and emotional complexity which they sometimes convey has to be interpreted within the underlying wholeness of psychological identity and self-awareness. How else, at the most elementary level, can (say) a man's *thumos* be called 'his' at all, unless it is conceived as constitutive of his conscious 'self'? How, similarly, can passages in which someone addresses his *thumos* be adduced as evidence for the independence of the latter, when these same passages are permeated by the language of an 'I' to which the *thumos* is entirely ascribed? What, moreover, are we to make of those four Iliadic passages in which a character addresses his *thumos* only to pull himself up with the question 'Why does my *thumos say this to me*?',[7] if not that they dramatize, through a stylized presentation, a mentally integral process or experience? It is difficult from these considerations, which could be multiplied, to see how the medium of such experiences can consist of 'detached entities'.

The argument can best be taken further by looking at a particular passage; I choose one which demonstrates well the compelling psychological characterization of which the Homeric epics are capable—the night scene at the start of *Odyssey* 20, where Odysseus holds back from premature vengeance against

[6] Adkins, *From the Many*, 26–7.

[7] 11. 403, 407; 17. 90, 97; 21. 552, 562; 22. 98, 122.

the suitors' mistresses, before being assuaged and granted sleep by Athena (5–55). The passage illustrates the combination of descriptive and dramatic means of characterization; the narrative of Odysseus' state of mind is enlarged by the direct voicing of his dilemma through soliloquy or self-address (18–21). This latter technique, showing us how Odysseus 'scolded his heart', is not a symptom of mental fragmentation, but a paradigm of the dramatic demonstration of a complex psychological process, the internal anguish of a mind faced by alternatives which evoke from it competing impulses. There is no reason to treat the technique as essentially different from later literary uses of self-address, such as, say, that of the distraught Demeas at Menander, *Samia* 325–56 (though there the element of audience address imports an additional factor).

Of course the scene in *Od.* 20 suggests a strong sense of psychological tension and convulsion, but the conflict of impulses *within* Odysseus is exactly that; and far from being an impediment to a coherent conception of the person, it would be unintelligible, I submit, without one. It is only because we know what it is for an individual mind to be caught in an agitated dilemma of contending impulses, and yet for the experience to be played out within an integral state of consciousness, that we can understand this remarkable scene and implicitly relate it to other possible experiences of psychic tension (such as that of Plato's Leontius, *Rep.* 439e–440a). The presentation of Odysseus' condition is not an aggregate of discrete and self-sufficient statements about his *thumos* and other 'organs': we interpret the psychological force of the particular components from the dramatic nature of the whole, not vice versa.

But this passage shows, in any case, how the range of psychological language employed by Homer is handled with a dynamic or expressive flexibility, not with an analytic sense of 'detached entities' operating somehow independently of, or in contradiction to, the mind's sense of itself. To try to attach a specific function to *thumos*, for example, will produce a confusion which is not present in the scene itself.[8] Far from having a specific function, *thumos* can represent any strong impulse or

[8] Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry*, 78, talks of a 'specific function' for each Homeric organ: he then attributes some sixteen different 'emotions', 'intimations', 'deliberations', and other states of mind to *thumos*.

motivation, and its urgings straddle analytical distinctions between the cognitive and the emotional; its particular significance must always be taken from the circumstances of the scene. When we are told how Odysseus' *thumos* swelled or roused up (9) after he heard the laughter of the maids, we do not need to consult the usage of *thumos* elsewhere to interpret this psychological moment; if we did, we would find, for example, that the other two occurrences of precisely the same phrase in the work (18. 75, 24. 318), and a further instance in the *Iliad* (9. 595), all represent subtly different states of feeling from the present passage—a point which can be established and elucidated only by dramatic, not by purely lexical, judgement.

Far from fragmenting the effect, in fact, some details of the references to *thumos* and other actuating springs of behaviour will serve only to show how they contribute to a complex but unitary sense of the mind and character of Odysseus. As regards the *thumos*, the point is conveyed in part by the variation between Odysseus himself (10, 28, 41) and his *thumos* (38) as the subject of the same crucial verb, *μερμηρίζειν*: the direct equation between 28–30 (with the poet's 'he') and 38–40 (with Odysseus' 'my *thumos*'), and the same shift within Odysseus' own speech at 38–41, are both incomprehensible without the presumption of an essential 'self'. Moreover, *thumos* functions variously as the medium of Odysseus' plans for retribution (5), as a passionate impulsion towards immediate revenge (9, 38), and as an element in the counter-impulse to wait for the opportunity for a fuller and more perfect vengeance (10–12). With the κραδίη, 'heart', we observe how a drive of (here) a strong animal character, as expressed by the dog simile, can yet be closely associated with the belief, recalled from a previous occasion, 'that you would die' (21); so the κραδίη too, if one wishes to press the analysis, has a cognitive aspect, and is more than 'pure' emotion.[9] If, indeed, we were consistently analytical here, we should have to say that the κραδίη as such possesses memory, since 'Odysseus' reminds it of its previous experiences. This point is critical. It would evidently be absurd to apportion memory to one segment of Odysseus' mind at this moment, and

[9] The address to the κραδίη not only employs a way of addressing a *person*, it turns into just that: the gender of the participle in 21 shows that Odysseus is addressing *himself*, yet within the address to his heart.

that is because we are compelled, by fundamental psychological postulates as well as by the clear import of the Greek, to take Odysseus' words as precisely *self*-address, a dramatization of the acute experience of conflict within a single mind, whose memory—the bonding of the sense of self—interpenetrates and integrates emotion and rationality.

