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Agon and Ethics: Competitive Discourse in Fifth and Fourth  
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By

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Abstract

Agon and Ethics: Competitive Discourse in Fifth and Fourth Century Greece

by

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How do we model our public sphere and the discourse that takes place within it – as a space of gradually emerging consensus or of endless competition? And how can we determine what constitutes appropriate, or even beneficial, competition and what constitutes inappropriate or harmful competition? In my dissertation, I utilize both literary and philosophical sources to examine classical Greek thoughts about the ethical problems of competition in public discourse. I argue, first, that public speech was virtually always conceived of as a fundamentally competitive enterprise; and secondly, that such competitiveness was viewed as particularly problematic in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. Authors in various genres explored the utility and abuses of competitive discourse through the vehicle of debate pieces that were intended to both entertain and illuminate. The *agones* that I examine are thus quasi-theoretical in that each contestant seeks to define the nature and limits of productive, fair competition and to distinguish it from harmful competition; but as one might expect, the agonistic format of the debate often colors the values expressed in the arguments.

I organize my dissertation according to Aristotle's three divisions of rhetoric—epideictic, forensic, and deliberative—in order to show how each genre attempts to define its own version of 'good *eris*' largely through differentiating itself from the other genres. I use Euripides as an example of explicitly epideictic debate. In the agons from *Suppliants* (399-580), *Phoenician Women* (446-635), *Iphigenia in Aulis* (317-414), and *Andromache* (147-273), the playwright presents competitive discourse as an ultimately irresolvable problem. At the same time, his ability to rise above the fray and offer a balanced presentation of the issue sets him apart from practitioners in the other genres (and ideally helps him to defeat his opponents in the dramatic contest). I then turn to Demosthenes and Aeschines for my example of forensic debate. In these legal agons, we see each contestant attempting to present himself as a superior competitive speaker, while each opponent is accused of a different kind of unfair *epideixis*. Finally, I examine three debate scenes from Thucydides' *History* (Cleon vs. Diodotus, Nicias vs. Alcibiades, and Hermocrates vs. Athenagoras), where we see the contestants walking a fine line between public and private interests and trying to outdo their opponents by more persuasively defining the type of competition proper to deliberative debate.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### I. Rhetoric as a competitive art

In the first book of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates and Thrasymachus enter into a debate to determine whether the life of the just man or the life of the unjust man is more profitable. The debate is given a certain formality by Socrates' proclamation that the disputants will serve as both speakers and judges (ἅμα αὐτοί τε δίκασται καὶ ῥήτορες ἐσόμεθα, 348b). Thrasymachus makes it clear that his primary criterion for deeming a man intelligent and good is his ability to successfully put other men 'under' himself. Only the perfectly unjust man will be able to do so with impunity, he claims. Socrates responds by asking Thrasymachus if he seriously believes that injustice, rather than justice, should be grouped together with wisdom and virtue (ἀρετή).<sup>1</sup> Suspecting an attempt on Socrates' part to shame him into a contradiction, Thrasymachus declines to answer the question: "What concern is it to you whether I believe it or not? Just refute the argument." Socrates agrees and begins his refutation by asking Thrasymachus a series of questions that essentially refer to the difference in attitude between the just and the unjust man in regard to competition. Thrasymachus agrees that the just man does not want to be superior to (πλέον ἔχειν) another just man or a just action, but he does consider it good (and just) to be superior to the unjust man. The unjust man, on the other hand, 'will compete in order that he himself may get the better of everyone' (καὶ ἀμιλλήσεται ὡς ἀπάντων πλεῖστον αὐτὸς λάβη; 349c).<sup>2</sup> Thus the just man only tries to outdo those unlike himself, while the unjust man competes with like and unlike alike.

Socrates' next move is, in trademark fashion, to introduce the practitioners of various crafts (τέχναι) in order to illustrate his ethical claims. If the unjust man is φρόνιμος (intelligent, skilled), then he is 'like' other φρόνιμοι, such as the musician and the doctor. The expert musician certainly does not try to outdo other expert musicians when he tunes his lyre, nor does the wise doctor compete with another doctor when he prescribes food and drink. In order finally to draw his conclusion that it is the just man, not the unjust man, who is wise and good, Socrates sums up his argument about skilled practitioners in the following way:

Περὶ πάσης δὴ ὄρα ἐπιστήμης τε καὶ ἀνεπιστημοσύνης εἴ τίς σοι δοκεῖ  
ἐπιστήμων ὅστισοῦν πλείω ἂν ἐθέλῃν αἰρεῖσθαι ἢ ὅσα ἄλλος  
ἐπιστήμων ἢ πράττειν ἢ λέγειν, καὶ οὐ ταῦτ' αὐτῷ ὁμοίω ἑαυτῷ εἰς τὴν  
αὐτὴν πράξειν.

In regard, then, to all knowledge and ignorance, see if you think that anyone at all who is knowledgeable would want to get more for himself than another knowledgeable man, either in acting or speaking, and would not rather try to

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<sup>1</sup> Socrates' strategy here depends in part on the ambiguity of the term ἀρετή. Adkins 1960 made a great deal of the fact that, in Homer, ἀρετή refers to a man's ability to defeat his opponents (the 'competitive virtues' of courage, etc.), and only later does it come to include the more cooperative virtues.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, 'that he himself may take the most out of everyone': the most profit? the most honor? On the analogy of πλέον ἔχειν, the idea is probably just that he will try to outdo or excel everyone. Aristotle associates πλεονεξία (and 'particular' injustice) especially with honor, money, and safety (*EN* I 130b3). See Williams 1980: 199, who suggests that Aristotle's description of πλεονεξία is only really accurate with respect to honor.

get the same amount as the man similar to himself in respect to the same action.<sup>3</sup> (350a)

Barely below the surface of this argument lurks the question of how debate, i.e. verbal competition, ought to be conducted. Although the emphasis is on the justice of men and of actions generally, Socrates points to the issue of just and unjust speech when he adds ἢ λέγειν to the areas in which the knowledgeable man will refrain from competing with his equals. Further, he draws attention to the importance of rhetoric to the subject matter under discussion by framing the debate as a contest between two *rhetors*, public speakers, who, in this case, are also judges. Further, although Thrasymachus argues here for all manner of injustice and subjugation, nonetheless, as a renowned sophist, the means that he actually employs, and imparts to his students, for placing men under him (to the extent that we imagine him actually behaving in accordance with his professed ethical principles) must be the art of rhetoric. But rhetoric, which was considered, at least by Plato's contemporaries, to be a τέχνη, is rather out of tune with the conclusions that Socrates draws from the examples of the lyrist and the doctor.<sup>4</sup>

We can see that Socrates has made a number of questionable moves in this brief passage – sleights of hand that one could even take as an indication of the great freedom granted by Plato to the just man in his competition with the unjust man. At any rate, it is certainly suspicious that, to show that expert lyrists do not compete with other expert lyrists, Socrates limits his discussion of their art to the tuning of the strings. Of course a good deal of the lyre playing that took place in 4th century Greece was in fact either explicitly or implicitly competitive, expert against expert.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, as we see from Greek medical writing, doctors were quite keen to develop innovations that set them apart from

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<sup>3</sup> All translations are mine.

<sup>4</sup> Several scholars (especially Ford 2001, Cole 1991, and Schiappa 1990) have argued that there was no conception of rhetoric as a τέχνη before the 4th century. The first appearance of the word ῥητορικὴ is in *Gorg.* 448d9, where Socrates refers to τὴν λεγομένην ῥητορικὴν. The qualifier λεγομένην ('so-called') seems to suggest that rhetoric was already being spoken of as an art, but Ford (p. 89 n. 11), e.g., argues that Socrates only uses the word here to infer from what Polus has said (by which, I suppose he means that we might translate it 'what you call rhetoric' rather than 'what people call rhetoric'). At any rate, Ford is surely correct that the sophists must have advertised themselves as more general liberal educators rather than *mere* teachers of rhetoric, and Schiappa may be right that 5th century τέχνηαι were not theoretical treatises, but only collections of model speeches, like the *Dissoi Logoi* or Antiphon's *Tetralogies*. But even if there was no explicit theorizing, that does not mean that public speaking was not considered an art (and Aristophanes' *Clouds* certainly makes it appear to have been considered an art that could be taught). I remain convinced that rhetoric, or εὖ λέγειν, was understood to be, not the only skill, but perhaps the most important skill that the sophists had to offer. In respect to the passage under discussion from *Rep.* I, we may note that Kennedy 1994: 25, though sceptical about many of the τέχνηαι attributed to sophists, maintains that the one alleged to have been written by Thrasymachus did exist.

Wardy 2009 insists on the importance of some amount of explicit theorizing and codification to any proper conception of an art of rhetoric; and he sees Gorgias as the seminal figure, who, by reacting to philosophical modes of thinking, gave Plato an opportunity to put a name to this anti-philosophy and thereby 'invent' rhetoric. In his succinct view of the origin of this τέχνη, "first comes eloquence; then the magisterial philosophers of *logos* arrive, only to be ruffled by the maddeningly tangential, sort of humorous harassment of Gorgias; and then Plato puts Gorgias down in his very own, but restricted and inferior place; Plato does so by putting a name to what the *Gorgias* has Gorgias say he does: 'rhetoric'" (p. 51). While any kind of persuasive speech counts as 'eloquence', Wardy argues that 'rhetoric' should be categorized with those arts that require a "productive awareness of what, by cultured convention, is to count as participation in those activities" and an "expert understanding" that "stipulates what can be done and regulates what is done well or badly." He also notes, however, that such an awareness and understanding continued to evolve in ancient Greece along with "the *praxis* of competitive public speaking"; and he includes both "theoretically aimed" and "practically aimed" materials in this kind of self-conscious thinking that transformed eloquence into rhetoric (p. 50).

<sup>5</sup> For lyre playing, see Power 2010; and for *mousikoi agones*, see Rotstein 2012 and Kotsidu 1991.

their rivals.<sup>6</sup> Still, we can grant to Socrates that there is nothing *inherently* competitive about these arts, and that there is a basic set of skills involved in these fields, according to their present stage of development, that their practitioners will only want to master as well as, and not better than, their fellow practitioners. It is nonetheless a great leap to claim that this is true of *all* fields of expertise. To master the art of wrestling, for example, one will necessarily need to show some degree of superiority over an opponent (unless we limit our discussion of the art to stretching, oiling up the body, etc.). Knowing how to wrestle only as well as everyone else who knows how to wrestle will not get you very far: to be an expert, you must try to outdo the other experts. Rhetoric, or public speaking generally, I would suggest, was viewed by most people in classical Greece as much more analogous to wrestling than to medicine.<sup>7</sup>

Some of Plato's opponents, in fact, view rhetoric very much along the lines of wrestling. Indeed, when Gorgias is trying to explain to Socrates what rhetoric is good for, he emphasizes its agonistic nature. Socrates has offered up the doctor, the trainer, and the businessman as other practitioners who have some claim to producing the greatest good for mankind and has asked what exactly the good is that the art of rhetoric produces. Gorgias' answer is "the ability to persuade with speeches in the courtroom, council, assembly, or any other political gathering." But he goes on to say that the rhetorician will make the doctor, trainer, and businessman his slaves (452e). Socrates had only asked him to explain why rhetoric should be considered better, or more beneficial, than medicine, training, and money-making - that is, how rhetoric can 'beat' these other arts in the more metaphorical sense of 'being more advantageous'. But Gorgias instead explains how the rhetorician 'beats' the other practitioners in a very real, material way: how he places them under himself.

When Socrates presses Gorgias by pointing out that other practitioners are able to produce knowledge, while the rhetorician is only able to produce belief, Gorgias boxes himself into a bit of a corner by first extolling the agonistic virtues of rhetoric and then insisting that the teacher should not be blamed if it is used unfairly. He begins by offering an anecdote that really does suggest a kind of beneficial employment of rhetoric, namely its utilization in cooperation with other arts. Gorgias explains that he has often gone with his brother or other doctors to see patients, and when the doctor could not persuade them to take their medicine or submit to being cut or burned, Gorgias himself had more success (456b). But note that, in this scenario, the rhetorician is actually a kind of subordinate helper of the doctor, not at all his enslaver. Thus, if Gorgias were to stop here, although he would have successfully demonstrated a real utility for rhetoric, he also would have conceded that it ultimately 'loses' to other arts such as medicine when it comes to evaluating it in a practical context. So he returns to the competition between the arts:

φημί δὲ καὶ εἰς πόλιν ὅπῃ βούλει ἐλθόντα ῥητορικὸν ἄνδρα καὶ ἰατρόν,  
εἰ δέοι λόγῳ διαγωνίζεσθαι ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ ἢ ἐν ἄλλῳ τινὶ συλλόγῳ  
ὁπότερον δεῖ αἰρεθῆναι ἰατρόν, οὐδαμοῦ ἂν φανῆναι τὸν ἰατρόν, ἀλλ'  
αἰρεθῆναι ἂν τὸν εἰπεῖν δυνατόν, εἰ βούλοιο. καὶ εἰ πρὸς ἄλλον γε  
δημιουργὸν ὄντιναοῦν ἀγωνίζοιο, πείσειεν ἂν αὐτὸν ἐλέσθαι ὁ  
ῥητορικὸς μᾶλλον ἢ ἄλλος ὅστισοῦν...

<sup>6</sup> See Lloyd 1987.

<sup>7</sup> Although, in accordance with the ambiguity of *λόγος*, which could either refer to the words actually spoken or to the ideas behind them, the art of speaking could simultaneously be understood as a competitive skill and as a window into a man's character (which may be quite moderate and cooperative). This ambiguity is especially apparent in Isocrates, for which see Too 1995.

And I say also that, between a rhetorical man and a doctor who have arrived at any city you like, if a verbal competition should be required in the assembly or in some other gathering as to which one should be chosen as doctor, the doctor would appear nowhere, but the one able to speak would be chosen, if he should like to be. And if there should be a competition for any other practitioner, the rhetorician would persuade better than anyone else to have himself chosen... (456b-c)

Of course, the question of how the rhetorician is planning to fake his medical expertise once he gets the job is not addressed. But it is clear that what makes rhetoric so great and miraculous has everything to do with its power to defeat all other areas of expertise - and yet, Gorgias argues that, just like other competitive arts, it must be used justly. It must be used only against enemies and never against friends. And presumably it must not be used to put practitioners of other arts, who have much greater expertise than the rhetorician in their own fields, out of work. But that only brings us back to the question of how the rhetorician is any better than the doctor, the trainer, and the businessman, if in fact he will not be allowed to 'beat' or enslave them.<sup>8</sup>

These passages from the *Republic* and the *Gorgias* are contributions to a strand of Greek ethical thought that was inaugurated, or at least first illuminated through conscious, analytical scrutiny, by Hesiod, when he split *Eris* in two and suggested that there was a good version and a bad version of competition. Considering the enormous importance of competition to virtually every field of thought and practice in Greek society,<sup>9</sup> it is perhaps surprising that this kind of explicit comparison between good competition and bad competition does not appear more often in the literature that has survived. The chorus of Sophocles' *OT* offers a similar contrast,<sup>10</sup> but it is not nearly so sustained a treatment as Hesiod's. Instead, as we will see in subsequent chapters, attempts in the 5th and 4th centuries to define good competition, and to differentiate it from bad competition, are usually more implicit, and they quite often take place within the context of one variety or another of formal agon. Indeed, I suggest that many of the speakers in these 5th and 4th century agons, in addition to whatever disputes they are trying to resolve, or policies they are trying to propose, or skills they are trying to demonstrate, are also trying to offer their judges a more satisfying resolution to the very same problems that Hesiod was trying to resolve: what is the nature of beneficial competition? what is the nature of harmful competition? and how can we differentiate the two?

In the ensuing chapters, I will be examining other attempts from the 5th and 4th centuries to distinguish between good and bad verbal competition. Like Hesiod, and unlike Plato, all of these authors, and the characters that they present, assume that there is always a competitive element to public discourse. I have selected in particular for my analysis passages all of which take place within the context of a formal rhetorical agon, since the theme of the ethics of verbal competition is particularly relevant to many of these debate scenes; and indeed, the format of the discussion cannot help but inform and/or reflect the

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<sup>8</sup> Part of what Plato's dramatization represents, of course, is a picture of the rhetorician's inability to make good on his claims about rhetoric's agonistic virtues. The reader observes, across several dialogues, that the rhetorician is completely unable to beat or enslave the philosopher - though he may go so far as to put him to death.

<sup>9</sup> For competition in ancient Greece, see Burkhardt 1998, Gouldner 1965, Griffith 1990, Fisher and van Wees 2011, and Barker 2009, who provides more references on p. 3, nn. 7-9. Ulf 2011 argues that the modern image of ancient Greece as an agonistic society is a construct.

<sup>10</sup> *OT* 879-881. The chorus has just been singing about how horrible ὕβρις is, and they then offer these lines by way of contrast: τὸ καλῶς δ' ἔχον / πόλει πάλαισιμα μήποτε λῦ- / -σαι θεὸν αἰτοῦμαι ('but I ask the god never to destroy the 'wrestling' that is good for the city').



arguments that are being made. Moreover, in contrast to the time when Hesiod was writing (probably the end of the 8th century), the 5th and 4th centuries saw a great number of developments in the rhetorical arts, and the opportunities for differentiating between good and bad verbal competition on the basis of generic distinctions became more varied. Further, vigorous questioning of the importance of equality, the nature of honor, the relative value of different kinds of skills, and the rationale for awarding prizes for superiority in those various skills all contributed to the complexity of the issue; while its urgency was ensured by the increasing importance of rhetoric in the assembly, the courtrooms, and the theater.

After a brief introduction, in which I explore the different ways that the ethics of competition in general, and of verbal competition in particular, are thematized in our earliest Greek authors, Hesiod and Homer, I examine three different groups of *agons*, in all of which the nature and value of verbal competition is explored and contested. These chapters are organized according to Aristotle's threefold division of rhetoric into 'display' (*epideiktikon*), 'forensic' (*dikastikon*), and 'deliberative' (*symboleutikon*). First, the chapter on the *agon* in Euripides reveals some of the possibilities for carrying on Hesiod's project within a more or less epideictic genre. Euripides' well-known interest in the rhetorical arts and their uses, not only on the stage, but also in the assembly and the courtroom, as well as his interest in competition, both verbal and otherwise, make his plays ideally suited to an inquiry about the ethical questions surrounding competition in public speech. For the forensic *agon*, I turn in Chapter 3 to the legal feud between Demosthenes and Aeschines, where we see the difficult distinction between good and bad verbal *eris* largely contested in respect to arguments about generic expectations. Finally, the debate scenes in Thucydides' *History* offer us a glimpse into the way ethical questions about verbal competitiveness might be addressed in the context of deliberative rhetoric; and they suggest that the competitiveness of the speakers (and their attempts either to contrast or conflate private and public interests) increases the difficulty of determining the proper role for justice in such debates.

There are two reasons that I have chosen to order the chapters in this way, one historical and one logical. On the one hand, there is a sense in which this sequence might reflect the historical development of rhetoric, as long as we consider rhetoric in a very general, unformalized sense. Poetry certainly preceded prose in the history of artful, literary composition, and Jefferey Walker (2000) makes a compelling argument that this early poetry should be thought of as fundamentally a kind of epideictic rhetoric, which would then be the original form of rhetoric, from which the other genres developed. And we might next imagine that disputes between individuals, methods of redressing wrongs, strategies for arguing one's way out of punishments, etc. would precede formalized group discussions about how best to further the collective interest.

But even if this sequence does not exactly reflect a historical development,<sup>11</sup> it does reflect a kind of logical development, which brings me to my second reason: namely, that I have placed the rhetorical genres in an ascending order of ethical complexity, both in terms of the consideration of interests and in terms of the stakes of the outcomes. Of course any author writing in any genre is free to express extremely complex ideas, but the assumed tasks of the rhetorician in each genre, and the different criteria that each kind of speaker

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<sup>11</sup> Kennedy 1992, e.g., views rhetoric as a "form of energy" that is prior to speech, and he describes examples of all three genres – deliberative, forensic, and epideictic – in the animal kingdom. His example of deliberative, however, is limited to the exchanging of growls and roars (as performed by red deer stags) in the interest of displaying power, which he suggests is "comparable to the rhetorical ultimata exchanged between hostile states and to constitute a kind of deliberation in which evidence of the power of each side is used to convince the other to give way (p. 5)."

will need to consider if he is to appear morally upright, do vary in complexity; and there is a sense in which each subsequent genre must incorporate the tasks of the previous genre. The epideictic rhetorician, for example, is fundamentally concerned with pleasing the audience and making a demonstration of his skills. Insofar as he is a competitor, he will be competing with other skilled speakers, and he will not necessarily be required to appeal to the interests either of himself or of his auditors.<sup>12</sup> The forensic rhetorician, on the other hand, will likewise need to display his skill at speaking (as we will see), but he will also have to appeal to the interests of his judges in order to show that they are more aligned to his own interests than they are to those of his opponent. Finally, the deliberative rhetorician will need to accomplish not only the tasks of the other two, but furthermore, assuming that the debate is taking place between fellow citizens, he will need to appeal even to the interests of his opponents, for he must argue that he knows what will benefit them (along with everybody else) much better than they themselves do. Thus, if at least one aspect of ethics involves the weighing of one's own interests against the interests of others, then this sequence of rhetorical genres may reveal an increasing ethical complexity.

Further, the stakes of an epideictic contest have mainly to do with honor and prestige. The stakes of a forensic contest certainly include honor and prestige, but they also often involve more serious consequences for the individual competitors, such as death or exile. And the stakes of a deliberative contest additionally involve the fates of not just individuals but of entire nations.

But if my project is to examine the ways that Greek authors discussed the ethical difficulties surrounding public debate, it remains for me to explain why I have largely limited my focus to an analysis of formal agons. After all, every text from 5th and 4th century Greece that we have could be described as 'competitive' in some fairly essential ways, whether or not it was actually performed before judges. And given the enormous importance of all manner of contests in Greek societies, we would surely find throughout the entire corpus some good clues about Greek attitudes toward the benefits and harms of verbal competition. This is certainly true, and I will indeed be bringing in evidence from sources outside of the agons that are my immediate concern. But my reasons for focussing primarily on agons are twofold. First, the emerging importance of the *ἄγων λόγων* as an institutional and literary form, I suggest, itself marks an increasing interest in the ethics of verbal competition: even the agons that do not directly address these issues nonetheless represent and thematize them through their very form. Thus, although these agons are not the only site, they are a kind of privileged site for Greek authors to examine the nature and the effects of verbal competition. Secondly, I am interested not only in ethical theorizing (though Aristotle will inform several of my analyses), but in the intersection of ethics and rhetoric; and it seems to me that the *ἄγων λόγων* is likewise a privileged site for different rhetorical genres to confront, and be weighed against, one another. We can see this especially clearly in Euripides, whose agons, though fundamentally epideictic are the most likely parts of his plays to show the characters virtually transforming themselves into litigators or assemblymen.

So far I have been taking for granted the meaning of the terms that I have been discussing and which appear in the title of this work – 'agon' and 'ethics' – but they do require some explanation. Both terms can be used either in a more technical or a more general sense. An 'agon' might specifically refer to an athletic contest, a legal trial, or a set debate piece in tragedy or comedy, or it might refer much more broadly to any sort of contest or struggle, with or without explicit rules. Likewise, 'ethics' might suggest either a theoretical examination of right and wrong, virtue and vice, or a much less systematic, more

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<sup>12</sup> In fact, he will sometimes want to argue for a completely counterintuitive position, as we see in Gorgias' *Defense of Helen* and the speech that Plato attributes to Lysias in the *Phaedrus*.

broadly conceived consideration of behavioral norms. For this study, I will use 'ethics' in the more general sense, for which 'morality' is a synonym. And while I will be examining particular agons – in the sense of a contest with rules and judges, and especially a set of paired speeches before an audience who is expected to decide, or at least to consider, which speaker should be viewed as the winner and which the loser – I will be particularly concerned with the theme of competition, more generally, within those agons. The adjective 'agonistic' I use more or less as a synonym for 'competitive', though it suggests specifically the kind of competitiveness that is associated with contests, or with a culture that places great value on contests.

Ever since J. Burckhardt, 'agonal' and 'agonistic' have sometimes been used as a kind of short-hand to bring to mind an interpretation of ancient Greek society which holds that 'the contest' was one of the primary defining features.<sup>13</sup> Burckhardt himself believed that the agonal spirit eventually declined in the fifth century "until it came to consist in men staking everything to win the favor of the crowd."<sup>14</sup> Others have located the transition away from the agonal spirit at different times. For Gouldner (1965), Plato was the first to offer a serious challenge to what Gouldner called 'the contest system.' And Adkins (1960) argues that Homer's epics reflect a society in which 'competitive values' always trump 'cooperative values', but that, after Homer, the latter gradually increased in importance – and thus the most powerful words of commendation and censure begin to change their meanings. But these authors have also seen the nature of this agonistic society in different ways. Burckhardt viewed it as an expression of elite status. The contests had no practical purpose, and that was the point: the elites had the time and resources to apply their energies to the aesthetics of such an agonal lifestyle, and others did not.<sup>15</sup> Gouldner, a sociologist, argued that there was a practical social function to such a system: namely, to weed out the citizens who were becoming too powerful. But he thought that the system went too far and was ultimately untenable. Adkins was interested in ethics, and for him, the agonistic ideals of the Homeric heroes seemed to be based on a kind of consequentialism: 'good' and 'bad' were entirely determined by the community's need for strong, brave warriors. He called such a society 'results-oriented' and claimed that good intentions, trying one's best, had virtually no mitigating influence on the shame that inevitably accompanied defeat of any kind.<sup>16</sup>

It is already clear that questions about 'ethics', broadly conceived, have often been bound up with questions about the agonistic spirit of the Greeks. Winning was certainly valued a great deal, in Homer and beyond, but, as Long demonstrated in response to Adkins, not even in Homer was it always the supreme value. In addition to the fact that the terms 'competitive' and 'cooperative' when applied to values are not always clear or distinct, it is also apparent that what Adkins took to be 'competitive' values did not always trump what he took to be 'cooperative' values in Homer.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Burckhardt 1998: 162: "While on the one hand the *polis* was the driving force in the rise and development of the individual, the agon was a motive power known to no other people – the general leavening element that, given the essential condition of freedom, proved capable of working upon the will and the potentialities of every individual. In this respect the Greeks stood alone." Burckhardt was certainly not alone in idealizing the Greeks in this way.

<sup>14</sup> *Idem* 184.

<sup>15</sup> On competition as an end itself, see e.g. p. 163: "In the heroic world the agon was not fully developed, if we think of it as excluding practical usefulness."

<sup>16</sup> See Long 1970: 124 for a critique and refinement of that particular claim.

<sup>17</sup> Long 1970. In addition to arguing that Adkins too readily takes Homer's poems as evidence about the way archaic Greek society actually functioned (and that he fails to account for the internal logic and the formal requirements of the poetry), Long cites such passages as *Il.* 17.142 ff. and *Il.* 13.459 ff., where both competitive and cooperative excellences are invoked simultaneously. He concludes (p. 135) that the concept of 'appropriateness,' which is "closely, if not logically, related to social status and the behavior this demands in

In a study like this, we cannot avoid being influenced by our own biases, but of course we should do our best to avoid hastily condemning or idealizing the cultural differences that we encounter. Hegel, for example, and philosophers like MacIntyre (1981) who argue for some form of 'virtue ethics' (and often imply that such an ethical outlook is applicable not only to Aristotle's theories, but to ancient Greek culture more broadly) can sometimes present an idealized, historically inaccurate picture of ancient Greek society.<sup>18</sup> There was certainly no homogeneous conception of human behavior in ancient Greece that involved no conflict between one's own good and the good of others. Opinions were varied and often contradictory.<sup>19</sup> But if there was one thing that most Athenians at least, if not most Greeks, seemed to agree on regarding behavioral norms, it was that they should be debated and demonstrated in a public forum, with an audience present to determine the relative merits of the speakers.

One assumption that I make in this study is that ethical principles and behavioral norms are to a very large extent determined, reinforced, and transformed through public discourse. Both competition *and* cooperation certainly have some basis in evolutionary biology,<sup>20</sup> but we are creatures of language, and we will always try to understand both our actual behavior and our behavioral ideals through language. And because there are always more possibilities for how members of a community might choose to interact, it seems to me that the stories we tell ourselves and the rules we imagine about how we ought to treat one another are just as important in the long run as how we actually behave. Further, morality cannot be reduced to the interests of rational actors. In the very beginning of his book on Greek popular morality, Dover defines his topic: "It often happens that if I try to do as I wish I necessarily frustrate what someone else wishes. By the 'morality' of a culture I mean the principles, criteria and values which underlie its responses to this familiar experience."<sup>21</sup> While there is no doubt that negotiating between one's own desires and interests and the desires and interests of others is a very important part of morality, one cannot ignore the complex, emotional interactions among members of a community in their endless attempts to reformulate and refine ethical norms. As Habermas writes in regard to Strawson's essay, 'Freedom and Resentment':

Strawson's phenomenology of the moral is relevant because it shows that the world of moral phenomena can be grasped only in the performative attitude of participants in interaction, that resentment and personal emotional responses in general point to suprapersonal standards for judging norms and commands, and that the moral-practical justification of a mode of action aims at an aspect *different* from the feeling-neutral assessment of means-ends relations, even when such assessment is made from the point of view of the general welfare.<sup>22</sup>

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a wide range of circumstances" is a more fundamental (though often difficult to define) concept in Homeric ethics. Adkins 1971 tried to defend his position.

<sup>18</sup> See White 2002: 94-5, who includes Sidgwick and suggests that his account "fits with a picture of 'the Greeks' as purveyors of a homogenous intellectual culture that can be easily idealized and set off against the ills of modernity." He also notes that the emphasis on virtue over duty may involve the idea that "the notion of virtue is somehow always less closely associated with deliberative conflict in general than the notion of duty is." As we will see, the Greeks were anything but free from deliberative conflict.

<sup>19</sup> Dover 1974: 3 notes: "It must not be imagined that we shall discover the Athenians to have lived, any more than we do, by an internally consistent set of moral principles."

<sup>20</sup> See Ong 1981.

<sup>21</sup> Dover 1974: 1.

<sup>22</sup> Habermas 1990: 50.

Accordingly, the agons that we will examine offer an inside perspective on moral argumentation and performance, with all of the attendant emotion and messiness.

## 2. Hesiod and the two Ἐριδες

In order to gain a greater appreciation of the shared cultural assumptions that the 5th and 4th century writers whom we will be examining took for granted (or exploited or revised) we need to look in some detail at the earliest literary examinations of the ethics of competition and rhetoric. The poems of both Hesiod and Homer show a great deal of concern with these issues; and their treatments reveal both continuities and discontinuities with later writers. From these early poems, we can see that speech had always been a particular locus for concerns about appropriate uses of competition and appropriate expressions of competitiveness; but without a more developed conception of rhetoric as an art, persuasive speech was less often explicitly singled out as distinct from other kinds of speech, and, in fact, speech was often hardly distinguished from action.

As noted above, Hesiod offers us not only the earliest, but also the most explicit account of the distinction between good competition and bad competition.<sup>23</sup> Words, as opposed to actions, do have a kind of privileged place in his accounts of both kinds of competition. And differentiation between different kinds (or genres) of speech seems to be one of the means that he uses to distinguish the two kinds of *Eris*. Still, as many have noted, the possibility of making a sharp distinction is put into question by the language that Hesiod uses.

I begin by quoting the key passage from Hesiod here in full:

Οὐκ ἄρα μοῦνον ἔην Ἐρίδων γένος, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν  
εἰσὶ δύω· τὴν μὲν κεν ἐπαινήσειε νοίσας,  
ἢ δ' ἐπιμωμητή· διὰ δ' ἄνδιχα θυμὸν ἔχουσιν.  
ἢ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ δῆριν ὀφέλλει,  
σχετλίη· οὐ τις τὴν γε φιλεῖ βροτός, ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἀνάγκης  
ἀθανάτων βουλῆσιν Ἔριν τιμῶσι βαρεῖαν.  
τὴν δ' ἑτέρην προτέρην μὲν ἐγείνατο Νύξ ἐρεβεννή,  
θῆκε δέ μιν Κρονίδης ὑψίζυγος, αἰθέρι ναίων,  
γαίης τ' ἐν ρίζησι καὶ ἀνδράσι πολλὸν ἀμείνω·  
ἢ τε καὶ ἀπάλαμόν περ ὁμῶς ἐπὶ ἔργον ἔγειρεν.  
εἰς ἕτερον γὰρ τίς τε ἰδὼν ἔργοιο χατίζων  
πλούσιον, ὃς σπεύδει μὲν ἀρόμεναι ἠδὲ φυτεύειν  
οἶκόν τ' εὖ θέσθαι, ζηλοῖ δέ τε γείτονα γείτων  
εἰς ἄφενος σπεύδοντ'· ἀγαθὴ δ' Ἔρις ἦδε βροτοῖσιν.  
καὶ κεραμεὺς κεραμεῖ κοτέει καὶ τέκτονι τέκτων,  
καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῷ φθονέει καὶ ἀοιδὸς ἀοιδῷ.  
ὦ Πέρση, σὺ δὲ ταῦτα τεῶν ἐνικάτθεο θυμῷ,  
μηδὲ σ' Ἔρις κακόχαρτος ἀπ' ἔργου θυμὸν ἐρύκοι  
νεῖκε' ὀπιτεύοντ' ἀγορῆς ἐπακουὸν ἔόντα.  
ῶρη γάρ τ' ὀλίγη πέλεται νεικέων τ' ἀγορέων τε

<sup>23</sup> For an interesting analysis of this passage, cf. Ferrari 1988: 48-9, who connects it with *Th.* 27-8, where the Muses claim to know how to say the truth as well as lies that resemble the truth. He argues (against Derridean readings) that both passages are making a distinction between 'good exchange' and 'bad exchange,' a distinction that is also common in *Theognis*.

ὦτινι μὴ βίος ἔνδον ἐπηετανὸς κατάκειται  
 ὠραῖος, τὸν γαῖα φέρει, Δημήτερος ἀκτὴν.  
 τοῦ κε κορεσσάμενος νείκεα καὶ δῆριν ὀφέλλοις  
 κτήμασ' ἐπ' ἀλλοτρίοις. σοὶ δ' οὐκέτι δεύτερον ἔσται  
 ὦδ' ἔρδειν· ἀλλ' αὖθι διακρινώμεθα νεῖκος  
 ἰθείησι δίκης, αἶ τ' ἐκ Διός εἰσιν ἄρισταί.  
 ἦδη μὲν γὰρ κλῆρον ἔδασσάμεθ', ἄλλα τε πολλὰ  
 ἀρπάζων ἐφόρεις μέγα κυδαίνων βασιλῆας  
 δωροφάγους, οἳ τήνδε δίκην ἐθέλουσι δικάσσαι.  
 νήπιοι, οὐδὲ ἴσασι ὅσῳ πλέον ἤμισυ παντὸς  
 οὐδ' ὅσον ἐν μαλάχῃ τε καὶ ἀσφοδέλῳ μέγ' ὄνειρα.

No unity, you see, was the family of Strifes, but on earth  
 there are two; one of them a man would praise if he saw her,  
 the other is blameworthy; their hearts are far apart.  
 For the one advances war and evil and fighting,  
 the wicked one; no mortal loves her, but by necessity  
 from the will of the immortals they honor the heavy Strife.  
 The other was born first from dusky night,  
 and high-throned Cronos' son who dwells in the ether placed her  
 in the roots of the earth and in men, a much better thing;  
 even a man without resources she stirs to work.  
 For a man lacking in work looks toward another  
 wealthier man, who hastens to sow and plant  
 and get his house in order; neighbor vies with the neighbor  
 who has zeal for wealth; this is the good Strife for mortals.  
 And potter is angry with potter and builder with builder,  
 and beggar envies beggar and singer envies singer.