The purpose of these remarks is to show that if the psychology of this scene is interpreted with due sense of its dramatic nuances and its full effect, we do not find in it evidence for a Homeric view of the fissionable nature of consciousness, but rather a manifestation of the way in which the mental experience of the character precisely *embraces* and holds together a complexity of drives and motivations. The scene gives us, in fact, a fine dramatic equivalent to the theories of psychological faculties later elaborated by the philosophers, in that for them too the existence of psychological 'parts' or components is predicated on the basic unity of the mind.[10] Moreover, the impact of the scene serves a function of ethical characterization. The μῆτις, 'cunning', of which Odysseus reminds himself, as his previous salvation (20), and the controlled endurance which it entails (18–23), are salient marks of the character which he shows and develops in the course of the entire poem. The present passage is itself a revelation of that μῆτις and endurance at work, and of the way in which they have to be exercised so as to achieve a hard-won control over other psychological forces which might impede their success. It is also, of course, important that we see Odysseus' character in operation unaided, *before* Athena's reassurance is given.

Emergent from a fraught experience of mental turmoil, Odysseus' difficult preservation of μῆτις is all the more rational for that; it depends on his sense that there are strong prudential reasons (30, 40–3), tied up with the nature of his preparations for revenge, why he should restrain himself from intervening at this point. Odysseus' heart may bark like a dog, but his animal drives are subject to the control (a control of heroic dimensions, in this case) of his larger awareness of the possibilities of his situation. Odysseus is not only conscious of his own mind, he is also

[10] Arist. *EN* 1102^{a}28–32, on the different senses of 'parts', is especially pertinent. Cf. *De An.* 432^{a}15 ff.; *EE* 1219^{b}32–4.

responsible for the final promptings to which it moves him. Psychology and characterization are therefore functionally at one in this episode. If Prodicus' parable, with which I started, might seem to delineate, in its allegorical schematism, too tranquil a model of ethical choice, the poet of the *Odyssey* offers us a wonderful image of the torments of such choice for one entrammelled in immediate complexities of action.

I suggested earlier that part of the importance of grasping the existence in Homer of a sense—an active, dramatic sense—of the unity-in-complexity of the mind, is that it establishes in the most influential texts of Greek literature an outlook which was capable of surviving or transcending later developments in the language and attitudes of Greek psychological thinking, and of remaining vitally intelligible to subsequent Greek culture. Without this continuity, it would be difficult to explain the lasting significance to the Greeks of Homer's images of man, still less to understand how even philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle could cite examples of Homeric psychology without any recognition of the 'gulf' which has been discerned between Homer's and classical Greek views of the mind.[11] Rather than positing such a gulf, it is more economical to accept that the shifts and changes in Greek psychology between the time of Homer and that of Aristotle, important though they were especially on the level of philosophical theory, did not obliterate an underlying continuity in assumptions about the workings of the mind, as well as about their relevance to human character. Various further aspects of this tradition of enduring, shared assumptions will emerge in the course of the examination of a particular exercise in characterization, Isocrates' *Evagoras*, to which I now turn.

II

The *Evagoras*, an encomiastic biography (or biographically structured encomium) of the King of Cypriot Salamis, was

[11] 'Gulf': B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (Eng. trans., Oxford, 1953), 1. Given Snell's view, it is curious that he should allow that Plato 'deliberately echoes Homeric ideas' (312 n. 20). For Platonic references to Homeric psychology, see esp. *Phaedo* 94d–e; *Rep.* 390d, 441b, where precisely the passage I have considered from *Od.* 20 is assimilated (tendentiously) to Plato's own psychological ideas. For Aristotle, see e.g. *EN* 1116b26–30.

written towards the mid-360s, some years after the death of its subject in 374/3, and was addressed, by way of dedication, to Evagoras' son, Nicocles. Its historical motivation and credibility, which are intricately related to the work's rhetorical nature, and about whose implications Isocrates shows a degree of delicacy (5, 9–11, 21, 39, 48), are not of direct interest here. The undoubted excesses consequent upon the eulogistic function, as well as what some might see as its author's mediocrity of ideas, do not impair its value as a document which can usefully exemplify a number of conventional Greek attitudes towards human character. In fact, its high degree of reliance on stereotypes and clichés (something for which the ageing writer seems to apologize at 73) actually gives it just the kind of representativeness, at least at the level of ethical outlook, which suits my illustrative purposes. I shall begin by examining a number of points which emerge from the final chapters of the work (73–81), where Isocrates summarizes its purport and possible effect. I shall then move back to the details of the treatment of Evagoras' life and character, and to consideration of the types of attitude in which it is grounded.

There is an obvious temptation to describe the *Evagoras* as a biographical 'portrait'. It is interesting that Isocrates himself, in the work's epilogue, develops an analogy and a contrast with sculptured and painted portraiture (73–5). He does so in part in order to challenge comparison with the power of visual memorials to preserve a man's reputation after his death and to endow him with 'immortality', which is one dimension of Isocrates' own encomiastic function in regard to Evagoras (3–4).[12] But the comparison, or rather the contrast, with visual memorials serves a further and more emphatic purpose, by giving Isocrates a means of asserting his concern with his subject's mind and character. To do so, it is true, he has to ignore the possibility that visual portraits too can express something of a man's particular nature and qualities.[13] Even so, his contrast

[12] Cf. 67, 70–1. It is relevant that the Athenians had erected a memorial statue of Evagoras in memory of his military help against Sparta (57). Note also that Isocrates' 'immortalizing' function is throughout conceived in competition with the ability of poetry to perpetuate a man's memory (a Greek cliché): see esp. 6, 8–11, 40, 65, 72.