Perses, you lay these things up in your heart,  
 and don't let evil-loving Strife draw your heart from work  
 to be a spectator and listener of market-place quarrels.  
 For little concern are quarrels and market-places  
 for the man who does not have at home a year's store of  
 ripe sustenance, which the earth brings, Demeter's grain.  
 If you're sated with that, then you might add to quarrels and fighting  
 over the property of others. But you will not get a second chance  
 to act this way; but let's settle our quarrel right now  
 with straight judgments, which, coming from Zeus, are the best.  
 For we already divided up our inheritance, and much extra  
 you kept snatching and carrying off by paying tribute to bribe-eating  
 kings, who are happy to judge this suit.  
 Fools, they don't even know how much better half is than the whole,  
 nor what great boon there is in mallow and asphodel. (*WD* 11-41)

West's explanation of Hesiod's motivation in dividing *Eris* in two is simply that he wanted to discuss the benefits of competition, but he had already offered a negative image of *Eris* in the *Theogony*, where he had described her as hard-hearted and hateful, the mother of battles, murders, and lying, among other things. Hesiod thus begins by talking about bad competition so that he can finish with good competition, the primary object of his interest

in this passage.<sup>24</sup> Clay, on the other hand, sees a complementarity between the two poems and considers Hesiod's point to be that good competition is only a factor among mortals and has no place in the divine realm of the *Theogony*.<sup>25</sup> I think Clay is right that it would be a mistake to place too much emphasis on only one kind of competition. After all, evil-loving *Eris* is in one sense every bit as important a motivation for Hesiod's poem as good *Eris*, since she is responsible for causing Perseus to neglect his own property and pursue the possessions of others, prompting Hesiod to compose this poem.

Thalman has written an interesting article in which he argues that, while Hesiod's suggestion of a divine genealogy for the positive *Eris* was probably an innovation, he was only making explicit "some fundamental characteristics of conflict and competition that were already implicit in his cultural tradition as we find it reflected in Homeric and other Hesiodic poetry."<sup>26</sup> Thus, as we see in Homer, *eris* can refer either to destructive quarrels and wars or to friendly, healthy agonistic ritual, such as athletic games or, at the extreme end of the spectrum, Nausikaa's laundry-washing competition. The primary benefit of competitive endeavors, whether on the battle field, in athletic games, or in the assembly, was to affirm or establish hierarchies, which in turn reinforced social cohesion. But such competition always threatened to break out into violence, and thus one of Hesiod's concerns (indeed, a concern that remained central to the polis as it continued to develop) was to harness competitive, honor-driven energies and direct them toward positive forms of competition.<sup>27</sup> Hesiod may have tried to tease apart the dual nature of this conceptual unity, but as other scholars have noted, his division is not an entirely clean one.<sup>28</sup>

Instead of the polar opposition between competitive and cooperative values that Adkins (1960) famously outlined, Thalman suggests that the two kinds of values were often "the same virtues seen from different perspectives."<sup>29</sup> Granted that Adkins' polarity is too rigid, I am not sure that Thalman's argument that competition could be socially constructive (which Hesiod more or less tells us) undermines it exactly. After all, Adkins argued that competitive values took precedence over cooperative values specifically because they were, on the whole, found to be more useful to the kind of society reflected in Homer's poems than cooperative values were. He fully acknowledged that the competitive values were needed to protect the community and thus ultimately were supposed to serve in the interest of social cohesion. Thalman is surely right, however, that the opposition between productive competition and destructive competition may be a more accurate lense through which to view the ethical norms of Greek behavior, as they actually thought about and discussed them, than the opposition between competitive and cooperative values.

Thalman does not explicitly state his views on the relative date of composition between Hesiod's and Homer's poems, but he does suggest a (rather late) 7th century date for Hesiod; and he argues that Hesiod's innovations are a break from the traditional conception, which he finds primarily in Homer. But of course, there is no way to decide for certain on the relative dates of composition, and it very well may be that Hesiod came before Homer.<sup>30</sup> So instead of worrying about the very difficult question of where Hesiod's innovation lies, we might merely note how striking it is that, from (perhaps) the very earliest

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<sup>24</sup> West 1978 *ad loc.*

<sup>25</sup> Clay 2003: 6-8.

<sup>26</sup> Thalman 2004: 365.

<sup>27</sup> This analysis bears an affinity with Ober's 1989 analysis of the way that the later democratic institutions of Athens functioned in such a way as to harness elite competitive energies and put them in the service of mass interests.

<sup>28</sup> Thalman 2004: 378 endorses Pucci's 1977: 131-2 deconstructionist reading of the passage.

<sup>29</sup> Thalman 2004: 366.

<sup>30</sup> West 1978: 31 places Hesiod's birth between 750 and 720.

Greek literature that we have, there is already a kind of theorizing about competition, and about the essential role that it plays in the establishment of ethical norms.

But what then is the nature of Hesiod's theory? What exactly are the *differentia* of the two species of competition, and why do they still belong in the same genus? Bad competition is the motivating force behind war (πόλεμος), evil (κακόν), and fighting (δῆρις) - as well as the various nasty qualities that appear as its children in the *Theogony*, including lying, verbal disputes, and simply 'words' (Ψεύδεα, Ἀμφιλλογίας, Λόγους, 229). It should come as no surprise that bad competition would promote physical violence and war, but it might not be entirely obvious that it would also be responsible for verbal disputes, which might on the contrary seem to be a healthy alternative to violence.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the verbal arena for bad competition is precisely what Hesiod emphasizes in *Works and Days*. Perses has been lured away from his work by this wicked *Eris* and has become a spectator and listener of market-place quarrels - quarrels which I take to be primarily of a more or less forensic nature. Hesiod tells him that only when he has plenty of grain stored up in his house should he increase/ promote quarrels and fighting that concern other people's property. At first, this still sounds like a reference to Perses' passion for listening to other people's disputes (something akin to Philocleon in Aristophanes' *Wasps* with his mania for serving on juries?). But we then see that it is not merely as a spectator of disputes that he is promoting these kinds of quarrels about other people's property, but rather he has begun to actively engage in these kinds of quarrels and to make his own claims on other people's property. Thus, there may be here a subtle hint about the contagious nature of bad competition, or perhaps even more specifically of hyper-litigiousness (or its 8th century equivalent). Evil strife first insinuated itself into Perses' life by presenting itself as an irresistible spectacle, but then there followed a natural and perhaps hardly noticeable transition from listener and spectator to quarreler, from an interest in observing disputes about other people's property to a desire to get his own hands on someone else's property.<sup>32</sup>

Like bad competition, good competition likewise has both a physical, material aspect and an immaterial, verbal aspect. Materially, it involves a different kind of response to the envy that comes from looking at another man's wealth. Instead of trying to obtain the other man's wealth through war, fighting, or verbal dispute, one who is influenced by good competition will be spurred to honest hard work in an attempt to outdo his neighbor by relying solely on his own resources.<sup>33</sup> But in addition to being a motivating force for the increase of personal wealth, good competition also seems to be a more general, less strictly material kind of impetus for excellence. The beggar who envies the beggar probably will have food and shelter in the forefront of his mind,<sup>34</sup> but the potter and the builder surely have an additional stake in the honing of their skills and in the general development of their crafts.<sup>35</sup> And Hesiod cannot possibly mean to suggest that the singer is motivated primarily

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<sup>31</sup> Note, e.g., Athena's advice to Achilles at *Il.* 1.210-11 to cease from strife but to keep taunting Agamemnon with words (ἀλλ' ἄγε λῆγ' ἔριδος, μηδὲ ξίφος ἔλκεο χειρὶ / ἀλλ' ἦ τοι ἔπεισιν μὲν ὀνειδισὸν ὡς ἔσεται περ).

<sup>32</sup> As Nagler 1992: 91 notes, this "slippery dynamic" of *eris* may also be suggested in Hesiod's account of good competition, where the verbs he uses become increasingly negative: σπεύδει, ζηλοῖ, κοτέει, and finally φθονέει. And, of course, the fact that this is the dynamic used to describe *good* competition puts into question the feasibility of clearly distinguishing between the two kinds.

<sup>33</sup> What about the man without resources who is spurred to hard work? In his case, the only resources he will have are non-material - physical strength, intelligence, and perhaps some skills - and so he will make the most of them. Clay 2003: 7 points out that good competition is occasioned by material lack and is thus applicable only to the mortal sphere, since the gods lack nothing.

<sup>34</sup> West 1978 *ad loc.* suggests Irus and Odysseus as an example of beggar competing with beggar, but it is hard to see how that fight could be an example of good competition. Rather, this must refer back again to the man without resources who is spurred to work.

<sup>35</sup> Plato, of course, would distinguish the practice of their arts from the supervening art of acquiring wealth.



by a desire to increase his material wealth. Rather, he would surely be motivated, at least in part, by pride in his craft and a desire for prestige and honor; thus his appearance in this list may suggest an acknowledgement of the crucial influence that the competitive ethos of ancient Greek culture had on innovation and development in all of the various intellectual, scientific, and artistic fields of practice.<sup>36</sup>

So why do both kinds of competition deserve to be referred to by the same word? Clearly, both involve an attempt to improve one's position or oneself in some way. And both involve a kind of gazing at the goods, or the good fortunes, of others (Perses is a spectator in the market place; the properly competitive man without work looks toward his wealthier neighbor). But as has been noted, it is the good competition that Hesiod describes as giving rise to envy and anger, two emotions that would have been more intuitively associated with bad competition.<sup>37</sup> We might assume that it should be taken as a given that those emotions are also involved in bad competition - surely they must play a part in wars and fighting. But our only indication that emotion is involved in Perses' transition to being actively engaged in bad competition is that his θυμός (soul, mind temper; in particular, the seat of anger) may be drawn by evil-loving *Eris* from work to quarrels (θυμὸν ἐρύκοι, 28). Indeed, the fact that some kind of θυμός is involved in both kinds of *Eris* is affirmed at right at the beginning of our passage, when Hesiod says that the two *Erides* have a divided θυμός (διὰ δ' ἄνδιχα θυμὸν ἔχουσιν, 13). This could mean simply that they have very different minds, or hearts; but the particular expression that Hesiod has chosen, with a plural subject and a singular object, suggests that θυμός is something that they both share in a fundamental, though divided, way. And this may encourage us to understand θυμός here more strongly, as the seat of anger and passion (competitive feelings), which can be directed toward either good or bad ends.<sup>38</sup>

Although both the realm of words and the realm of actions appear side by side without any explicit differentiation throughout this passage, the specifically verbal aspects of both good and bad competition do receive some special emphasis. For the most part, verbal disputation is associated with bad competition, both in *Works and Days* and in the *Theogony*. The only hint that it can also be associated with good competition is in Hesiod's seemingly innocuous αἰδὸς αἰδῶ (singer [envies] singer), which he tacks onto the list of other practitioners who are spurred to rivalry (by φθόνος). But the importance of his decision to include poetic rivalry in this list should not be underestimated. One effect that it has, in fact, is to make this theoretical analysis self-referential, in the sense that it invites us to take this singer, Hesiod, and the poem which he is in the midst of composing/performing, as an example of what a positive, beneficial kind of verbal competition might look like.

The traditional interpretation of the context (whether historical or fictional) of *Works and Days* is that Hesiod and his brother Perses are involved in a legal dispute over their inheritance, of which Perses, by means of bribing the kings, was taking (or was trying to take) more than his share. Indeed some have argued that Hesiod's poem represents a

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<sup>36</sup> As examined by Lloyd 1987.

<sup>37</sup> Thalmann 2004: 361 compares Isocrates *Panathenaicus* 81, where φθόνος appears along with φιλοτιμία in a description of the qualities of the Greek heroes at Troy. He concludes: "In a culture so conditioned as Greek culture was by honor as both a conceptual system and a code of conduct, envy might be relatively neutral rather than discreditable at least some of the time, an accepted by-product of competition and in turn a good to further efforts to attain honor." For the Greek concept of envy cf. Walcot 1978.

<sup>38</sup> Viano 2003: 94 points out that *thumos* is characterized by Aristotle as the source not only of the competitive emotions, but also of affection (τὸ φιλητικόν, *Pol.* 1327b40). Aristotle's proof is that πρὸς γὰρ τοὺς συνήθεις καὶ φίλους ὁ θυμὸς αἵρεται μᾶλλον ἢ πρὸς τοὺς ἀγνώτας, ὀλιγωρεῖσθαι νομίσας. This would suggest a good kind of competitive emotion, fueled by a healthy *thumos*.

kind of rehearsal of his legal case.<sup>39</sup> If this is true, then the distinction between poetic and forensic discourse will be quite tenuous. Clay, on the other hand, has suggested (rather boldly) that the 'much extra' that Perses took and the 'goods of others' that have so attracted his attention may have nothing at all to do with Hesiod.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps Hesiod has no personal material stake at all in setting Perses on the right path, but, after seeing him behave unjustly toward someone else and neglect his own property, he merely wants to help him. In this way, his role as singer is very much akin to the role of the muse-inspired king, whose eloquence is put in the service of settling disputes, not of furthering them. But increasing one's material wealth by honest means, if not the sole motivation, was certainly found to be one of the primary motivations of good competition; so I would be inclined to imagine that the traditional interpretation is correct, but that Hesiod is collapsing the two roles of the singer. Like the muse-inspired king, he is using his divine eloquence to settle a dispute, but like the competitive, envious singer and the other practitioners who are inspired by good *Eris*, he is settling this dispute specifically by trying to outdo his opponent. Indeed, there is a sense in which his opponent is not only Perses, but also the market-place quarrelers, who, as a manifestation of bad *Eris*, are competing with Hesiod for Perses' attention (or for his θυμός).<sup>41</sup>

At any rate, a couple of points emerge from the foregoing. First, it is extremely difficult to distinguish clearly between good and bad competition. Whether we want to imagine that Hesiod is intentionally using *negative* language to describe *positive* competition in order to give his listeners hints about this difficulty, or we prefer, in deconstructionist fashion, merely to view the text as undermining itself, the fact remains that the line between the two is blurry. Second, it appears that one way to attempt to make the distinction in regard to speech is by contrasting different modes, or genres, of speech. In Hesiod's case, the contrast is between muse-inspired singing and 'market-place' speech (or perhaps simply between songs and *logoi tout court*, if we remember that *logoi* are the offspring of bad *Eris* in the *Theogony*). Likewise, Plato will later be at great pains to distinguish his own mode of discourse, dialectic, from all others, which are dismissively characterized as *eristic* in some fashion or other. Furthermore, Plato is quite singular among other practitioners of verbal arts in 5th and 4th century Greece in his suggestion that experts should not be competing with one another at all (but only with those below them) and in his insistence that the proper goal of any debate is always and only to try to get at the truth. The extent to which he, or his character Socrates, succeeds in rising above the agonistic atmosphere of his time is a matter of some disagreement; but regardless, he certainly presents a vision of verbal debate that is, at least in theory, at odds with the prevailing vision, which assumes an agonistic element to public speech.

### 3. Speech contests in Homer

There is no doubt that competition for honor is an enormously important theme in Homer's epics, and that the heroes are very much preoccupied with their ability to engage in such competition with every means at their disposal, both physical and verbal. And there is also, accordingly, a fair amount of attention paid to the quality of the speeches, especially through phrases such as *kata moiran*, *kata kosmon*, etc. and their negatives. Nancy Worman suggests that this kind of rhetorical assessment in archaic poetry is characterized by a

<sup>39</sup> Kirchhoff 1889, cited by Clay 2003: 34, n. 10.

<sup>40</sup> Clay 2003: 35.

<sup>41</sup> Not to mention his rival poets, of course!

"conflation of verbal style, visible performance, and moral content" and goes on to note that this conflation helped to shape rhetorical theory in its later developments.<sup>42</sup> Though there is of course no science of rhetoric in Homer, nor any explicit distinction between rhetorical genres,<sup>43</sup> there is certainly a recognition of great variation in the level of speaking ability that one may have, as well as of the possibility for different *kinds* of ability - along with an acknowledgment of the fundamental importance of verbal skill generally. But when it comes to assessing the proper limits of agonistic speech, or differentiating between good and bad, helpful and harmful, verbal competition, Homeric heroes are inclined to lump speech together with action and to take it for granted that everyone will use both, to the extent that he is able, to prove his worth and increase his honor.<sup>44</sup>

The famous words of instruction that Peleus gave to Phoenix regarding Achilles' education, that he should be taught to be 'a speaker of words and a doer of deeds' (μύθων τε ῥητῆρ' ἔμειναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων, 9.443), is particularly striking in light of the subsequent Greek obsession with making a distinction between λόγος and ἔργον. And this association, or conflation, of speech and action is reinforced by Phoenix's description of Achilles at the time of his departure as 'knowing nothing of close-fought war, nor of assemblies, where men become highly distinguished' (οὐ πω εἰδόθ' ὁμοίου πολέμοιο, / οὐδ' ἀγορέων, ἴνα τ' ἄνδρες ἀριπρεπέες τελέθουσι, 9.440-1), where the relative adverb ἴνα is surely meant to refer both to 'war' and 'assemblies,' as two complementary arenas for winning distinction and honor. As Adam Parry puts it, "speech, counsel and monologue are a form of action."<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the three Greek heroes whose speech is most marked in the epics - Nestor, Achilles, and Odysseus - all have a different speaking style, which is itself a reflection of their style or status as warriors. Nestor's fighting years are in the past, but he has a great deal of experience and wisdom and uses his speech to further the cooperative interests of the army by always giving the best advice. Achilles is the greatest warrior, and he speaks fearlessly and straightforwardly, backing down from no one. Odysseus, as we will see, has a more complex character (indeed, famously so), and his speech contains various styles, some that are similar to both Achilles and Nestor.