[13] The earliest references to character (*ēthos*) and related topics in the visual arts occur at Xen. *Mem.* 3. 10. 1–8; Arist. *Pol.* 1340a38; *Poet.* 1450a26–9; but none of these

has some justification; there are necessary limitations on what can be learnt about character from appearance alone, and hence from a portrait: 'there is no mark of a man's mind in his face' (Hyperides fr. 196 Kenyon).[14] A sculptured portrait might communicate a striking sense of some aspects of a personality, but it could hardly be expected, unaided, to offer extensive insight into the nature of an individual's mind or life as a whole. Isocrates' verbal 'portrait', by contrast, with its narrative, expository, and analytical means, can claim to be able to exhibit the 'actions and mind' of the man, his true character, as revealed in the ethical shape of his entire career.

Evagoras' 'actions and mind' (73)—here we have Isocrates' central subject, the theme which justifies the application of the term 'biography' to his work, though of course with due qualifications.[15] In contrast to the historian, who might place some of Evagoras' actions within the larger framework of, say, a war, a period, or the events of a region, Isocrates' purpose is to show and explain the unity of an individual life in its own right and for its own sake. More than this, it is his aim to demonstrate how such unity is at root a matter precisely of character—a matter of the shaping of a life by its own agency, an agency which consistently reflects and embodies the dispositions, choices, and virtues predicable of the person himself. This biographical task claims to match, by its encomiastic design, one of the main *internal* dynamics of the kind of life in question: Evagoras shares with all καλοὶ κἀγαθοί, all who have ambition to excel (φιλοτιμία), a pride in active achievements and the force of mind which is manifested in them (τοῖς ἔργοις καὶ τῇ γνώμῃ, 74). The underlying ideas here, which Isocrates had stressed at the start of his work too (2–5), are old and well-tried. One will not need to dwell on the pervasive importance in many areas of Greek culture of an ambitious, striving ethic, feeding on values of success, honour, and lasting fame. Isocrates' work identifies such values in operation in Evagoras' life, just as it validates and perpetuates them itself by its own panegyric function. The whole process is self-renewing: the *Evagoras* has been written in part so as to encourage others, especially Evagoras' own son, to emulation (74–81)—a well-recognized capability of encomium.[16]

passages refers directly to portraiture. R. P. Hinks, *Greek and Roman Portrait Sculpture* (London, 1935; 2nd edn. 1976), ch. 1, takes the development of portraiture as reflecting beliefs in the integrity of the self.

[14] One is irresistibly reminded of Duncan's 'There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face' (*Macbeth* I. iv. 11–12). Hes. *Op.* 714 implies the possibility of an appearance which disguises one's mind. Cf. n. 32 below.

[15] A. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), ch. 3.

There are, it can already be discerned, certain notions about character implicit in, and associated with, such an ethical outlook. Though Isocrates may advert to the novelty and difficulty of prose encomium (8–11), the new form (if it is that) grows naturally out of the soil of an old, varied, Greek tradition of praise and blame. Praise and blame are ethical exercises and forces; they are, in fact, paradigmatic forms of ethical judgement, as Aristotle emphasized.[17] They entail not only the existence but also the *sharing* of values, since effective praise and blame must be addressed to audiences which will recognize and endorse their function: their function and effect are constituted precisely by people's responses to them. And this function is in turn predicated on the assumption that, in certain respects at least, men have some personal, conscious control over the determination of their actions and lives. Isocrates makes this point explicitly. Nicocles, Evagoras' son, the addressee of the work, is urged to continue with his quest for virtuous pre-eminence and recognition: 'it is in your power', he is told, 'not to miss these goals' (81). That which is 'in one's power' depends on character for its realization. Character, as Isocrates' epilogue makes clear, centres on a man's actions and on the personal direction which motivates and shapes them: his mind and thought (διάνοια, γνώμη), his choice and will (75), his practical intelligence (φρόνησις), and the habits, practices, and way of life (τρόποι, ἐπιτηδεύματα, διατριβαί) which the exercise of thought and choice generates.[18] This cluster of terms and motifs occurs in the work's protreptic epilogue to Nicocles, supporting Isocrates' contention that it is now *his* turn to follow his father's example and perpetuate the reputation of his ancestors. But

[16] See e.g. Isoc. 4. 159, with Aristoph. *Ran.* 1026–7, 1039–42; Pl. *Prt.* 326a; *Phdr.* 245a.

[17] *EN* 1101^{b}31–2, 1103^{a}8–10, 1109^{b}30 f.; *EE* 1223^{a}9–15.

[18] διάνοια/-αι: 42, 73, 75; γνώμη: 27, 29, 41, 61, 71, 74; φρόνησις: 65, 80; τρόπος/-οι: 24, 51, 75; ἐπιτηδεύματα: 2, 77; διατριβαί 78. Note also the use of ψυχή in this connection (80, matching 41).

these same ideas had also occurred insistently in the main body of the work, helping to substantiate the account of Evagoras' own character. Some features of this account will allow us to see more fully the conceptions of character which Isocrates employs and presupposes.

The encomium proper starts by situating Evagoras in the perspective of his ancestral γένος, the Teucridae (12–18). This is noteworthy not just as an opportunity to rival (by borrowing) some of the 'ornaments' (9–11) and mythology (36) supposedly reserved for poetry, but also as a way of suggesting an inherited potential which gives Evagoras' character one strand of its significance: the family or clan, stretching back into mythical time, is the matrix of Evagoras' *phusis* (12), which will later be shown to have grown and materialized in his own life (29, 49, 72). This is a clear case, then, of εὐγένεια, inherited nobility and 'breeding', a factor which we saw in 'The Choice of Heracles'. Such a pedigree seems to operate in a double manner, both as a model or standard for Evagoras' emulation (the παραδείγματα of 12; cf. 77), and as a natural element internal to his make-up, though requiring active realization. The first of these points is indicated by the specific theme of 'dangers' (κίνδυνοι), which the mythical figures Peleus (16) and Achilles (18) are cited for having faced, and which run as a leitmotiv through the treatment of Evagoras' own life (2, 27, 29, 35–6, 38, 46, 65). But that Evagoras was capable of living up to such exalted standards (12–13) was possible in part only because of his natural endowment (19, 41). His life manifests a character which validates, by sustaining, the norms of his γένος (32); his 'nature' belongs to him, but it can be fully appreciated only in the light of his ancestry.