The representation of verbal dueling as either a complement to or a substitute for physical dueling pervades most of the battle scenes in Homer. Parks (1990) has examined the rules, structures, and techniques of 'flyting' contests, not only in Homer, but also in English and Sanskrit epic poetry.<sup>46</sup> He identifies five 'speech functions' that typically occur in a flyting speech: identitive, retrojective, projective, attributive-evaluative, and comparative. "In other words, the flyter identifies himself or his adversary; retrojects or refers back to some fact or event; projects some future chain of actions or state of affairs; evaluates or attributes (implicitly evaluative) qualities to himself or his adversary; and indulges in a heroic comparison, to his adversary's disadvantage."<sup>47</sup> As an example, he analyzes the encounter between Achilles and Aeneas at *Il.* 20.158-352, but notes that there

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<sup>42</sup> Worman 2009: 28.

<sup>43</sup> Martin 1989: 44 suggests that, in Homer, there is no distinction between speech-act and speech-genre, and he thus lists the 'genres' as: "prayer, lament, supplication, commanding, insulting, and narrating from memory." Cf. Karp 1977, Cole 1991: 40-44 for different ideas about the level of rhetorical awareness in Homer.

<sup>44</sup> Martin 1989: 94-5 argues that "all speech in Homer takes place in an agonistic context," which, I believe, is accurate, though we must understand this 'context' as a very broad description of Greek society, which must be fully capable of admitting cooperation as well. Still, the notion that *public* speech must always have *some* element of competitive display is as true of Homer as it is of 5th and 4th century Athens.

<sup>45</sup> Parry 1956: 4.

<sup>46</sup> Also Ready 2011 examines similes in Homer as a locus of competition, not only competition between characters but also between the characters and the poet.

<sup>47</sup> Parks 1990: 104.

"the contest lacks 'correct' Resolution in that the Achaian does not cut down his enemy and boast over the corpse."<sup>48</sup> His analysis makes it clear that, by means of such taunting and vaunting, speech becomes a kind of weapon, and the physical battle is supplemented by a verbal component.

At other times Homer presents abusive speech less as a support than as a kind of substitute for physical violence. In the meeting between Diomedes and Glaucus in *II*. 6.119-236, what begins as the standard vaunting of a verbal duel that is to be a prelude for a physical duel ends up revealing new information that prevents the violence from ever taking place, and the competitive speech becomes cooperative (though not entirely cooperative: there is certainly a winner). But there is a better example of competitive, vituperative speech being used purely as a substitute for violence in book 1, when Athena appears behind Achilles to prevent him from drawing his sword and killing Agamemnon. She tells him to cease from the strife/quarrel/competition, λῆγ' ἔριδος, but encourages him to 'reproach/revile him with words, as to what will be' (ἀλλ' ἦ τοι ἔπεισιν μὲν ὀνειδίσσον ὡς ἔσειταί περ, 1.210-11). This quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon, with which the *Iliad* opens, is probably the closest thing we find in Homer to an explicit examination of the distinction between good and bad competition, so it warrants further discussion.

After Agamemnon has announced his scheme to make up for the loss of his own prize, Chryseis, by taking a prize from one of the other heroes, perhaps even Achilles' dear Briseis, Achilles reviles him for his excessive love of material wealth, calling him φιλοκτηανώτατος (1.122). And after Agamemnon has responded, Achilles continues to hurl insults in the same vein: Agamemnon is 'clothed in shamelessness' (ἀναιδείην ἐπιειμένε) and 'greedy/profit-obsessed' (κερδαλεόφρον, 1.149). Agamemnon's defense is to attack Achilles for a different character trait, namely for being overly fond of competition. He has always hated Achilles, for 'strife and wars and battles are always dear to him': αἰεὶ γάρ τοι ἔρις τε φίλη πόλεμοί τε μάχαι τε (1.177). Note that, in this line, ἔρις, 'strife, competition,' is particularly emphasized by its placement. Also note that φίλη, 'dear,' echoes the first element of the abusive term that Achilles used against Agamemnon, φιλοκτηανώτατε. Thus, it appears that Achilles is overly fond of competing (according to his opponent), and Agamemnon is overly fond of the prizes resulting therefrom; and each has been accused of a different kind of hypercompetitiveness.<sup>49</sup> If a contest (of whatever sort) is pictured as consisting of two parts, namely the toilsome display of superiority and the resulting gains in wealth or status, then the criticisms leveled by these two warriors complement each other, as each offers a picture of a different way that a hero might overvalue one aspect of the contest to the exclusion of the other. Agamemnon cares only for prizes, for material reward, and he is not particularly concerned about the process by which he might demonstrate that he deserves such prizes (and indeed by which he might demonstrate his excellence generally). As Achilles goes on to say, Agamemnon is happy to sit out of the battles and merely content himself with claiming the rewards (1.225 ff). Likewise, implicit in Agamemnon's accusation that Achilles always loves quarrels and battles is the suggestion that he is not *really* so concerned with his prize, Briseis, but that he merely wants to pick a fight. Perhaps this kind of disingenuousness is what Agamemnon has in mind at the beginning of the argument, when he tells Achilles not to try to deceive him (μῆ...κλέπτε νόω, 1.131-2).

Agamemnon's criticism has some plausibility to it: for Achilles to be such a great warrior, he must take some pleasure in the activity. And if he takes pleasure in physical

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<sup>48</sup> *Idem* 117.

<sup>49</sup> Words using some form of φιλο- are often used to signify an *over*-valuing of something, especially in regard to competition (φιλοτιμία, φιλονικία, φιλονεικία). Cf. Aristotle *EN* 1118b.22.

fighting, he might reasonably be expected to take pleasure in verbal fighting as well.<sup>50</sup> After Patroclus' death, he even seems to acknowledge that there was some truth to Agamemnon's criticism, when he says to his mother:

ὡς ἔρις ἔκ τε θεῶν ἔκ τ' ἀνθρώπων ἀπόλοιτο,  
καὶ χόλος, ὅς τ' ἐφέηκε πολύφρονά περ χαλεπῆναι,  
ὅς τε πολὺ γλυκίων μέλιτος καταλειβομένοιο  
ἀνδρῶν ἐν στήθεσσιν ἀέξεται ἤυτε καπνός.

I wish strife would die away from gods and from humans,  
and anger, which makes even a very thoughtful man enraged,  
and which, much sweeter than flowing honey,  
grows in the breasts of men like smoke.  
(18.107-110)

Although the metaphors are applied to χόλος, 'anger,' the real theme of this sentiment, which accordingly is mentioned first, is ἔρις, which gives rise to and sustains that anger. Thus, by acknowledging the 'sweet' pleasure of anger, Achilles is also acknowledging the sweetness of strife and competition and admitting that it has indeed been 'dear' to him, even if he now regrets it.

But even if Achilles does, by his own admission, derive some pleasure from angry intercourse, both verbal and physical, still, whether or not that pleasure is really the motivation for his actions, as Agamemnon claims, remains debatable. He certainly views his own motivation during the quarrel rather as the heroic imperative to ensure, by whatever means necessary, that one's worth is appropriately recognized by the group: i.e. the increase and defense of one's honor, which is almost always made manifest through material, as well as symbolic, awards.<sup>51</sup> According to this view, Achilles recognizes the pleasure of fighting, but he does not fight for pleasure. And this proper assessment of the value of competing would then correspond to his proper assessment of the value of the prize, which Claus puts very succinctly: "Simply put, he must be paid, but he cannot be bought."<sup>52</sup>

But regardless of the legitimacy of the criticisms made by either Achilles or Agamemnon, the fact remains that, in so far as they are debating the proper bounds of 'good competition,' they are doing so in very broad terms that include both speech and action, without distinguishing between the two. In broader, thematic terms, of course, their quarrel can be seen as a conflict between the 'social' and the 'martial.'<sup>53</sup> From this perspective, the question is not so much, 'how ought one to compete?' but, 'does social status or martial excellence give one a greater claim to superiority, honors, etc.?' And the criticisms that each makes will be understood to be the natural perspectives of the men who specialize in each 'function': a proponent of the claims of social status will naturally view the warrior as overly bellicose, and the proponent of the claims of martial ability will naturally

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<sup>50</sup> Though it is important to note that Ajax really does represent the purely physical warrior. In the embassy scene, his speech (9.620-639) is only 19 lines (compared with 81 for Odysseus, 121 for Achilles, and 171 for Phoenix) and is not terribly inspiring.

<sup>51</sup> As Adkins 1960b: 30 puts it, τιμή, 'honor,' "is not material possessions only, but it is rooted in the material situation, not on intentions or attitudes."

<sup>52</sup> Claus 1975: 24. He further argues (pp. 21-3) that this principle lies at the heart of the heroic 'code' and is discernible in Sarpedon's famous speech (*Il.* 12.310 ff.).

<sup>53</sup> Nagy 1979: 48. Davidson 1980 cites this quarrel as an example of the conflict between two of Dumézil's three Indo-European functions. The motif of the superior warrior pitted against the inferior leader also appears in the myths of Heracles, The Germanic Starkaðr, and the Indic Śiśupāla.

see the pure leader as a lazy profiteer. Thus, viewed in this way, they cannot really be debating how one ought to compete, because they have no real choice in the matter. Their manner of competing is simply built into who they are and the functions that they serve.

In the character of Achilles, however, scholars have seen some interesting peculiarities in the striking style of his agonistic language. A discussion about the extent to which he uses epic language in innovative ways in order to question the meaning of honor, or the value of the 'heroic code,' took place in several articles with 'the Language of Achilles' in their titles.<sup>54</sup> We need not rehearse them here, as Martin provides an excellent survey and analysis of the debate; but Martin's own conclusions are worth reviewing. Focusing in particular on Achilles' great speech in response to Odysseus in the embassy scene, Martin argues that Achilles shows himself to be the best competitive speaker in a number of ways. Martin points out, for example, that a lower percentage of the phrases that Achilles uses are formulaic.<sup>55</sup> That is to say that he is a more innovative speaker, and indeed Martin calls him a 'rhetorician'.

If Achilles is one character in whom we see the theme of verbal competition, then Odysseus is certainly at least as much so. His *μητις*, or cunning intelligence,<sup>56</sup> manifests itself in many ways, but one area in which it clearly gives him an advantage is in the area of verbal competition. His reputation as the speaker *par excellence* is emphasized in a memorable anecdote during the *teichoskopia* in Book 3 of the *Iliad*. After a description of the leader, Agamemnon, the very next person that Priam notices among the Greek army is Odysseus, whom he asks Helen to describe. She refers to him as the man of many wiles (*πολύμητις*), who knows all manner of tricks and clever stratagems (*εἰδῶς παντοίους τε δόλους καὶ μῆδεα πυκνά*, 200-2). Then Antenor interjects to confirm Helen's description of Odysseus by telling them that he himself witnessed Odysseus giving a speech when he and Menelaus had come to Troy on an embassy regarding Helen. At that time, Antenor was able to learn of the physical stature (*φνῆν*) and the clever stratagems (*μέδεα πυκνά*) of both men. Menelaos was taller (though Odysseus looked more noble while seated), and he made a good showing with his speech, keeping it short but very 'clear-voiced' (*παῦρα μὲν, ἀλλὰ μάλα λιγέως*, 3.214). Odysseus, on the other hand, kept his eyes fixed on the ground and, instead of moving his staff back and forth, he kept it perfectly still like a man without intelligence (*αἰδρεῖ φωτὶ ἔοικώς*, 219). One would have thought him morose and foolish. But when he projected his great voice and his words, which were like winter snowflakes (*ἔπεα νιφάδεσσιν ἔοικότα χειμερίσιν*), then no mortal could compete with Odysseus (*οὐκ ἂν ἔπειτ' Ὀδυσῆι γ' ἐρίσσειε βροτὸς ἄλλος*, 3.223).

The effect of this description of Odysseus is not only to give testimony to his 'cunning intelligence,' but also to create a disjunction between speech and physicality, word

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<sup>54</sup> Parry 1956, Claus 1975, Nimis 1986, Martin 1989.

<sup>55</sup> Martin 1989: 164 ff. distinguishes between paradigmatic formulae, which are single words that appear more than once in the same position of the hexameter line, and syntagmatic formulae, which are groups of words that appear together more than once, not always in the same position and sometimes with intervening words. Only the syntagmatic formulae are significant for his analysis, since "the mere repetition of a certain phrase structure, without the repetition of exact words, could not carry intentional semantic meaning to an audience." He argues that Achilles is shown to be an innovative speaker in part because he uses relatively few of these syntagmatic formulae in his speech. Though Martin does not analyze any speech by another hero as a *comparandum*, which would give the reader a sense of just how divergent Achilles' speech is, it may be safe to trust that Achilles does indeed use less of these formulae. Even so, he uses quite a number of them – almost every line contains at least one, and the largest gap in his speech between them is two lines – so we might have some question about the *extent* to which this aspect of his innovative style would force itself upon the ancient audience of the poem.

<sup>56</sup> For *μητις*, see Detienne and Vernant 1978.

and deed.<sup>57</sup> Detienne and Vernant emphasize only the duplicity of Odysseus' behavior here as an illustration of the deceptive power of μῆτις. They compare this behavior to various deceptive objects that Homer refers to as δόλος (trick, trap, etc.): "the Trojan horse, the bed of love with its magic bonds, the fishing bait are all traps which conceal their inner deceit beneath a reassuring or seductive exterior."<sup>58</sup> Thus the point in Odysseus' case would be that he is 'reassuring' his audience that they have nothing to fear from this surly ignoramus, who knows nothing about oratory; and then once they are lulled into complacency, his powerful, dangerous words will be all the more effective. There may be some truth to this description, but it does not quite mesh with Antenor's emphasis. By comparing Odysseus' words to winter snowflakes, Antenor seems to be most impressed, not with their power and danger, but with their beauty and intricacy. And while Odysseus' behavior may be, in some sense, all an act, it is surely significant that it is no elaborate performance, that no effort whatsoever is expended in trying to give the impression of being someone other than he is: if his audience is given the wrong impression about his speaking abilities, that is only because he *does nothing*. He insists rather on letting the words speak for themselves, as it were. In the world of Homer, where appearance and physical behavior are in a complementary relation with speech in the competition for honor; where Thersites' ugly appearance implies his unmeasured speech, and vice versa; where Achilles must be the greatest warrior in respect to the force of both his fighting and his speaking; in this world, Odysseus alone is able to defeat all rivals in the arena of verbal competition without having any recourse to, or paying any attention to, the physical dimensions of the contest. Thus one characteristic of μῆτις is that it can exert its powers in the verbal realm, in opposition to the physical realm.<sup>59</sup>

Another way of viewing Odysseus' μῆτις, as it applies specifically to his manner of engaging in competition, is through the idea of self-effacement or deferral of recognition. Part of what makes Odysseus special is his ability to withhold his demands for honor and defer the recognition that he deserves for his excellence - all for the sake of a greater payoff in the end.<sup>60</sup> We see this kind of restraint both in his speeches and in his actions. He masterminds the final downfall of Troy through a military strategy whose genius is entirely founded on concealment, disguise, and patient waiting. And his two most memorable individual disguises are symbolic of the absolute extreme of self-effacement: on his return to Ithaca, he suppresses every claim to superiority of status by appearing as a lowly beggar; and in the cave of Polyphemus, he withholds his name and presents himself as a Nobody (until, of course, he can no longer resist the temptation to assert himself).<sup>61</sup>

His opponents would surely accuse Odysseus of overvaluing the prize and undervaluing the contest, since he does not appear to play by the rules.<sup>62</sup> Like Agamemnon,

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<sup>57</sup> Parry 1981: 24 does not see any disjunction here. He notes, correctly, that Odysseus "is a great and honorable warrior" and that his words "are a form of action," but he does not seem to notice that, in this passage, his words are expressly contrasted with his physical action. Achilles' great speech in the embassy scene is the only place in Homer that Parry sees a hint of the λόγος / ἔργον distinction.

<sup>58</sup> Detienne and Vernant 1978: 23.

<sup>59</sup> This is a major aspect of the opposition between μῆτις and βίη, which I discuss below.

<sup>60</sup> For this aspect of Odysseus, see Murnaghan 1987.

<sup>61</sup> Of course, *metis* is also a pun, and thus his particular brand of cleverness is closely associated with this kind of self-effacement. A humorous contrast to this aspect of Odysseus' character can be found in Euripides' portrayal of Achilles in *I.A.*, where he is obsessed with his 'name,' and is in fact originally angry with Agamemnon, not for luring Iphigenia to her death under false pretenses, but for doing so without first asking permission to use Achilles' name.

<sup>62</sup> Parks 1990: 7 notes that the *Odyssey* has an "ambivalence toward verbal *agōnia*," and he later (p. 20-1) explains Odysseus' deceptive tactics in evolutionary terms. The main purpose of ceremonialized aggression is to create the greatest benefit to the group by allowing for "escape or submission." There may be great individual benefit, however, to deception and over-bluffing, but if taken too far, it will "confer the advantage

one might charge, Odysseus is willing to do whatever it takes to win, to enjoy the rewards of the contest, even if it means that he must forego the customary demonstration of superiority that is expected to serve as the substance of the contest.<sup>63</sup> But, of course, at least as far his portrayal in Homer goes, this charge would be false. If anybody values, not only the payoff, but the game as well, it is Odysseus. He makes an art of it. He does not excuse himself out of laziness, as Achilles accuses Agamemnon of doing, nor does he get others to do the dirty work for him. In fact, of all the Greek heroes, he is the most celebrated for the suffering and toil that he willingly undergoes. But his talents are different from Achilles', and he must be more creative.