Although Evagoras' Teucrid pedigree is a special, quasi-heroic factor, Isocrates' treatment of the king's 'nature' reflects a Greek attitude of much wider applicability—a tendency to see one dimension of character as something natural. The term *phusis*, as in this work, is often used to present a person's character as a matter of that which is most intrinsic and integral to him; where appropriate, the superiority of the natural over the acquired is an additional implication. Yet this poses a paradox, for character is also commonly conceived, as the etymology of *ēthos* suggests, in terms of dispositions induced by habit, practice, and training: 'all character (*ēthos*) grows through habit (*ethos*)'.[19] This duality of categories runs through much Greek thinking about character, sometimes resolved by the assertion of the priority of one force over the other, but often handled in such a way as to allow the interfusion of the two factors. It seems likely, in fact, that the two basic conceptions—of a natural, innate temperament, and of a habitual way of life—effectively cross-fertilized one another, so that to call a man's character his 'nature' became the most emphatic means of portraying (for good or bad) the pervasive qualities of his existence, while the primary evidence for a person's 'nature' would inevitably be the consistent attributes of his behaviour.[20] This issue is therefore implicated in the relation between mind and action which will shortly be considered.

One original context of the idea of character as natural was probably aristocratic; the conception could derive an obvious impetus from societies (both real and mythological) in which there was a dominant presumption of the inherited superiority of members of political and social élites. Hence, for one thing, the frequency of such notions in Pindaric epinician, proclaiming and celebrating the quality of ancestral merit in those families which could lay claim to it.[21] Yet even Pindar can praise only those who have *displayed* and thereby proved the capability of their 'natural' character. Eugenic nature is only an acceptable warrant of character where the evidence of deeds provides confirmation of it. The tensions which might arise in such a scheme of values are dramatically explored in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, where the issue of Neoptolemus' 'nature' is suspended ambiguously between two factors: his inherited identity as son of Achilles, and his active attempts to emulate and re-create the heroic implications of that paternity in his own life.[22]

[19] Pl. *Leg.* 792e2 (though the verb 'grows' seems to admit a natural basis to the process: cf. *Rep.* 395d2 and n. 24 below); cf. Arist. *EN* 1103ᵃ17 ff.

[20] There is much relevant material in K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality* (Oxford, 1974), 88–95. For the superiority of the natural, see e.g. Thuc. 1. 138. 3, on Themistocles; E. *Hipp.* 79–80.

[21] e.g. *Ol.* 9. 100–2, 11. 19–20 (NB ἐμφυές ... ἦθος), 13. 13 (συγγενὲς ἦθος). The imagery of *Nem.* 8. 40 f. suggests that *aretē* is like a plant: natural, but in need of careful tending.

[22] *Phil.* 88–9, 874–5 clearly indicate that Neoptolemus' *phusis* is distinguishable from his parentage (cf. n. 1 above), even though, as the whole play suggests, the former aspires towards the standards of the latter.

In Evagoras' case too, as in Prodicus' allegorical treatment of Heracles', a man's natural inheritance, however historically illustrious, calls for practical, visible realization in his personal achievements. Otherwise, nature becomes degenerate, disappointing; εὐγένεια alone is seen to be insufficient for an excellence which men can discern and to which they can respond.[23] If the fragile identification of character with inherited claims to 'breeding' is something which could be perceived with impunity in a democratic society, we should not attribute entirely to this cause the acuteness of the debates over the rival claims of nature and education attested so clearly for the age of the sophists and reflected in the thinking of Plato.[24] It had always been possible to think the thoughts of a Thersites, by observing discrepancies between the expectations attaching to socially transmitted status and the realities of an individual's behaviour.

By the later fifth century 'nature' had become a term applicable to anyone's character of life, regardless of pedigree. It would perhaps be a mistake to see this as entirely a matter of extension from an originally aristocratic frame of reference, a kind of democratization of the language of inherited merit, though certainly a process of that kind can be interestingly seen at work in the 'moralization' of the specific terminology of εὐγένεια.[25] But more generally, a view of character which, as commonly in a traditional Greek outlook, aligns expectations of individual behaviour with position within the structures of family and society, and therefore with such determinants as sex, age, and political status, might well find it persuasively convenient to translate such conventional expectations into the terms of natural roles.[26] If so, this is a further element tending

[23] Degenerate εὐγένεια: Theogn. 183–92, 436; Phocylides fr. 3 Diehl; S. *El.* 287, 341 ff.; E. *El.* 368–72, 550–1; Arist. *Rh.* $1390^{b}22$–4.

[24] The 5th-cent. debate over natural versus learnt character is reflected at e.g. E. *Hec.* 592 ff.; *Suppl.* 911–17; Pl. *Meno passim; Prt.* 318–28; but, as Pl. *Meno* 95d–96a observes, the issue is older (see Theogn. 31–8, 429–38). Arist. *EN* $1103^{a}17$ ff., $1114^{a}31$–$^{b}25$, denies altogether that character is a matter of nature (though see e.g. *Rh.* $1390^{b}16$–31 for some allowance); Plato's position is much more equivocal and complex: see e.g. *Rep.* 374e ff., 424a, 431c7, and cf. the remarkable physiological explanation of mental diseases at *Tim.* 86d–87b.