One passage from the *Odyssey* that highlights both of these aspects of Odysseus' competitive μῆτις – both its verbal, as opposed to physical, orientation and its deferral of self-assertion – is the passage where the Phaeacians are trying to draw him into their athletic contests. Here the context, of course, is explicitly competitive, and Odysseus quite literally, at least at first, refuses to compete – a form of self-effacement that corresponds to his stubborn refusal to reveal his identity to the Phaeacians, as he insists on remaining a stranger far beyond the normal dictates of *xenia*. But Euryalus and Laodamas, deprived of the opportunity to compete with Odysseus physically, then seek to draw him into a verbal contest by taunting him. When Laodamas first offers the challenge, he says that the greatest glory for men is to be found in physical accomplishment, which he clearly understands to mean primarily athletic accomplishment:

ἔοικε δέ σ' ἴδμεν ἀέθλους·  
οὐ μὲν γὰρ μεῖζον κλέος ἀνέρος ὄφρα κ' ἔησιν,  
ἢ ὅ τι ποσσὶν τε ῥέξει καὶ χερσὶν ἐῆσιν.

but you likely have experience with contests;  
for there is no greater glory for man, as long as he exists,  
than that which he accomplishes with his own feet and hands.  
(8.146-8)

Odysseus responds by diminishing the importance of athletic contests, saying that his mind is much more occupied with 'cares', as he has suffered so much and now longs to return home. This response provokes a taunt (νείκεσε) from Euryalus, who now reverses his brother's previous judgment that Odysseus appeared to be skilled in athletics: οὐ γὰρ σ' οὐδέ, ξεῖνε, δαήμονι φωτὶ έίσκω/ ἄθλων ('no, stranger, for I would not judge you to be like a man skilled in athletic contests,' 8.159-60). He continues by questioning Odysseus' social status, suggesting that he looks more like the captain of a merchant ship, who is concerned only with cargo and profits. Thus, not only is Odysseus unskilled in contests, Euryalus suggests, but he is not even of an elite enough social class to engage in them at all.

Now Odysseus finally asserts himself, first verbally and then physically. He begins his speech with a critique of Euryalus' speech: 'stranger, you have not spoken well' (ξεῖν', οὐ καλὸν ἔειπες, 8.166); and he goes on to explain his objection by noting that the gods do not give the favors of physical form (φύην), good sense (φρένας), or speaking ability (ἀγορητύν)<sup>64</sup> to all men alike. Given the nature of Euryalus' taunt, one here expects that Odysseus is preparing to defend his refusal to participate in the athletic contests, and

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to those who always challenge the bluff... Thus both rule observation and rule breaking contribute to the gaming balance of evolution. Achilles and Odysseus both have their place."

<sup>63</sup> This perspective is, in fact, what we find in both Sophocles and Euripides, where Odysseus is a convenient stand-in for the ambitious, lying politician.

<sup>64</sup> ἀγορητύς, 'eloquence,' is a *hapax*, but ἀγορητής is common, especially to describe Nestor.



simultaneously salvage his honor, by arguing that his talents simply lie elsewhere: if he has not been blessed with a particularly impressive φύη, which would enable him to excel in athletics, then his intelligence and speaking ability should make up for it. And we recall that, in the *Iliad*, when Antenor was praising Odysseus' superiority in eloquence, he had contrasted it with his comparatively inferior φύη. But Odysseus shows his μῆτις and defies expectations by revealing that his comment is not meant in the way of defense, but as an attack. Euryalus, he argues, is all φύη without any φρένες or ἀγορητύς (which are more or less collapsed together); thus he is the reverse of Odysseus as Antenor described him.

So far we seem to have a contrast between verbal performance (along with the intelligence that must attend it) and physical performance. But Odysseus proceeds to considerably increase the severity of his insult by making it clear that, by φύη, 'physical nature,' he does not understand anything at all having to do with physical *ability*, but is referring solely to physical *appearance*. One man might be inferior in appearance, 'but a god crowns his physical form with words' (ἀλλὰ θεὸς μορφήν ἔπεισι στέφει, 8.170). Another man is like the immortals in looks, but 'he does not have the grace of words set upon him as a crown' (ἀλλ' οὐ οἱ χάρις ἀμφιπεριστεφέρεται ἐπέεσσιν, 8.175). Euryalus, of course, falls into the latter category. And in case he continues to think that his superior φύη should have any bearing on his athletic abilities, Odysseus proceeds to disabuse him of that notion by picking up an extra heavy discus and hurling it much farther than all the rest.<sup>65</sup>

This passage presents an interesting contrast with the later Greek opposition between λόγος and ἔργον. In some sense the distinction between word and action does appear, at least in our mistaken expectation of how Odysseus' speech will proceed; though even there, we expect Odysseus to attribute at least as much value to λόγος as to ἔργον. But it becomes clear that speech and action are not the real *comparanda* here, but rather speech and action, on one side, are contrasted with mere physical appearance on the other. Later, the argument that verbal and mental ability is far more valuable than athletic ability would be made explicitly and forcefully, by Xenophanes and then by Socrates. But at this stage of the game, Odysseus only goes so far as to cunningly hint that he will make such an argument – an argument that surely would have sounded a bit too much like an admission of defeat to an audience familiar with the demands made on all epic heroes of physical and athletic excellence – before reverting to the more familiar Homeric conception of competitive performance, whereby speech and action are complementary elements of the contest, and 'appearance' is just appearance.

I have focused on the central heroes of the Homeric epics and their different styles of engaging in, and commenting on, verbal competition partly because it is clear that these two characters were conceived as a kind of 'binary opposition' in the field of competition. More specifically, the opposition between Odysseus and Achilles represents an opposition between μῆτις and βίη, 'cleverness' and 'force', two poles whose relative ethical merits, and relative effectiveness for achieving victory, could be endlessly weighed. Nagy famously argued that, alongside the *Iliadic* poem that has come down to us, there was another oral tradition, another *Iliad*, in which the events that we are familiar with were instigated by a quarrel, not between Achilles and Agamemnon, but between Achilles and Odysseus. There are two passages that offer particularly strong evidence for this alternative tradition: in the embassy scene of the *Iliad* (9.182-3), there is a seemingly ungrammatical use of the dual form, which, Nagy argues, must be a kind of wink toward the other version, in which the embassy was made up only of Phoenix and Ajax, since Odysseus would not have been on

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<sup>65</sup> Considering the number of myths that involve death by discus (Apollo and Hyacinthus, Peleus and Phocus, Perseus and Acrisius), Odysseus' action here amounts to a boast that he could kill these rivals (just as he will later kill the suitors) if he were so inclined.

speaking terms with Achilles;<sup>66</sup> and in the *Odyssey* (8.72-82), Demodocus actually sings about a 'quarrel between Achilles and Odysseus' as taking place in a context that sounds very much like our *Iliad*.

Nagy finds further confirmation of this traditional rivalry in the recurrence of the thematic opposition between μῆτις and βίη. In reference to the song of Demodocus, the scholia explain that the quarrel between Achilles and Odysseus specifically concerned the question of whether Troy should be taken with force or with guile.<sup>67</sup> And Nagy sees Achilles reprising the debate during the embassy scene when he tauntingly challenges Odysseus, Agamemnon, and the other kings, to 'devise' (φραζέσθω) a way to keep the fire from the ships. Further, at the end of the speech, he repeats that they should 'devise another μῆτις'. Here μῆτις, Achilles would suggest, represents their only means of competing, since they are to remain deprived of his own βίη. Generally, the word βίη is often associated with Achilles,<sup>68</sup> and of course μῆτις and πολύμητις are almost synonymous with Odysseus. The final passage discussed by Nagy in which we see this opposition very clearly is the scene where Nestor advises his son before he competes in the chariot race at Patroclus' funeral games. It is with μῆτις, Nestor tells him, rather than with βίη that a woodcutter is better (ἀμείνων), that a helmsman keeps his ship on course (ιθύνει), and that a charioteer defeats (περιγίγνεται) his opponent.<sup>69</sup> Nagy concludes: "In such a traditional celebration of *mētis* 'artifice' at the expense of *biē* 'might', we see that superiority is actually being determined in terms of an opposition between these qualities."<sup>70</sup>

It seems, then, that, next to the argument between Achilles and Agamemnon, the closest thing that we will find in the Homeric epics to Hesiod's opposition between 'good ἔρις' and 'bad ἔρις' is precisely this opposition between μῆτις and βίη. In Nestor's advice, in fact, we see a strong parallel to Hesiod. The impending race and Nestor's concluding with the importance of μῆτις in the victory of charioteer over charioteer make the context of his advice explicitly agonistic. His inclusion of the example of the helmsman, on the other hand, need not imply any sort of competition but would still be relevant, in so much as the skill of the helmsman serves as an obvious analogue to that of the charioteer, who must likewise steer his vehicle through dangerous obstacles. But the woodcutter seems a rather odd example. Perhaps his skill is one that might properly be mistaken for relying primarily on βίη, and Nestor wants to point out that it actually relies more on intelligence, proper aim, the ability to swing the axe with a straight motion (just as a ship must be guided straight), or something of that sort. But one might also be reminded here of some of Hesiod's exemplary 'good' competitors, namely the potter and the builder. Though μῆτις certainly has a great deal to recommend it in military contexts, as the Trojan horse most famously attests, Nestor's praise of it here includes, in addition to the athletic and nautical examples, what looks like a rather domestic scene. No doubt, woodcutting is an activity that must take place in the military camp as well, but this image of the woodcutter who is 'better' (ἀμείνων), I propose, more readily brings to mind the man who vies with his neighbor more quickly and more efficiently to get his own household prepared for the onset of winter.

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<sup>66</sup> Scodel 2002: 160 ff. discusses the various interpretations of the use of the dual here, and she (among others) argues that it is Phoenix rather who is left out: "There is no real evidence that Odysseus and Achilles were traditional enemies – indeed, the epics make them friends, though opposites and rivals" (p. 164).

<sup>67</sup> Nagy 1979: 46 n.2 notes that the scholiast does not use these exact terms but makes the opposition clear through a number of equivalent terms: ἀνδρεία/σύνεισις, βιάζεσθαι/δόλω μετελθεῖν, σωματικά/ψυχικά, ἀνδρεία/μηχανή καὶ φρόνησις.

<sup>68</sup> Nagy cites *Iliad* 11.787.

<sup>69</sup> *Iliad* 23.313-18.

<sup>70</sup> Nagy 1979: 47.

This Homeric opposition between μῆτις and βίη, however, unlike Hesiod's opposition, represents a comparison between two different kinds of excellence, both of which are widely acknowledged to be 'good' and beneficial. Thus it is an opposition between 'good competition' and another 'good competition.' Each will have its particular champions, who will praise it at the expense of the other, but both Achilles and Odysseus are essential to victory. But each term is also, like ἔρις itself, somewhat ambiguous, which is what allows one so easily to devalue either in favor of the other. The opposition between intelligence and physical strength, brains and brawn (in Greek perhaps φρένες and ἰσχύς), which might be more easily considered as unqualified goods, is only one part of it. But μῆτις does not only mean 'intelligence', but also 'deviousness'; and βίη does not only mean 'strength', but also 'violence'. So they are two different approaches to ἔρις, both of which contain its dual nature.

Further, we need to say more about how this opposition relates specifically to the issue of 'verbal' competition. On the one hand, μῆτις is very closely associated with verbal ability, while βίη at once brings to mind physical strength. Thus Odysseus and Nestor, the two greatest speakers – despite the fact that they have very different speaking styles (and only Odysseus is known for a particularly 'cunning' style) – are likewise the two great champions of μῆτις over βίη. And Achilles, the greatest warrior, acknowledges that there are others in the camp who are better than him at speaking.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, as we noted above, Achilles is characterized, especially in his great speech in response to Odysseus, as an excellent agonistic rhetorician in his own right. So the opposition between μῆτις and βίη can also find expression *within* the arena of verbal performance. It can suggest 'speech versus action', but it can also represent two different kinds of speech, as well as two different kinds of action. At the beginning of his great speech, Achilles famously expresses one of the ethical principles that underlies his own preferred rhetorical style: ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς Αἴδαο πύλῃσιν/ ὅς χ' ἕτερον μὲν κεύθη ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπη ('for that man is hateful to me, just like the gates of Hades, who hides one thing in his mind, and says another thing,' 9.312-13). As in Hesiod, where we saw that good ἔρις is associated with poetic speech, and bad ἔρις is associated with the kind of speech that takes place in the agora (perhaps of a litigious nature), here we likewise see two different kinds of competition contrasted through two different styles of speech. In this case, however, despite Achilles' attempt to disparage the style of his opponent, both styles are generally valued, and the verdict on the question of which is ultimately the more advantageous is left open.

We see from Plato's *Hippias Minor* that in the fourth century Achilles and Odysseus were still invoked as representatives of two opposing styles of competition, whose relative ethical merits could be debated; but that dialogue also reveals the extent to which the ethical preoccupations and the terms of the debate had changed.<sup>72</sup> The extent to which μῆτις, understood as verbal, as opposed to physical, competition, had won the day is apparent from the fact that βίη is hardly anywhere to be seen in the dialogue, and references to physical competition serve only as context and foil to the topic at hand. Yet μῆτις, understood as deceptive cleverness, seems largely to have fallen out of favor in the changed ethical outlook of democratic Athens. Socrates, who in defending Odysseus is very clearly taking the unorthodox position, baffles fictional interlocutors and modern scholars alike with the apparently absurd conclusions that he reaches. But however ironic and unconventional some of his conclusions may be, the nature of the debate that Plato fictionalizes gives some indication of the nature of the preoccupation that 4th century Athenians had with the ethics of competitive discourse.

<sup>71</sup> *Il.* 18.106: ἀγορῇ δέ τ' ἀμείνονές εἰσι καὶ ἄλλοι.

<sup>72</sup> For a discussion of the dialogue, including a great deal of attention to the agonistic context, see Blondell 2002: 113-164. Also see Kahn 1996: 113-124.

The long-standing, traditional nature of the debate about the respective characters of Achilles and Odysseus is alluded to at the beginning of the dialogue when Socrates says that he used to hear Eudikos' father say that *The Iliad* was a better, more beautiful (κάλλιον) poem than *The Odyssey* to the same extent that Achilles was better (ἀμείνων) than Odysseus. For each poem, he said, was written with a view toward one of those men: ἐκάτερον γὰρ τούτων τὸ μὲν εἰς Ὀδυσσεέα ἔφη πεποιῆσθαι, τὸ δ' εἰς Ἀχιλλέα. Obviously both epics are incredibly rich poems and can be (and have been) compared and contrasted in any number of ways. But this comment from Eudikos' father suggests that one (more or less popular) way of comparing the poems at the time was, rather simplistically, to view each as a kind of ethical lesson conducted through the description of one exemplary individual: if you find Achilles to be a more virtuous character, then you judge *The Iliad* the winner, and vice versa. Thus the contest between Achilles and Odysseus lives on in the ethical debates of subsequent generations.

In case there is any doubt that this ethical discussion has to do specifically with competition, Hippias' first contribution is to compare the present discussion to the demonstrations that he is accustomed to making at the Olympic games. It would be terrible form to avoid Socrates' questions, given that he always goes to Olympia during the games and offers, not only to speak on any of the subjects that he has prepared for 'display' (ἐπίδειξις), but also to answer any question put to him. And Socrates teasingly proceeds to make explicit the analogy between the Olympic athletes and Hippias, the intellectual athlete:

Μακάριόν γε, ὦ Ἱππία, πάθος πέπονθας, εἰ ἐκάστης Ὀλυμπιάδος οὕτως εὐελπίς ὢν περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς εἰς σοφίαν ἀφικνῆ εἰς τὸ ἱερόν· καὶ θαυμάσοιμ' ἂν εἴ τις τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα ἀθλητῶν οὕτως ἀφόβως τε καὶ πιστευτικῶς ἔχων τῷ σῶματι ἔρχεται αὐτόσε ἀγωνιούμενος, ὥσπερ σὺ φῆς τῆ διανοία.

What a blessed experience you have had, Hippias, if during every Olympics you arrive at the temple with such great expectations regarding your soul and its wisdom; and I would be amazed if any of the 'athletes of the body' comes to that place to compete with the same fearlessness and confidence in his body as you say you have in your intelligence. (364a)

Although Socrates and Hippias in this debate are fundamentally concerned with the ethics of intentional deception and thus do not take advantage of the contrast between physical and verbal competition that Achilles and Odysseus could provide them, Socrates nonetheless alludes to such a contrast with his comparison. But instead of βίη and μῆτις, both of which *can* have both physical and verbal application, Socrates contrasts the athletes περὶ τὸ σῶμα (concerning the body) and this athlete περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς (concerning the soul). Hippias, who tries to emulate Achilles, is perfectly happy to have his own achievements compared to those of Olympic victors, and he boasts in rather guileless, Achillean fashion: ἐξ οὗ γὰρ ἤρξαμαι Ὀλυμπίασιν ἀγωνίζεσθαι, οὐδενὶ πῶποτε κρείττονι εἰς οὐδὲν ἐμαυτοῦ ἐνέτυχον (for since I have begun competing at the Olympics, I have never encountered anyone better than me at anything).<sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Klosko 1987: 622-3 sees this reference to Olympic athletes as an important clue that the conversation depicted in this dialogue, as in the *Euthydemus* and the *Protagoras*, is an eristic 'debate' and not a cooperative discussion (the distinction is made explicitly at *Tht.* 167e4-5). Klosko's argument is that in all of these dialogues, we should not be surprised at all to find Socrates using fallacious arguments, since fallacies were an important part of these popular, public contests, and Plato's readers would have been well aware of that. He

After Socrates gets Hippias to agree that the 'true' man and the 'false' man are the same (by fallaciously equating the man with a *capacity* to lie about something, i.e. the expert, with the man who *does* lie about it), Hippias gets fed up and explicitly challenges Socrates to a rhetorical contest. All along the dialogue has been agonistic, of course, but it has been conducted according to Socrates' more friendly question-and-answer format; and Hippias now proposes, in Homeric fashion, to match speech against speech. As he makes this rather boastful, Achillean challenge, he figures Socrates as an Odyssean figure by accusing him of always 'weaving together these kinds of arguments' (ἀεὶ σὺ τινας τοιοῦτους πλέκεις λόγους, 369b)<sup>74</sup> and of breaking up the topic into small pieces and fastening onto the most difficult part, rather than competing in respect to the whole matter under discussion (καὶ οὐχ ὄλω ἀγωνίζη τῷ πράγματι περὶ ὅτου ἂν ὁ λόγος ᾗ). Just like Odysseus, Socrates breaks the rules of proper verbal competition; and thus, the contest that Hippias proposes will be decided as much on the basis of form as content. If Hippias wins, not only will it mean that he has mustered the better arguments in defense of his champion, Achilles, but it will also prove that his and Achilles' rhetorical style is more effective, more powerful, than the style employed by Odysseus and Socrates. And if Socrates wins, it will be a victory for πολυτροπία.