[25] e.g. E. *Hipp.* 1390; *El.* 253, 262; fr. 336 N²; Men. *Dysc.* 281, 321, 723, 835; *Sam.* 356. Cf. the kindred idea of the aristocracy of merit at Pl. *Menex.* 238c–239a.

[26] For some formal acknowledgement of the link between character and status see

towards complication of the conceptual relationship between nature and 'practice' (including nurture, education, and habitual behaviour), for the latter influences are themselves to be regarded, where status-defined standards are prevalent, as enabling the processes of nature to be socially realized and embodied. A person who fulfils his or her normative role within the family or society can be held to possess a character which is the completion of nature. Nature here functions as an ultimate sanction and justification for the (hierarchical) structuring of human relations, and the individual is not praised or blamed for an existentially independent choice of life, but for successfully complying with the determining forces of his natural place in the world. Similar assumptions can of course be translated onto an even larger scale, contributing to chauvinistic conceptions of the natural 'character' of a whole society, or even to a sense of the racial superiority of Greeks over barbarians.[27]

In the acclaimed case of Evagoras, to return to Isocrates, nature and character, the 'given' and the actualized, are synonymous, or at any rate in perfect harmony. The portrayal of active character is marked by the emphasis on the presence of virtues in Evagoras' life from his childhood onwards (22 ff.). The virtues are clustered in such a way as to suggest a complete array: self-control or discipline (σωφροσύνη, 22), courage (ἀνδρία, 23), practical intelligence (σοφία, 23), justice (δικαιοσύνη, 23), piety (ὁσιότης, εὐσέβεια, 25–6). Each of these qualities reappears and is confirmed later: σωφροσύνη is exemplified by Evagoras' mastery over the force of pleasure (45), courage is central to the subsequent narrative of the recovery of power (esp. 27–32; cf. 65), the force of intelligence is accentuated at 41–6, while justice and piety receive regular reference (26, 38–9, 43, 51). This range of excellences covers many major dimensions of ethical activity—appropriate treatment of others, both friends and enemies; regulation of one's own conduct, and

e.g. Pl. *Meno* 71e–72a (where Meno voices traditional sentiments); Arist. *Rh.* $1388^{b}31$–$1391^{b}7$. The relevance of the point to literary characterization is apparent at Pl. *Ion* 540b; Arist. *Poet.* $1454^{a}19$–31.

[27] Athenian national character: Aristoph. *Pax* 607; Thuc. 2. 36 ff., 7. 14. 2–4, 48. 4; Pl. *Menex.* 237–8; cf. the spurious prologue to Theophr. *Char.* on differences of character between Greek states. Greek character *vis-à-vis* barbarian: e.g. A. *Pers.* 231–44; Arist. *Pol.* $1285^{a}19$–22; Hippoc. *Aër. passim.* On these two points, cf. also Dover, *Greek Popular Morality*, 83–7.

control over internal forces capable of impeding prudence; the pursuit of honourable goals even at the risk of one's life; behaviour of a kind likely to find favour with the gods.[28]

It would be difficult to exaggerate the Greek tendency to evaluate character in overtly ethical terms—that is to say, to judge people primarily by reference to their possession or lack of *aretai*, excellences or virtues, which are active exemplifications of standards sustained by the currency of wide social approval, and embodiable in particular forms of life. This is, arguably, the most important fact about Greek conceptions of character—a cultural fact deeply embedded in the vocabulary of evaluation used at all levels and in all types of context (which does not imply, it should be stressed, universal subscription to an identical set of values). This ethical culture incorporates the traditions of praise and blame which I mentioned earlier, and its nature well suits Isocrates' purpose in the *Evagoras*: the encomiastic form exactly satisfies one aspect of the preoccupation of traditional Greek ethics with honour and shame, with success and failure, with publicly sanctioned criteria of good and evil. It may be worth adding to this, though without directly addressing the problematic history of changes in ethical values in Greece, that Isocrates' portrayal of Evagoras illustrates the difficulty of applying in this sphere a neat distinction between 'competitive' and 'co-operative' standards. Evagoras is esteemed and commended for a life which in various ways fuses the pursuit of personal glory with the display of virtues from which others—his family, his city and people, his foreign allies—benefit.

Rather as in the Aristotelian systematization of ethics, Isocrates regards Evagoras' individual virtues as crowned by a certain greatness of mind (μεγαλοψυχία, μεγαλοφροσύνη: 3, 45, 59), thus stamping his portrait of the man with a sense of a special potency of character. It must be reiterated that the credibility of the portrait is not our concern, only its characterizing terms and assumptions. These are perhaps seen at their clearest in chs. 41–6, where Isocrates gives a kind of epitome of the character which Evagoras displayed throughout his rule in

[28] Isocrates perhaps exploits a certain tendency, not unique to Socrates, to believe in the unitary nature of *aretē*: for some earlier evidence of this see Theogn. 145–7 (cited as proverbial at Arist. *EN* 1129ᵇ29–30), 378–80.

Salamis. Complementing the earlier emphasis on bold, quasi-heroic courage, exhibited in his recovery of Teucrid power, we are now given an image of Evagoras' prudence and intelligence as a king and leader.[29] This is, in essence, an account of practical wisdom (φρόνησις, 41) and good judgement (εὐβουλία, 46). But these are not abstract virtues; like everything else attributed to Evagoras by Isocrates, they are manifested in action and behaviour: 'that Evagoras possessed all these qualities, and more besides, can easily be learnt from his deeds themselves' (46).

So the virtues of Evagoras were the result of a certain cast of mind; but all the evidence cited to support this belief is derived from active policy and way of life. Character is exhibited by action, and action allows Isocrates to deduce and establish the nature of character. The same correlation between qualities of mind and action was already present in the earlier account of the winning of the kingship (27–40), and the correlation resembles a pattern of attitudes which we have met in the conception of a man's 'nature'. With the mind as with nature, the crucial test is that of observable behaviour; we can adduce here the semantic stress of many Greek terms relating to character (ἦθος, τρόπος, διατριβή, ἐπιτήδευμα, δίαιτα) on the orientation or regularity of behaviour. But the Greeks were not behaviourists, and the persistent assumption is that actions express or reflect the ethical and intentional qualities of mind which lie behind and prompt them—a fact which explains the frequency of cognitive terms (νοεῖν, φρονεῖν, γιγνώσκειν, with various cognates) in Greek descriptions of personal dispositions. In this sense, character can be spoken of as 'in the mind',[30] but this point of view is typically counterbalanced, and made inimical to any preoccupation with introspective psychology, by the equal tendency to diagnose character from action: 'one cannot know the mind of man or woman, until you put them to the test like a beast of burden' (Theogn. 125–6). This is a generalization of an attitude whose validity for political life acquired the status of proverbial wisdom.[31]

[29] This exemplifies the old ideal of combining excellence in deeds and words (see specifically chs. 44 and 77): e.g. Hom. *Il.* 9. 443; Pind. *Nem.* 8. 8; Thuc. 1. 139. 4. On εὐβουλία, cf. M. Schofield, '*Euboulia* in the *Iliad*', *CQ*, NS 36 (1986), 6–31.

[30] ἐν φρεσὶν ἦθος Theogn. 1261; cf. e.g. Hes. *Op.* 67, νόον καὶ . . . ἦθος.

[31] Arist. *EN* 1130ᵃ1–2, quoting Bias' wisdom, echoed at S. *Ant.* 175–7.

The mutually explanatory correspondence between character and action may be a necessary working presupposition of human self-understanding. But it acquires a distinctive Greek complexion through association with an ethical outlook which locates the finest human excellences in overt, publicly recognizable activities. This is something which can be discerned in various forms. Its place in the mythological society dramatized by heroic poetry is patent, but it also appears prominently, for example, in the attitudes underlying Pindaric epinician, where observable success and failure are strong clues (though the gods may spoil the process) to the nature of those who experience them: 'the test of experience shows definitively who is superior—boy among boys, man among men, and likewise, finally, among elders' (*Nem.* 3. 70–3). This same criterion, the test of experience, operates on a different level as a premiss implicit in much of the forensic rhetoric of classical Athenian courts. One justifies oneself in such an arena, and impugns one's opponent, by exploiting in every available way the principle that the nature of a man is manifest in his deeds and his way of life. With the inevitable exception of the dissembler (truly, the exception that proves the rule),[32] there is little room here for the possibility that the quality of a life, or a particular cast of character, may be just of the sort which is *not* open to easy or direct inspection. The bond between character and activity is carried to the point of great philosophical sophistication in the ethics of Aristotle, who can thus be seen, in this as in other respects, to be refining assumptions widely and traditionally held about human nature.[33]

A number of the points made above can be illustrated by the elegiac prayer of complaint at lines 373–400 of the Theognid corpus. This brief meditation on the lack of alignment between a man's character and the conditions of material life which the world (or Zeus) allots him offers us some typical reflections of Greek folk moralizing. We find here the primary postulate of an essential link between the mind of a man and his ethical

[32] Dissimulation is a recurrent theme of moralizing, betokening the anti-behaviourist streak in Greek psychology: see e.g. Hom. *Il.* 9. 312–13; Hes. *Op.* 67, 78; Theogn. 117–18, 213–18, 363–4, 963–7; E. *Med.* 516–19; *Hipp.* 925–31; and the Attic σκόλιον PMG 889 (which Plato may have had in mind at *Rep.* 577a).

[33] Compare Arist. *EN* 1103^{b}1–25 with Dem. 13. 25; and cf. *EN* 1114^{a}9–10 for the currency of the principle.

actions. The idea of 'the mind and spirit of every man' (375) is explained by the division of the world into the just and the unjust (377–8), who are further described as those whose 'mind is turned' either to restraint or to violence (379). This thread continues with the reference to those who 'hold back their impulses (*thumos*) from base deeds' (383–4). Thus action is held to manifest mind or character, while the latter is itself predicated on the basis of the virtues or vices embodied in action. Against the background of this correlation, however, it is then possible for the poet to suggest that the pressure of circumstances—the 'harsh necessity' of poverty—may lead even the good astray into involuntary, because *uncharacteristic*, wrongdoing (386–92). This picture presupposes that we can observe the degradation of a person's good character, and judge it as precisely that, because of our previous experience of their worth. At the same time, the faith in action as the demonstration of character is maintained: even in poverty, one will tell the good and the base apart (393–4), and the behaviour of the just man in these circumstances will give one proof of the straightness of his mind (395–6).