The language that Hippias uses to make his challenge emphasizes very nicely this collapsing of the rhetorical competition between Odysseus and Achilles into that between Socrates and Hippias. He boasts that he will demonstrate (ἐπιδείξω) that Homer made Achilles better (ἀμείνω) than Odysseus, and he invites Socrates to argue that the other man is better: εἰ δὲ βούλει, σὺ αὖ ἀντιπαράβαλλε λόγον παρὰ λόγον, ὡς ὁ ἕτερος ἀμείνων ἐστί· καὶ μᾶλλον εἴσονται οὗτοι ὀπότερος ἀμεινον λέγει (and if you like, you in turn match speech against speech, arguing that the other man is better; and these people will better know which man speaks better). The triple use of ἀμείνων - to refer to his own estimation of Achilles, to Socrates' estimation of Odysseus, and to the audience's estimation of the winner of the debate - creates some ambiguity as to who exactly is meant by ὀπότερος. The audience (which includes both the fictional gathering and the readers of the dialogue) will know *both* which man speaks better in the contest between Hippias and Socrates *and* which man speaks better in the contest between Achilles and Odysseus - the two contests are the same.<sup>75</sup>

The contest between Achilles and Odysseus, then, is still very much alive in the fourth century, though it has been transformed in some significant respects. Most importantly, the contest is now exclusively about speaking style and speaking ability. Indeed, the fact that this debate about 'who was the better man' is entirely reduced to the question of 'who was the better speaker' gives some indication of the enormous (and perhaps surprising) degree to which Athenians at this time imagined the value of a man's character to be coextensive with the value of his rhetorical method and capability.<sup>76</sup> The man of βίη is

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makes no mention, however, of the actual subject of this debate, which is fallacious argument itself, along with other forms of πολυτροπία. Surely in this contentious debate at least one of the competitors is taking a firm stand against the intentional use of fallacy in the interest of victory.

<sup>74</sup> Odysseus (*Od.* 9.422) says of his tricking Polyphemus πάντας δὲ δόλους καὶ μῆτιν ὕφαινον.

<sup>75</sup> LévyStone 2005 and, to some extent Kahn 1996: 113-124, see Socrates as an Odyssean figure; but Blondell 2002: 113-164 presents a more complicated picture, wherein both Socrates and Hippias represent aspects of both Achilles and Odysseus, the former only the positive aspects and the latter only the negative aspects. The main problem with this suggestion is that, as she notes, Hippias neither lies (Odysseus' most problematic trait) nor gets angry (Achilles' most problematic trait).

<sup>76</sup> Of course Plato is not only concerned with rhetorical and analytical method, but, as Nightingale 1995: 10 points out, he is also concerned with "a unique set of ethical and metaphysical commitments that demanded a whole new way of living." Nonetheless, he has an extraordinary preoccupation with rhetorical method and discursive genre (the topic of Nightingale's book).

no longer evaluated with respect to his physical accomplishments, but only with respect to his straightforward speaking style.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, the nature of the debate has been transformed by the introduction and profusion of rhetorical genre. Here, it is clear from the language that Plato uses that *epideictic* rhetoric is under attack.<sup>78</sup> Nightingale has explored the ways that Plato engages with various genres in order to negatively define, and to champion, his own new philosophical genre.<sup>79</sup> And his adversarial, and often parodic, engagement with *epideictic* in this dialogue is no different. Aside from the simple fact that Hippias' brand of rhetoric is shown to be *practically* inferior, in so far as Socrates gets the better of him, there are also several more specific criticisms. One of the most basic, and one that is applied to virtually all of Socrates' opponents in the elenctic dialogues, is that Hippias is overconfident about his own possession of knowledge. Plato highlights this by having Socrates, after he has soundly defeated Hippias, undercut his own victory and express doubts about the soundness of his own conclusions.<sup>80</sup> This overconfidence is also connected to a kind of dilettantism.<sup>81</sup> Hippias claims to be an expert on virtually all genres of discourse, poetic and prosaic; and he is even an expert in several non-verbal crafts as well.

But it is not only Hippias' overconfidence regarding his own abilities that is critiqued and ridiculed, but also his manner of competing – which, again, is surely a criticism that Plato is making, not so much against Hippias as an individual, but against the rhetorical genre that he represents. Hippias apparently thinks of himself as the intellectual version of an athlete. In the realm of encomiastic discourse, this association is hardly remarkable. Such rhetoric of praise clearly owes a debt to the praise poetry of Pindar, who often connected his own verbal excellence with the excellence of the athletic victors who served as his topic (in *Nemean 4*, e.g.). Similarly, Hippias' topic is Achilles, and even though it is only Achilles' straightforward honesty that he cites as the basis for his encomium, Plato suggests that there is more to it than that. In taking Achilles as his model, he resembles him not only in respect to his honesty, but also in respect to his (overly) passionate competitiveness.

In other elenctic dialogues, Plato uses the terms *eristic*, *antilogic*, and *sophistic* to refer to the sort of hyper-competitive rhetorical techniques to which he opposes philosophy.<sup>82</sup> There has been a fair amount of debate as to what extent these terms might convey some specific argumentative method; but I think Nehamas is correct that the distinction between the two kinds of argumentation has more to do with intention than with method: philosophy aims at the truth, while eristic, etc. only aim at victory. Though even that distinction can be blurry, especially when we are dealing with sophists like Protagoras (and Hippias), who do not intentionally use any fallacious arguments:

Socrates may well have claimed that his purpose in argument was always the discovery of the truth. But if, as I have argued, the test of truth in the elenchus is essentially dialectical, then the truth can be established only to the extent that you continue to win the argument—and it can therefore be tested only negatively: the fact that you have so far been victorious in your argument with me does not in any way guarantee that a new consideration

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<sup>77</sup> And of course a hero like Ajax has no place at all in this debate.

<sup>78</sup> ἐπίδειγμα appears at 368c5, ἐπιδειξαμένου at 363a2, and forms of ἐπίδειξις at 363d2, 364b6, and 364b8.

<sup>79</sup> Nightingale 1995. Also cf. Nightingale 1993, where she focusses on Plato's critique of encomiastic discourse in the *Symposium* and the *Lysis*. The *Hipp. Min.* could be included in that list.

<sup>80</sup> 376b8. Hippias: Οὐκ ἔχω ὅπως σοι συγχωρήσω, ὦ Σώκράτες, ταῦτα. Socrates: Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἐμοί, ὦ Ἱππία.

<sup>81</sup> One of Socrates' main critiques of Ion in the dialogue named after him.

<sup>82</sup> Kerferd 1981: 59–67 discusses these terms. Nehamas 1990 argues that none of them refer to a method.

under-mining your position will not be found. Both Socrates and his opponents, therefore, necessarily aimed at victory. In this respect at least, Socrates cannot have differed in method from those sophists who practiced the method of question-and-answer and who did not intentionally use fallacious reasoning.<sup>83</sup>

Thus Socrates, as Plato portrays him, is every bit as competitive as his interlocutors; but he is competitive in the right way, and they are competitive in the wrong way. And while it may be true that the fundamental material of the distinction is to be located in differences of intention and not of method, it is nevertheless also the case that Socrates (or Plato) consistently formulates the distinction in terms of genre: his own new genre versus all the rest.

I have focused on the *Hippias Minor* not only because it reveals some of the continuities and discontinuities from the archaic to the classical period in Athenian attitudes toward competitive discourse, but also because Plato is the most well-known fourth century critic of Greek competitive values generally.<sup>84</sup> But my concern in this study is not actually with the philosophers, whose audience was after all quite limited, but rather with more mainstream Athenian attempts to grapple with the difficult question of how to distinguish between good and bad *Eris* in the realm of public discourse.

In the agons that I will be analyzing in the following chapters, there is a sense in which the idea that competition can be either productive or destructive does not need to be explicitly stated because it is built into the very structure of the discussion. Since these debates all make competition one of the points of contention, and thus one speaker will prevail over the other at least in part on the basis of his conception of what constitutes good competition (both as he formulates it in his arguments and as he demonstrates it), it goes without saying that there must be, if not a good and a bad kind of competition, at least a better and a worse kind.

By organizing these texts according to the three genres of rhetoric that were only later formulated by Aristotle,<sup>85</sup> I could be accused of anachronism. But even if the terms, συμβουλευτική, δικαστική, and ἐπιδεικτική, are not used by these 5th and 4th century authors, they nonetheless show a full awareness (and an anxiety) about the appropriateness of different kinds of speech to different kinds of contexts. And further, they appear to imagine the primary contexts for competitive public speaking to be separated broadly into political assembly speeches, courtroom speeches, and speeches intended to entertain the audience and demonstrate the speaker's skill and cleverness. Hesk suggests that Aristotle's formulation was part of an "active tradition of rhetorical theory, pedagogy, and practice in classical Greece" and that therefore it should come as no surprise that it "offers a good 'fit' with the most important contexts in which persuasive oral discourse was used on mass audiences in Greek *poleis*."<sup>86</sup> He also notes, however, that "real Greek and Roman speeches are always persuading their audiences in ways which go beyond or complicate the Aristotelian picture."<sup>87</sup> And this is exactly what we will find in the rhetorical agons that follow. There is always an awareness of the context of the competition and the genre of speech best suited to that context, and often an effort to distinguish that genre from genres more suited to other contexts. But there is also a preoccupation with specifying and contesting the rules, behaviors, and attitudes that are most appropriate, both to the

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<sup>83</sup> Nehamas 1990: 10.

<sup>84</sup> See Gouldner 1965.

<sup>85</sup> Of the main authors that I examine, only Demosthenes and Aeschines were contemporaries of Aristotle.

<sup>86</sup> Hesk 2009: 146.

<sup>87</sup> *Idem* 147.

particular context and to competition more generally. Thus, each speaker is in some sense making a contribution to the theorization and codification of competitive public discourse - a process that can never be completed because it is an essential part of the game.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Gunderson 2009: 11 notes: "The major discourses of antiquity are in a constant and often agonistic dialogue. We should not be over-hasty in judging who has won the debate about debate and successfully subordinated one sort of language to another."



## Chapter 2: Competitive Thematization in the Euripidean Agon

### I. Introduction

As radical as many of Plato's ideas may have been in respect to the proper scope and focus of rhetorical competition, he was not alone in his preoccupation with the issue.<sup>89</sup> As the tyrants were thrown out and the new demands of polis life began to take shape in the fifth century BCE, there was a greater opportunity for citizens to improve their social standing - and a greater risk that their social standing could be destroyed - through skill in public speaking. Accordingly, new professions in rhetorical education and legal advocacy emerged, and rhetorical handbooks were written to provide speakers with the tools to win any debate. As we would expect, most of the rhetorical handbooks and most of the legal speeches did not treat competitive discourse as ethically problematic at all - their only concern was with bringing about a victory. But in other kinds of literature, and even at times in legal rhetoric itself (as we will see in the speeches between Demosthenes and Aeschines), the assumption that a public speaker's primary goal should always be to defeat his opponent was often challenged, even if the notion that public discourse could ever be entirely non-competitive was scarcely entertained. In tragedy, comedy, and history, as well as in philosophical texts such as the anonymous *Dissoi Logoi*, we see an increased tendency to present conflicts and disagreements of all sorts through the medium of opposed speeches. On the one hand, this increased prevalence of debate scenes in literature merely reflects the increased importance of debate in the assemblies and the law courts of the Greek poleis. But on the other hand, these literary *agons*, by pitting one character against another and one argument against another in a rather formal and distinctive kind of scene, lend themselves to commentary on the effectiveness and harm, the virtues and vices, of this kind of competition.

We can see this increased preoccupation with the ethical problems of verbal competition reflected in the development of the tragic agon.<sup>90</sup> Aeschylus certainly does thematize competition in some very interesting ways, and indeed he was the only one of the tragedians to stage an actual trial scene (in the *Eumenides*), but not until Sophocles and Euripides do we see the appearance of formal set-piece debates.<sup>91</sup> In those debates, the theme of competition can appear in various ways, more or less subtly: through athletic or military metaphors,<sup>92</sup> through references to different kinds of competitions,<sup>93</sup> through

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<sup>89</sup> Thus, I believe that Gouldner 1967 overstates Plato's influence on the transformation of the 'contest system.'

<sup>90</sup> See Duchemin 1945 for a detailed study of the tragic agon, Lloyd 1992 and Dubischar 2001 for the Euripidean agon in particular, and Froleyks 1973 for the ἀγών λόγων as it appears in many different literary genres.

<sup>91</sup> Note, however, Said 2005: 218, writing on Aeschylus' *Suppliants*: "at the end of the play the interaction between the two actors, the Argive king and the Egyptian herald, amounts to a real agon, a confrontation between two hostile characters." Also, see Durand 2005 for a survey of agonistic relations in all of Aeschylus' plays.

<sup>92</sup> E.g. an archery metaphor at Soph. *Ant.* 1084-6; draughts, javelin throwing, and wrestling metaphors in Eur. *Suppl.* 409-10, 456, and 550. All but the last example are metaphors used by a speaker in an agon to describe the force of his own speech.

<sup>93</sup> Of course, the contest for the arms of Achilles is an important issue in the agon scenes of the *Ajax* (1135 ff. and 1239-40), where it is described as though it were a legal trial. The beauty contest and the judgment of Paris is a major theme in the agon between Helen and Hecuba in Eur. *Tro.* 919 ff.; Spartan girls' participation in races and wrestling-schools at *Androm.* 599; the contest over the decipherment of the riddle of Sphinx in *OT* 391-2; general athletic ἀγῶνες as a metaphor for political power at *Hipp.* 1016-18.

accusations or defenses of competitive behavior,<sup>94</sup> or through more intricate, metatheatrical means. But Euripides shows far more of a tendency than Sophocles to really make those agons, in some central respect, about competition: debates about debate. Indeed, the agons that I will examine – from *The Suppliants*, *The Phoenician Women*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and *Andromache* – all make competition, and competitive speech in particular, a primary point of contention, each in a unique and interesting way.

Scholars have certainly noted the importance of language as a theme of tragedy. Goldhill, for example, demonstrates through an analysis of the *Oresteia* that “[l]ack of security and misplaced certainty in and about language form an essential dynamic of the texts of tragedy.”<sup>95</sup> And he pays particular attention to the ways that language is not only dramatized in the *Oresteia*, but is also a constant target of explicit comment: “It is the way in which what one does with words becomes a thematic consideration of the *Oresteia* that makes this trilogy a ‘drama of logos.’”<sup>96</sup> In another chapter, he attempts to give us some context for this explicit attention that tragedy gives to the exchange of words by commenting on the importance that language held for Athenian citizens at the time. He describes Athens as a “city of words,” since the “sense of the city, its order and organization, its boundaries and structure, is formed in language, a language which dominates the various arenas and practices of city life.”<sup>97</sup> And it is tragedy’s “moment,” then, to articulate the “struggles of the city’s discourse.”<sup>98</sup>

While Goldhill is absolutely right that tragedy thematizes and problematizes all sorts of different kinds of civic discourse, I want to draw attention to the importance of specifically competitive language as a particularly important theme. Of course competitive speech is important for comedy as well as tragedy, and indeed we might even go so far as to say that it is thematized in more or less explicit ways in virtually every genre of Greek literature. But if tragedy finds its ‘moment’ in the thematization and problematization of discourse, as Goldhill argues, then it is a good place to start. Furthermore, the context of the dramatic competition, and the medium of the formal tragic agon, can lend the thematization of verbal competition in tragedy some rather interesting, and intricate, possibilities.

The scholarship that has focused more widely on the competitive ethic in ancient Greece has tended to stress the universality of competition (at least in certain periods), which manifests itself in virtually all Athenian social practices, be they verbal, athletic, military, etc. Of course there is nothing wrong with this kind of analysis (begun in earnest by Jacob Burckhardt), which views ‘the agon’ as a concept, or category of behavior, that was extremely important to the Athenians and was recognized by them as a common element in a wide variety of practices, ranging from friendly to deadly. And indeed we are strongly invited to view competition in just such a way when we see the Greeks using the same word, *agon*, to refer to an athletic contest, a legal trial, a dramatic debate, and even to war. But it seems to me that, given the enormous importance of, and fascination with, language in the ‘city of words,’ it might be worth asking, not just about the similarities between all of the different manifestations of competitiveness in ancient Greece, but also about the differences – specifically about the potentialities and limitations that were felt to apply uniquely to verbal competition.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> In his agon with Medea, Jason must defend himself against the charge that he has a σπουδὴν εἰς ἄμειλλαν πολύτεκνον (*Med.* 557). *Eur. Supp., Phoen., IA, and Androm.* will be discussed below.

<sup>95</sup> Goldhill 1986: 3. He also cites Goldhill 1984a, Zeitlin 1982a, Podlecki 1966a, Segal 1982, 1983.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Idem* 75.

<sup>98</sup> *Idem* 78.

<sup>99</sup> Wright 2009: 158: “...we cannot automatically assume that literary competitions are essentially the same as other types of competition (or that ancient agonistic culture in general was homogeneous).”