The poem is interesting partly for its acknowledgement of the kind of external forces which may undermine a person's stable behaviour,[34] but also for the way in which, in the face of these facts, it manages to reaffirm the correlation of 'mind' and action, and to suggest that this correlation is the medium in which the excellences and defects of character are constituted. The elegy additionally allows, though hardly with much force, for an element of psychological inwardness in character: 'You, Zeus, know well the mind and spirit of every man', says the poet (375), with a hint of the possible human limitations on seeing into each man's heart. The deployment of the familiar Homeric terms νόος and θυμός implies the dynamics of a rudimentary psychology: the motive forces in each person are focused in an individual agency, and yet not reducible to a single kind of motivation. It is part of the linguistic inheritance of the words from Homeric poetry, as sketched earlier in this chapter, that the components of this psychological picture have

[34] For the force of ἀνάγκη, 'necessity', undermining character, cf. e.g. S. *El.* 307–9, 616–21; E. *El.* 375–6; Dover, *Greek Popular Morality*, 109–10.

a flexible capacity: they do not stand as self-contained mental 'faculties', but depend on a descriptive, narrative, or dramatic context for their full significance. In the present passage, we might notice that νόος and θυμός seem close to being interchangeable (379, 384, 386, 395), and between them cover both the emotional drives and the deliberative functioning of the mind.

If we now return to Isocrates, we can pick out two further and necessary factors in the traditional understanding of character, which reinforce the posited relation between mind and action that I have been outlining. These factors, responsibility and consistency, are made explicit in chs. 41–6 of the *Evagoras*. The nature of Evagoras' leadership, we are told, depended on his personal and active knowledge of his subjects, allowing for first-hand rather then delegated judgements of them (42). 'Nor was he disorganized or capricious in any respect; he maintained consistency in deed and in word alike. His pride [μέγα φρονεῖν; cf. on μεγαλοφροσύνη above] was grounded not in the results of fortune, but in the things for which he himself was responsible' (44–5). This last phrase echoes a contrast which Isocrates had previously drawn between Evagoras' fearless quest for the recovery of power, and the element of fortune or guile in many traditional myths of heroic home-comings (36). In so far as success is due to fortune, it cannot be wholly due to character; and apart from an oblique acknowledgement of the possible coexistence of the two causes (59), Isocrates' encomiastic purpose inhibits him from limiting his subject's personal responsibility for his achievements.

Even so, it remains for anyone working within the spirit of a traditional Greek outlook to observe that Evagoras' remarkable life must have been blessed and favoured by the gods. And so indeed, Isocrates helpfully confirms, it was. If Evagoras is comparable in excellence to heroic figures of myth, he has surpassed them in the happiness of a life lived without tragedy or lesser impairments, a life which almost merits for him the hyperbole of the poetic appellation 'a god among men' (70–2; cf. 29). But this recognition of the divine background poses a possible question about the factor of responsibility mentioned above. The suppleness of traditional religious beliefs allows for fluctuation, according to context and the frame of mind of the

observer, in the degree to which gods can be held causally engaged within or behind ostensibly human actions. If the power of gods is real, then it can even invade the mind and pervert the channels of human agency.[35] Yet this supposition, which may provide a compelling explanation of some events in the world, is inimical to the general conceptions of choice, intention, and responsibility, and consequently to the judgements of merit and blame which depend on them. The belief that the gods are responsible for *everything* may be theoretically tenable, but its implications are hardly sustainable in practical terms through all the circumstances of a life; the assumption of a mysterious interweaving of divine and human agency is more flexible.[36] These stresses in Greek thinking are particularly reflected in the complex ways in which the idea of a personal δαίμων, an idea found on different levels of belief, could be conceived as relating to the notion of human character.[37]

Even Isocrates' affirmation of Evagoras' supreme happiness lightly acknowledges, in the midst of its fulsome felicitations, the existence of these traditional Greek concerns with forces capable of overriding human character and of causing tragedy. Yet his encomiastic design and function require him to avoid the more pessimistic thoughts of conventional wisdom, and to assert that he is describing a case in which character and divine support matched one another, or were interwoven, with perfect accord. It is rhetorically understandable that Isocrates should stress that Evagoras' claimed success, blessed though it was with the avoidance of tragedy, was not a matter of purely contingent help from the gods: it was the consummation, the perfect endorsement, of Evagoras' own nature and character (71). At one point Isocrates posits a provident δαίμων active in protecting Evagoras, but the δαίμων arranges that Evagoras

[35] 'Psychic intervention' from the gods is an old idea: e.g. Hom. *Il.* 6. 234; Archil. fr. 96 West. S. *Ant.* 683 exemplifies the related 'folk' notion that the gods are responsible for men's wits.

[36] The gods are responsible for everything: Hom. *Od.* 1. 347–9; *Il.* 3. 164–5; Theogn. 133–42, 169–72; the denial of this: Hom. *Od.* 1. 32–4; Solon frs. 4. 1–8, 11. 1–2 West; Theogn. 833–6.

[37] Hes. *Op.* 122–3; Theogn. 149–50, 161–3; Lys. 2. 78; Men. *Dysc.* 282; fr. 714 Körte, all exemplify the view of the δαίμων as independent of the person's own character; Heraclit. fr. 119 DK; Theogn. 165–6; Epicharm. fr. 258; Democr. fr. 171 DK; Pl. *Rep.* 617e; Xenocrates *apud* Arist. *Top.* 112ᵃ36–8, all variously translate the belief into an equation between δαίμων and character.

should shun impious circumstances and grasp the opportunity for pious, just kingship (25–6): providence is channelled into the virtues of the man's own character, in a way which simultaneously looks back to a traditional duality of Greek religious thought and anticipates an important feature of Stoicism. When Evagoras' life is subsequently called 'dear to the gods' (43, 70), it is hard to disentangle the active from the passive aspect of this predication. The force of human nature and character has been asserted, but not its complete independence from a larger scheme of things.