Furthermore, just as Goldhill finds in tragedy the perfect site for explicit comments about the exchange of words, other scholars have seen the ‘moment’ of tragedy defined, at least in part, by its expression of themes of competitiveness. Rosenmeyer, in his analysis of the art of Aeschylus, says that “drama is *the* agonal poetry of classical Greece.”<sup>100</sup> Several scholars have attempted more precisely to define the formal tragic agon, to trace its origins, and to determine its dramatic function; and they tend to agree on the agon’s central importance to the thematic unity of the plays – which only increases the impression that competition itself is a central theme.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, if one of the most important themes of tragedy is the failure of language, as Goldhill, Podlecki, etc., suggest, then the agon would appear to be perhaps the most tragic of tragic scenes: as Lloyd and others have pointed out, tragic agons virtually never resolve anything, but almost always leave the disputants even more entrenched than they started out.<sup>102</sup>

The scholars who attempt to define the tragic agon and set out its formal characteristics all acknowledge that no two agons are alike – thus, there is perhaps an element of arbitrariness in settling upon a definition. Lloyd offers the strictest definition and only recognizes 13 agon scenes in Euripides (whereas Dubischar recognizes 31). He requires that they be distinct scenes;<sup>103</sup> that they be balanced and involve two speeches of “substantial length, separated by two or three iambic trimeters from the chorus” (though he allows for some variation in *Supp.* and *El.*);<sup>104</sup> and most importantly, he insists that the agons must be truly ‘agonistic,’ that is, that there must be some real hostility and animosity between the speakers.<sup>105</sup> Dubischar, on the other hand, classifies Euripidean agons into three main groups, the *Abrechnungsagone* (‘agons of reckoning’), *Beratungsagone* (‘agons of advising’), and *Hikesiagone* (‘agons of supplication’);<sup>106</sup> and only the first group – which is distinguished by the functioning of one participant of the agon as ἀδικήσας and the other as ἀδικούμενος (wrong-doer and wronged) – necessarily involves the kind of hostility that Lloyd requires in any agon. However, Dubischar does show a kind of preference for the *Abrechnungsagone* merely by the fact that his focused treatments of individual agons are limited to that category. While I find Dubischar’s classification system very useful, in this chapter I will likewise be focused on only the more ‘agonistic’ type of agon, since it is in those scenes that we will see the most explicit thematization of competition.

Dubischar, in his survey of the scholarship on the agons of Euripides, criticizes the approach of those scholars who attempt to elucidate the ethical problems and ideas that arise in the agons. In approaching the agon in such a way, he argues, one must first demonstrate why priority should be given to the agon, over the other scenes in the plays, in looking for these “Grundprobleme menschlichen Lebens und Zusammenlebens.”<sup>107</sup> While I agree that most of the ethical issues that are explored in tragedy are not necessarily given a more profound or more detailed treatment in the agon than in the rest of the play, I do

<sup>100</sup> Rosenmeyer 1982: 333-4. Also quoted by Downing 1990: 13.

<sup>101</sup> In particular see Dubischar 2001, Hamilton 1985, and O’Brien 2001 (*passim*) for defenses of Euripides against the charge that his agon scenes do not contribute to the unity of the plays.

<sup>102</sup> Lloyd 1992: 15, citing Strohm 1957: 37 f. and Mastronarde 1986: 205 f. Scodel 1999/2000: 132 notes that Euripidean characters engage in these persuasive performances “in situations where persuasion is very unlikely to take place.” In these situations, “even if such a speech were to be persuasive, nobody would be likely to act differently.”

<sup>103</sup> Lloyd 1992: 3-4.

<sup>104</sup> *Idem* 5-6.

<sup>105</sup> *Idem* 6-11. One reason for his rejection of nearly all of the ‘near-agonies’ that he considers is that they lack the requisite hostility.

<sup>106</sup> Dubischar 2001: 66-81. In his system, some agons share features of multiple categories.

<sup>107</sup> *Idem* 37.

think that the agon is the right place to look for the most developed treatment of one ethical issue in particular: the issue of verbal competition and competitiveness.

Particularly relevant to my study is a thought-provoking article by Downing, which does provide some insights into the thematization of competition in tragedy.<sup>108</sup> Downing provides an excellent analysis of the ambiguity of competition in Euripides' *Helen*. He notes that, in the first half of the play, references to competition are generally negative, while in the second half they are to a large extent, though not entirely, positive. He sorts out the two contrasting evaluations by suggesting that the positive representation comes from an aesthetic evaluation, which reflects the kind of 'first order' competition that Euripides himself is engaged in, as opposed to the 'second order' competition that the characters on stage are engaged in.<sup>109</sup> The competition of the dramatic festival is a good thing, and it is metatheatrically brought to mind when Helen and Menelaos themselves appear as ingenious artists who engage in a kind of competition of cleverness in the 'comedic' latter part of the play. But even then, our enjoyment of the competition of the characters is somewhat troubled by the repeated intrusion of negative, ethical evaluations, in the chorus' songs about war and bloodshed, and in the horrible slaughter with which Menelaos' 'comedy' concludes. For Downing, the tension created by the simultaneous contrasting evaluations of competition are paralleled by the same sort of tension in contrasting evaluations of deception, or *apate*, which tends to be highly destructive in the ethical, second order frame, but produces pleasure and entertainment when applied to the positive, first order activity of the poet, who deceives us in a sense with his composition; and again, the poet's activity is mirrored by the clever stories invented by Helen and Menelaos, which bring a great deal of joy to the audience, but are never entirely free from the dark cloud of an ethical evaluation, since again, this deception leads to slaughter. Thus, the audience is given a great deal of pleasure, but is simultaneously made uneasy by that pleasure.

While Downing treats the themes of *agon* and *apate* as separate but parallel – that is, he does not explain the connection between the two themes, or the reason Euripides might have treated them in this same complex way – nonetheless, his analysis certainly invites one to ask about other ways the two themes might be related, indeed, how the separation between the two themes might be blurred. After all, as long as we are talking about specifically *verbal* competition, *apate* will be a very important, and most often illegitimate, component thereof. His distinction between first order and second order competition is also useful, as I think he is absolutely right that the playwrights use the audience's understanding of the competitive context of the dramatic festival to further complicate the evaluations of competitiveness that they present through their characters.<sup>110</sup>

In what follows, I will examine the intricate and challenging ways that Euripides thematizes and problematizes verbal competition in four of his agons: *Suppliants* 399-580, *Phoenician Women* 446-635, *Iphigenia in Aulis* 317-414, and *Andromache* 147-273. While each of these four agons is quite different from the others, we will see in all of them a deep ambivalence about the value of verbal competition, and of competition in general. Of course, the agon scene is itself a verbal competition, and thus when competition also becomes the subject of the debate (as it does in these four plays), there is often a

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<sup>108</sup> Downing 1990.

<sup>109</sup> *Idem* 8. Downing is indebted to Rosenmeyer in his discussion of first-order and second-order competition and deception. Concerning deception (which is really the primary focus of the article), he explains, "Rosenmeyer argues for an understanding of all tragedy as essentially *apatê*, as what we might call first-order *apatê*; as a consciously produced fiction deliberately divorced from concrete reality."

<sup>110</sup> However, I will say that I believe Downing has argued a bit too strongly that negative views of competition result from an ethical evaluation while positive views result from an aesthetic evaluation. It seems to me that the ethical evaluations of competition in tragedy are decidedly mixed; and in any case, there is always an ethical component to the aesthetic evaluations.

complicated interaction, and tension, that emerges between the form and the content of the debate. And though the speakers will often take on the roles of forensic or deliberative rhetoricians, the contests they are engaged in are meant for display – display of both the theatrical abilities of the actors and the poetic and rhetorical skill of the poet – and are thus fundamentally epideictic.

## 2. Deep ambiguity in the *Suppliants* agon

As we have noted, it is common in tragedy for the characters to speak about speaking, to draw attention to their own manner of speech and that of the other characters, and to make judgments about what kind of speech is appropriate either to the particular circumstances or in general. This kind of metadiscourse is particularly common in the tragic agon, where there is often a comment made by one of the characters, or the chorus, that explicitly marks the scene as a formal agon.<sup>111</sup> And of all the tragic agons, the one that contains perhaps the most explicitly metadiscursive, as well as the most ‘agonistic,’ language is the one between Theseus and the herald in Euripides’ *Suppliants*. This agon is essentially a piece of political theory, in the tradition of Herodotus’ (3.80-83) Persian debate about the relative merits of monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy: Theseus argues that democracy is the superior form of government, and the Theban herald argues that tyranny is the superior form. Interestingly, the terms of the debate are almost entirely limited to the function of speech within the two kinds of government. And perhaps surprisingly, even though we would expect the Athenian audience to be far more sympathetic to Theseus’ position, Euripides nevertheless presents the debate as balanced and leaves the question, in some sense, unsettled.

The herald from Thebes delivers the first rhesis (409-425), in which he criticizes democracy for offering free speech to all, including farmers and demagogues; and Theseus begins his reply by justifying his participation in the present verbal competition: ἐπεὶ δ’ ἄγωνα καὶ σὺ τόνδ’ ἠγωνίσω,/ ἄκου· ἄμιλλαν γὰρ σὺ προύθηκας λόγων (‘since you too competed in this competition, listen; for you proposed the contest of words,’ 427-8). It is the herald’s turn now to listen, on the grounds that he *too* has delivered a competitive speech. In fact, he is the one who started it. This emphatic announcement that we are witnessing a contest, with the repetition made by the internal accusative (ἄγωνα ἠγωνίσω), as well as the synonym ἄμιλλα, suggests that the audience might have good reason to give special attention to the nature of this verbal competition. And indeed, upon reflection, we see that the exchange between Theseus and the herald has already proven itself to be a ἄμιλλα λόγων in four distinct senses. First, on the most basic narrative level, it is a contest between the two characters that is conducted by means of words, rather than, say, athletics or violence. Secondly, it is a contest of rhetorical skill to determine who is the better speaker, or who can make the best argument.<sup>112</sup> Thirdly, by marking the scene as a kind of set-piece and drawing our attention to the theme of competition, the poet may remind us that he himself is competing for the prize in the dramatic festival; so this agon is one part of the larger ἄμιλλα between Euripides as his fellow contestants.<sup>113</sup> And finally, on

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<sup>111</sup> Lloyd 1992: 4-5.

<sup>112</sup> Scodel 1999/2000: “Euripidean speakers are highly self-conscious about themselves as performers, recognizing that their speech is subject to evaluation ‘for the way it is done.’”

<sup>113</sup> Of course there were other kinds of set pieces, such as messenger speeches or choral odes, that surely came across as at least as ‘competitive’ as the agon, in the sense that their status as formal elements of a tragedy caused them naturally to be viewed against other efforts by other poets, and thus the more clever or dazzling

a thematic level, the subject of the debate is language, its proper use and limitations in the context of governing a state: so it is a contest *about* words.

But the debate is not just about words, it is about debate itself. It is itself representative of epideictic oratory, both in the sense that it is clearly intended as a kind of skilled display, and in the sense that, in accordance with Aristotle's criterion, its content is concerned with praise and blame. But the objects of the praise and blame, democracy and tyranny, are defined in terms of the other genres of rhetoric. Both forensic and deliberative rhetoric are indicated in the herald's image of the democracy ruled by rhetors, who first cause harm to the city by leading it astray with pleasing words (deliberative) and then escape punishment with yet more deception (forensic, 414-17). As for the democratic practice of inviting men of low station to participate in the debates, that will either result in the wicked gaining honors by captivating the people with words (γλώσση κατασχών δῆμον, 425), or even if some farmer does happen to have a bit of knowledge, he will nonetheless be far too burdened with work to pay any attention to the state (ἔργων ὑπο/οὐκ ἂν δύναίτο πρὸς τὰ κοῖν' ἀποβλέπειν, 421-2). Thus, in essence, the herald's argument against democracy, which he more or less equates with free speech, is that, if you divide the population into those who have a lot of free time and those who have no free time, the former will become professional politicians and masters of deception, and the latter will be clueless about affairs of state. So we are better off keeping them all silent.

As we saw above, one hallmark of the tragic agon (according to a stricter definition) is that the speeches are supposed to be well balanced; and indeed there is often a "point-by-point refutation of the opponent."<sup>114</sup> But in this agon, Theseus replies to the herald's argument only in very general terms, without actually addressing the particular concerns that were raised. He employs ethical terms of equality and freedom (432 τόδ' οὐκέτ' ἔστ' ἴσον... 434 τὴν δίκην ἴσην ἔχει... 438 τοῦλεύθερον δ' ἐκεῖνο... 441 τί τούτων ἔστ' ἰσαίτερον πόλει;), without giving any explanation of why such things should be valued.<sup>115</sup> And he stresses the importance of laws, which are shared by all and give the weak and the rich equal rights. But in the simplicity of his language, we might detect a somewhat glaringly weak rebuttal to the herald's point about the dangers of sophistry in democracy. He explains: νικᾷ δ' ὁ μείων τὸν μέγαν δίκαι' ἔχων ('and the smaller man defeats the greater, if he has a just cause,' 437). This line looks like a kind of correction of the famous claim of Protagoras (which was parodied in Aristophanes' *Clouds*) that he could make the weaker argument the stronger.<sup>116</sup> Theseus here qualifies the formulation with δίκαι' ἔχων – the smaller (weaker) only defeats the great (strong) when justice is on his side. But it seems quite unlikely that an audience of 5th century Athenians would be easily convinced that justice always prevails in the courtrooms. Indeed, such a comment may have only served to remind them that there is often a disconnect between the relative strength of people and the

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they were, the greater chance they gave the poet for victory. But the *opposed* speeches of the agon may have brought to mind in the audience member the competitive nature of the dramatic performances in a more explicit way, and all the more so when the competitiveness of the agon was explicitly commented on, as here.

<sup>114</sup> Lloyd 1992: 34.

<sup>115</sup> Burian 1985: 141 discusses these democratic "slogans" and Theseus' failure to answer the herald's portrayal of democracy. Some audience members may have required no explanation for the value of such terms, but others might have seen Theseus as using 'buzz-words' to avoid making a real argument.

<sup>116</sup> Aristotle *Rhet.* 2.24.11 (1402a): καὶ τὸ τὸν ἡττω δὲ λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν τοῦτ' ἐστίν. καὶ ἐντεῦθεν δίκαιως ἐδυσχέραινον οἱ ἀνθρώποι τὸ Πρωταγόρου ἐπάγγελμα. The herald alludes even more explicitly to the Protagoran formulation when he calls war the ἡσῶν λόγος and peace the κρείσσων (486-94), a passage that will be discussed below.

relative strength of their arguments; that, in fact, the weaker man, if he does prevail, may be more likely to do so on the basis of his rhetorical skill than the justness of his case.<sup>117</sup>

Theseus' position is further undermined by the fact that most of the herald's arguments *against* democracy were already made by Theseus himself earlier in the play, when he was chastening Adrastus for being led astray by just such demagoguery.<sup>118</sup> Walker's explanation for this repetition is that Theseus has undergone a transformation, and both he and the audience are now able to see that the arguments that Theseus originally used to justify his refusal to help the suppliants are anti-democratic and must be rejected: "When they came from the mouth of Theseus, we might perhaps have given such views some credence, but when we hear them from a Theban herald, we recognize them for what they are."<sup>119</sup> Walker may be right that this is the effect on the audience of hearing Theseus' former arguments repeated by his ideological opponent. But these criticisms of, and fears about, the deceptive manipulations of highly trained orators are commonplace enough that it seems surprising that they would all of a sudden be rejected just because they are put in the mouth of a Theban herald. But even if Walker is right, and the audience members really are prepared to accept any arguments made by Theseus and reject any arguments made by the Theban herald (even when they are virtually identical to the arguments that they just endorsed when made by Theseus), then might that very fact not make them question the legitimacy of this sort of debate all the more? Would it not, in fact, undermine Theseus' claim that a small man (as the Theban herald surely is in the audience's eye) can defeat a great man, like Theseus, whether or not his arguments are just?

Furthermore, if the audience members are supposed, in some sense, to put themselves in the place of judges of the competition, their job is made even more difficult by the inconsistency between the behavior of the contestants and the arguments that they present. Theseus, the champion of democratic free speech and open debate, not just between equals, but also between unequals, seems very uncomfortable with the debate that he is currently engaged in, and his harshest criticism for the herald is reserved for the *ad hominem* charge that he talks too much! When the herald first comes on the stage, he expresses his intention of simply conveying Creon's message to the ruler of the land (τίς γῆς τύραννος; πρὸς τίν' ἀγγεῖλαί με χρή/ λόγους Κρέοντος..., 'who is king of the land? To whom should I report the words of Creon?' 399-400), and it is Theseus who immediately accuses him of speaking falsely (πρῶτον μὲν ἤρξαω τοῦ λόγου ψευδῶς, ξένε,/ ζητῶν τύραννον ἐνθάδ'..., 'from the start, you began your speech falsely, stranger, by seeking the king here,' 403-4) and then proceeds to hold forth on the merits of democracy. When the herald interprets Theseus' statement as an invitation to engage in such a democratic debate, Theseus feels that the herald has overstepped his bounds: κομψός γ' ὁ κῆρυξ καὶ παρεργάτης λόγων ('eloquent this herald, and a fashioner of irrelevant words,' 426). And although the herald's rhesis was kept to the very brief length of 17 lines, Theseus ends his own rhesis of 36 lines by blasting the herald for his loquacity:

κλαίων γ' ἄν ἤλθες, εἴ σε μὴ ἔπεμψεν πόλις,  
περισσὰ φωνῶν· τὸν γὰρ ἄγγελον χρεῶν  
λέξανθ' ὅσ' ἄν τάξη τις ὡς τάχος πάλιν  
χωρεῖν. τὸ λοιπὸν δ' εἰς ἐμήν πόλιν Κρέων

<sup>117</sup> Scodel 1999/2000: 144: "The experience of Euripidean theater could hardly fail to make its audience more aware of the dangers of being manipulated, more conscious of the need to distinguish a good performance from a worthy cause."

<sup>118</sup> Theseus' speech: 236 ff. See Walker 1995: 155.

<sup>119</sup> Walker 1995: 160.

ἦσσον λάλον σου πεμπέτω τιν' ἄγγελον.

You'd have left in tears, if the city hadn't sent you, for speaking too much; for a messenger ought to say whatever he has been ordered as quickly as possible and then go back. In the future, Creon should send to my city a less chatty messenger.

(458-62)

So while Theseus is portrayed as an advocate for the free speech of demagogues and poor farmers alike, he does not seem to believe in the same rights for heralds.<sup>120</sup> And Euripides further emphasizes Theseus' verbal 'tyranny' by having Adrastus attempt to join in (ὦ παγκάκιστε...) only to be rather abruptly ordered by our democrat to keep quiet: σῖγ', Ἄδραστ', ἔχε στόμα/ καὶ μὴ ἴπιπροσθεν τῶν ἐμῶν τοὺς σοὺς λόγους θῆς ('quiet, Adrastus, hold your tongue, and don't offer your own words before mine,' 514-15).