III

My remarks on the *Evagoras* have tried to accentuate those features which exhibit fundamental themes in traditional Greek conceptions of character. What the work does not display, and what I have therefore not been concerned with, is any great range of *means* of characterization, and I should like to finish by offering some brief thoughts on this point. Isocrates is working here in a descriptive and narrative mode of rhetoric; despite the fact that his piece is an early example of the growing Greek interest in biography, it almost entirely lacks a sense of closeness to, or inwardness with, its subject. Interest in the individual, without which we would have no biographical form at all, is qualified and coloured by the tendency to see him as an exemplar of general, ethical qualities—qualities, that is, which are not uniquely his. While this is symptomatic of much Greek thinking about character, it must still be said that two particular kinds of material are largely absent from Isocrates' picture: psychological immediacy, and 'circumstantial' or specifically personal detail.

This negative dimension of the work is due to various factors, some doubtless peculiar to it (such as the relation between writer, subject, and audience), but others evincing the conventions of characterization with which Isocrates operates. The paucity of personal detail (there are the merest hints in chs. 42–5) belongs to a stylized elevation of tone which suits the immediate pupose of the work while also ensuring conformity to certain canons of literary tradition. A wealth of circumstantial detail would detract from the grand, quasi-heroic status which Isocrates seeks to establish for Evagoras, as well as from

the purity of the 'immortalizing' function of the work. In this connection it is worth recalling the epilogue's comparison of verbal encomium with the sculptured portrait (p. 43 above): Isocrates' work is equivalent to an idealized portrait in striving to give us a powerful sense of the great individual, but without being drawn into an exact realism of detail. The exclusion of the mundane and the commonplace is a broad stylistic feature of most serious forms of Greek literature from Homer onwards; when 'low' elements do intrude, it is usually for pointed effect. By contrast, the literary 'line' which embraces iambus, parody, and comedy, and which helps to generate Theophrastus' *Characters*,[38] gives scope for precisely the everyday, even the sordid, detail which higher genres consciously exclude.

I mention these large, familiar phenomena only to stress their implications for characterization—implications which, as we can see from the debate in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, were of conscious interest in classical Athens.[39] If character is thought of as a matter of the distinctively individual and particular, then conventions of stylized elevation will place restrictions on its presentation in serious literature, while it will be left to the earthier genres of comic and satirical writing to bring us close to the texture of individual lives. But it is precisely the premiss here—the alignment of character with the distinctively, even uniquely, individual—which cannot be automatically assumed for Greek culture. The strong tradition of literary stylization which I have adduced marks a significant divergence from the kinds of individualism familiar to us in our own dominant literary forms, and involves a countervailing tendency towards the understanding and evaluation of people by reference to wider, ethical categories and standards; and it is just these standards or *aretai* which, as was earlier stressed, form the foundation for Greek judgements of character.

While it might at first sight be thought related to this ethical tendency, Isocrates' lack of psychological inwardness with his subject requires a different explanation, though one which

[38] But the *Characters* well shows how a detailed texture of characterization (personal mannerisms, quirks of speech, etc.) does not eliminate ethical evaluation, and need not have an individualistic focus either.

[39] See esp. *Ran.* 1043–62 for the criticism of Euripidean 'realism' as destructive of the (ethically and stylistically) elevated tone of tragedy.

again reflects the nature of literary tradition. Large areas of Greek literature—represented by much elegy and iambus, by epinician lyric, and by much history, oratory, and philosophy—depend primarily on descriptive and narrative means of characterization. Standing in a broad, though not unequivocal, contrast to this material are those genres—principally epic, tragedy, and comedy—which make extensive use of *dramatic* modes. These two broad categories are meant to be indicative of major modes of presenting character, but they are not, of course, exclusively separate: direct speech, the dramatic mode, has its limited place in the first of them (influencing historiography, for example), just as descriptive means do in the second. Even so, the contrast between the modes as such is real and important.

The first mode, the descriptive or narrative, tends to give us more 'distanced', sometimes moralistic, images of individuals, set firmly in the terms of general ethical categories. The second, while not eschewing material of this same kind, has in addition the means to bring characters close to its audiences: to put them dramatically before our eyes, to let them speak for themselves, even, at the extreme, to give us privileged access to the workings of their minds in the kind of scene of which I earlier considered an example from *Odyssey* 20. Both major modes of representation and characterization develop distinctively literary techniques, but they are also derived from non-literary ways of looking at people in the world.[40] That Isocrates' *Evagoras* employs exclusively the first of these two modes largely explains the work's lack of psychological closeness to its subject. The intrinsic strength of the dramatic mode, on the other hand, lies in its capacity to convey immediacy, vividness, and intensity of personal life, and to allow us to observe at close range, so to speak, the processes of thought, feeling, and motivation.

But this closeness of focus does not entail a view of people that is radically different from or more individualistic than the kind conveyed by narrative and descriptive means. The dramatic mode does not commit one to seeing persons as irreducibly private individuals, since the psychological workings of the mind

[40] See D. W. Harding, 'Psychological Processes in the Reading of Fiction', *Brit. Journ. of Aesthetics*, 2 (1962), 133–47 (repr. in H. Osborne (ed.), *Aesthetics in the Modern World* (London, 1968), 300–17).

are rarely conceived in the Greek tradition as an enclosed world of their own (though they may sometimes *conceal* or dissemble their contents), but rather as the source and springs of ethically significant action. Much of the traditional Greek understanding of character lies in the attempt to find ways of affirming the authentic force and integrity of human agency and responsibility, the components of character, at the point where many different potencies—internal and external; psychological, social, natural, and divine—intersect and become entangled. Against this background, the conception of character, the sense of a person as potentially the source of his own motivation and ethical agency, has to be won and maintained in the face of the competing possibility that people are at the mercy of powers and causes larger than themselves.

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