Likewise, the herald, who claims to greatly distrust rhetorical competition and to believe firmly in unwavering obedience to the king, shows himself to be quite assertive and rhetorically competent. In his response to Theseus' challenge, he immediately claims the advantage, using a board-game metaphor: ἐν μὲν τόδ' ἡμῖν ὡσπερ ἐν πεσσοῖς δίδωσ/ κρεῖσσον ('this one point you have given to my advantage, just as in draughts,' 409-10). Again, when he begins his second rhesis, where the debate shifts from being about debate itself to being about whether or not the bodies of the seven will be released for burial, he seems quite comfortable with the terms of the agon and quite confident in his position: λέγοιμ' ἂν ἤδη. τῶν μὲν ἠγωνισμένων/ σοὶ μὲν δοκείτω ταῦτ', ἐμοὶ δὲ τάντ'ια ('I would speak now; of the matters under contention, to you those things seem best, but to me the opposite things,' 465-6). This is not the tone that one would expect of a man who is opposed to free speech or free thought. While the herald, who claims to distrust the art of rhetoric, is playing draughts, a game of strategy and cleverness, Theseus, in his own words, is hurling spears (καὶ ταῦτα μὲν δὴ πρὸς τὰδ' ἐξηκόντισα, 'and those are the spears I hurled against these points,' 456), which might be read as a rather more hostile metaphor for the competition.<sup>121</sup>

So we see that there are rifts between several of the different senses of the ἄμιλλα λόγων in which the two characters are engaged. In one sense, as I noted above, this is a contest between two characters who are choosing to settle their differences through speech instead of through other means. At least in the first half of the agon, the difference that they are trying to settle is their disagreement about which type of political government is the superior one. In this sense, the specific λόγοι that they employ are merely instrumental – what is important is the inherent strength of the characters' respective positions. And surely the audience is predisposed to consider Theseus' position as the stronger. But once we consider the second sense of the ἄμιλλα λόγων, that of a rhetorical competition, not just one conducted by means of words, but one that is to a large extent judged on the basis of the eloquence and cogency of those words (a particularly important element, of course, in such an epideictic context), we may be a little more hesitant to assign the victory to Theseus. After all, the herald's criticisms of free speech are presented in fairly specific and practical terms, and they largely go unrefuted by Theseus, who instead appeals to more

<sup>120</sup> Of course, Theseus may have a point, since heralds, whether representing tyrannies or democracies, are generally expected to convey messages and not to take matters into their own hands. Indeed, just before the agon Theseus praises his own herald and specifies his job as that of 'spreading announcements' (381-2 τέχνην μὲν αἰεὶ τήνδ' ἔχων ὑπηρετεῖς πόλει τε κάμοι, διαφέρων κηρύγματα).

<sup>121</sup> Note that it is also a more elite metaphor, since the javelin represents athletic (as well as military) competition, which was the purview of the aristocracy.



general principles (at the same time, Theseus makes some strong arguments against tyranny, which also go unrefuted). But as we saw above, the fact that verbal competition also serves in part as the topic of the competition creates a further rift. In a debate about debate, each contestant cannot help but exemplify a kind of ethical stance toward the topic under discussion by his own conduct. And, ironically, if we decide that the herald does come out on top rhetorically, speaking in opposition to democratic institutions of debate, he only does so by exemplifying those institutions better than his opponent does.

By focusing on the way that democracy is scrutinized in this agon, I do not mean to imply here that there is inherently a democratic element to Athenian tragedy, or to tragic agon scenes. Of course there has been a fair amount of controversy over the last few decades about the extent to which the performance of tragedy had a specifically democratic social function.<sup>122</sup> Barker in fact does make the claim that the agon, by its placing of opposing views in the center of the public space, *to meson*, for the audience's judgment, allows for dissent and thus is inherently democratic.<sup>123</sup> But it is not always clear which opinion is supposed to be the dissenting one. And the audience's judgment obviously has no practical effect on the action of the play, nor, as we noted above, does the agon generally have much of an effect on the action; so the agon could be seen as demonstrating rather the futility of such debates and thus presenting a decidedly anti-democratic view. To take a somewhat cautious position on the matter, I would say that it does seem likely that the Athenians associated rhetorical technique with democracy to some extent, even though, as Dover argues, such an association was largely misguided.<sup>124</sup> Oligarchical, and even tyrannical, regimes could certainly allow for skillful debate. Dover points to the trial scene on the shield of Achilles, the debate scenes in Thucydides, which do not indicate a great deal of difference in rhetorical technique between oligarchical and democratic debate, and Xenophon's portrayal of the debate between Kritias and Theramenes under the thirty.<sup>125</sup> Nonetheless, there was a tendency to associate rhetorical technique, and especially professional orators and consultants, with democracy. And in the agon in the *Suppliants*, where the debate is about democracy and tyranny, it is difficult not to see the connection, especially when the herald's critique of democracy begins with a complaint about such professional orators.

Indeed, there are some verbal clues that this agon is meant in some sense to exemplify the kind of freedom of speech that was particularly associated with Athenian democracy. Even before the agon has been explicitly announced, Theseus points out that, in a free city, the people rule in turns, with yearly transitions of power: διαδοχαῖσιν ἐν μέρει ἐνιαυσίαισιν (406-7). This notion of ruling ἐν μέρει is paralleled by the agon itself, in which opponents speak ἐν μέρει.<sup>126</sup> Thus, the form and content of the agon are collapsed, and there is a subtle hint that the two characters may actually be exemplifying democracy by debating its merits. The agonistic connotations of the redundant διαδοχαῖσιν are reinforced by the fact that the suppliant women had characterized their lamentation as an ἄγων διάδοχος (71-2): thus when the audience again hears a form of διαδοχ- here, it may naturally associate it with ἄγων. As the spokesman for such a democracy, Theseus can vindicate it, in one sense, merely by winning the debate, by proving that he has the stronger position. However, in another sense, democracy can only be vindicated by the success of

<sup>122</sup> See especially Winkler and Zeitlin 1990 for arguments about the democratic nature of Athenian drama, and Griffith 1995 for an alternative view.

<sup>123</sup> Barker 2009: 17-18, following Vernant 1982: 125-6.

<sup>124</sup> Dover 1968: 180-3.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* II. 18.497-508, *HG* 3.24-46.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. *Heracles* 182 and *Hecuba* 1130, where the phrase ἐν μέρει is explicitly used to describe the nature of the verbal agon. Also, during the stichomythia of this agon, the herald uses similar language when he acknowledges the need to give Theseus a 'turn' to speak: κλύοιμ' ἄν: οὐ γὰρ ἀλλὰ δεῖ δοῦναι μέρος (570).

the debate in resolving the dispute and preventing the war.<sup>127</sup> If democracy *is* the kind of verbal competition that is currently being performed by Theseus and the herald, then the futility of their agon might imply the futility of democracy, whether or not Theseus is shown to have the stronger argument.

However, there is also a very important respect in which this debate is anything but democratic. After all, within the fiction of the drama, it is a debate between a leading citizen and the representative of a tyrant, with no jury or assembly in attendance to pronounce its judgment on the matter. The two men will either reach an agreement with each other or they will go to war. And of course, we have to consider the fact that this is a debate that was composed, not by two rivals, but by a single playwright, who is working within the bounds of certain generic expectations about what a tragic agon should achieve, as opposed to, say, a real-world agon between representatives of two *poleis*.<sup>128</sup> If the tragic agon is not supposed to resolve the dispute, but is rather supposed to make both positions more cogent, more balanced, or more comprehensible to the audience, or to heighten the tension of the narrative, or even to demonstrate the limits of rational argument,<sup>129</sup> then maybe the failure of the agon to resolve the dispute should not be taken as a verdict on either democracy or oligarchy, but rather as an argument in favor of *tragedy* (and this kind of rhetorical *epideixis*), as superior to either political system.<sup>130</sup>

This tension - namely, the tension between the idea that the purpose of a verbal competition is to resolve disputes, prevent bloodshed, etc., and the idea that it has entirely different purposes - is one, I suggest, that Euripides makes full use of.<sup>131</sup> Perhaps, in fact, this tension can help to explain why Theseus fails to rebut the specific points that the herald has made in his argument against democracy. The herald is operating under the assumption of the 'resolution model' of the verbal agon. Thus his criticisms are all directed at the different ways that these agons can go wrong, how they can fail to serve justice, how they can result in the city's adoption of the wrong sort of policies. He makes his position especially clear in the second part of the agon, when he offers a sort of encomium of peace and laments the tendency of the *demos* to 'vote' for war (481-94). Again, he is envisioning a democratic deliberation (since the Thebans would presumably get no opportunity to vote on the matter), the entire purpose of which *should* be in the interest of resolution and peace, but which instead results in the opposite. This is a fascinating passage, as it ties

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<sup>127</sup> Theseus earlier hinted at the prospect of resolving the dispute through language at 112: πέρας γὰρ οὐδὲν μὴ διὰ γλώσσης ἰόν. Later when he agrees to help the suppliants (346-7), he still has faith in the power of words, though he recognizes that they may not succeed: δρᾶσω τάδ'· εἶμι καὶ νεκροὺς ἐκλύσομαι λόγοισι πείθων· εἰ δὲ μή, βίᾳ δορός.

<sup>128</sup> Scodel 1999/2000 discusses the self-conscious distinction in Euripides between "normal" and "rhetorical" language (the latter of which is particularly associated with the agon). She notes (p. 131) that the "performers act within performance norms that transcend their immediate situations and invite the external audience to consider their performances within their genres rather than as contingent solely on the dramatic context."

<sup>129</sup> Burian 1985: 140, "The debate on government seems not designed to settle an issue but to establish the bounds of an opposition that will brook no compromise.... The debate is generally held to have little or nothing to do with the drama and, therefore, to be designed solely to reveal Euripides' own political views. What we have observed so far, however, suggests a different possibility: Euripides has deliberately staged a debate that will not reveal any view as correct beyond doubt or qualification. If this is so, the debate may be relevant to the drama in a manner not usually suspected."

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Griffith on the effect of the agon from the *Trojan Women*: "...in the *Trojan Women*, though Helen's Worse Argument may win the day, Hecuba's Better Argument is not permanently overthrown. The two contest-pieces coexist, each eliciting from us, as from Menelaus, some measure of assent and admiration, and combining to produce a paradoxical pleasure peculiar to the process of "spur-of-the-moment listening (reading/watching)," a process ever subject to revision, addition, retraction."

<sup>131</sup> Scodel 1999/2000: 135 suggests that the other, non-practical value has to do with verbal performance, noting that "Greeks had always recognized a distinction between performance excellence and success in achieving a goal."

together the two parts of the agon, by suggesting that the failures of democracy are in fact responsible for the current predicament; and it also ties together the theme of democratic verbal competition with the violent, military, colonial kind of competition represented (to the herald's mind) by the impending war:

καίτοι δυοῖν γε πάντες ἄνθρωποι λόγοιν  
τὸν κρείσσον' ἴσμεν, καὶ τὰ χρηστὰ καὶ κακά,  
ὅσῳ τε πολέμου κρείσσον εἰρήνη βροτοῖς,  
ἢ πρῶτα μὲν Μούσαισι προσφιλεστάτη,  
Ποιναῖσι δ' ἐχθρά, τέρπεται δ' εὐπαιδία,  
χαίρει δὲ πλούτῳ. ταῦτ' ἀφέντες οἱ κακοὶ  
πολέμους ἀναιρούμεσθα καὶ τὸν ἥσσονα  
δουλούμεθ', ἄνδρες ἄνδρα καὶ πόλις πόλιν.

Yet, of two arguments, all of us men know the stronger one, both what is beneficial and what is bad, and how much stronger peace is than war for mortals, peace which is most beloved of all to the Muses, but hateful to the goddesses of vengeance; it delights in good offspring and takes joy in wealth. We wicked men throw these things away and choose wars, and as for the weaker, we enslave him, men enslaving men, city enslaving city.  
(486-93)

In his claim that there are always two *λόγοι*, a stronger and a weaker, we immediately see an allusion to the Protagoran formulation, as well as a response to Theseus' claim that the weaker man with justice on his side can defeat the strong man. But the herald takes the rather extreme position that an argument for peace is always the *κρείσσων λόγος*, and an argument for war is always the *ἥσσων*. If wicked men, *οἱ κακοί*, reject the stronger argument and choose war, it must be because they are led astray by the failures of professional orators, i.e. by the failures of democratic institutions. But in the last line of the passage, the herald adds a surprising twist. We wicked men, he claims, reject the stronger argument, peace, and instead choose war; then the line ends *καὶ τὸν ἥσσονα*. We expect *τὸν ἥσσονα* to be followed by *λόγον*: we choose war and the weaker argument. But instead, it modifies *ἄνδρα* and *πόλιν*: we choose war and we enslave the weaker man and the weaker city. Thus, in a reader- or listener-response analysis, the word *ἥσσονα* would first be understood to refer to *λόγον* until the conclusion of the sentence forces the audience to revise its meaning. And it thereby creates a connection between rhetoric and action, *λόγος* and *ἔργον*, or more specifically, between word and subjugation, by hinting that the weaker argument in every case urges the subjugation of the weaker man or city. Any political system that encourages the kind of verbal competition in which the weaker argument can potentially defeat the stronger will thereby be endorsing the subjugation and enslavement of those who cannot defend themselves.<sup>132</sup> And the claim of democracy to offer equality and security to the less powerful will be a sham.

Earlier in the play, when Theseus still had hopes of persuading the Thebans through words, he seemed to be considering the value of debate according to similar considerations of its practical utility (but with a positive evaluation, of course). But now, as

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<sup>132</sup> This vision is consistent with the agon of the *Clouds*, in which ὁ Ἡπτιῶν Λόγος argues in favor of injustice (900-902, 1040), which generally suggests the taking advantage of weaker men and women. The 'weaker argument' is the one in favor of φύσις over νόμος (*Clouds* 1075), so stronger arguments generally propose equality, and weaker arguments propose dominance and (ironically, considering the herald's position) usually tyranny.

he finds himself in the midst of a verbal agon that he finds irritating and futile, he dispenses with the practical considerations, but nonetheless continues to defend verbal competition, now in more abstract ethical terms, hinting that it may be useful or important *regardless* of whether it resolves anything. Furthermore, as I suggested above, the emphatic language that Euripides puts in Theseus' mouth to draw attention to the agon as an agon, a ἄμιλλα λόγων, may very well be seen as a 'metatheatrical' cue for the audience members to remind themselves that the play itself is also a sort of ἄμιλλα λόγων, and to reflect on the purpose of this dramatic agon. After all, Euripides surely did not write this play and submit it to the archon for production in the dramatic competition in order to resolve some kind of dispute with his fellow playwrights. So if not resolution, then what is its purpose?

We can all certainly agree with Euripides that questions about the power and the limitations of debate are indeed complicated and deserving of inquiry. But we may want to press a little further and ask why it is that he chooses to problematize it in such a relentless, aporia-inducing manner. In what sense is it a ἄμιλλα λόγων? who wins? what would victory look like? what is the purpose of this debate? or of debate in general? He invites us to ask all of these questions but makes it virtually impossible to answer any of them conclusively. One response would surely be that the nature of his treatment of competitive speech in the play is determined, in some part, by his own competitive drive: by presenting the most intricately and decidedly ambivalent dialectic about competitive speech, he perhaps felt that he gained a competitive edge over his dramatic competitors. In other words, he may have thought that the audience and the judges would appreciate seeing competitive speech problematized in such a way; and that they would appreciate seeing such a treatment of competitive speech taking place, appropriately, in the context of a tragic agon. Griffith has noted that Greek poets had long been competing for the distinction of superiority in *sophia*, which could refer to any of three broad categories: "knowledge and factual accuracy, ...moral and educational integrity, ...technical skill and aesthetic/emotional impact."<sup>133</sup> There is no doubt that the third category, 'technical skill and aesthetic/emotional impact,' was at play here: Euripides shows a great deal of technical cleverness in the self-referentiality and the piling on of contrasts and tensions in this agon. But it is more difficult to say how this agon would have been judged according to the second category of *sophia*, that of 'moral and educational integrity.' As we know from Aristophanes' *Frogs*, Euripides had a reputation for immorality, and it is possible that the confusion he creates in this agon about the value of some of the fundamental institutions of democracy would only have contributed to that reputation. Some audience members, on the other hand, surely would have recognized his refusal to allow an easy verdict to be rendered as a mark of educational integrity.<sup>134</sup>

It seems to me a bit simplistic to subsume his thematization of verbal competition here under the general heading of that tragic interest in 'the failure of language' that has been noted by Goldhill, Podlecki, et al. After all, what is the purpose of all of this attention to the failures of language? As we have seen, even as tragedy, and in particular the tragic agon, is concerned with the failure of language, it is simultaneously concerned with the success of language, both in form and content. Verbal competition may not always (or hardly ever, in tragedy) resolve disputes, but it affords the auditor a great deal of pleasure and can potentially produce some useful reflection, not only on whatever thorny issue it may be that is under discussion, but also on the nature of verbal *techne*, on the necessity

<sup>133</sup> Griffith 1990: 189.

<sup>134</sup> Burian 1985: 154-5 quotes Stanley Fish (*Self-Consuming Artifacts*, Berkeley, 1972: 1) to explain the sense in which he finds the *Suppliants* to be 'dialectical': "A dialectical presentation...is disturbing, for it requires of its readers a searching and rigorous scrutiny of everything they believe and live by. It is didactic in a special sense; it does not preach the truth but asks that its readers discover the truth for themselves."

and the difficulty of trying to shape *erga* with *logoi*. Thus, the tragedy itself is sure testimony of the pleasure, benefit, and perhaps even educative utility of at least one kind of agonistic discourse.

### 3. *Phoenician Women* and the origin of ἀμφίλεκτος ἔρις

The agon of *The Phoenician Women* offers a different kind of examination of the ethics of competitive speech. Similar to the agon of the *Suppliants*, this agon seems to serve as a kind of model for, or reflection of, a non-monarchical form of government; although in *The Phoenician Women* it is an even more exact model, since it specifically mirrors the form of government proposed by Polyneices, which involves only two rulers who take turns ruling for equal lengths of time, just as the competitors in an agon take turns making speeches. The content of this debate, however, is not political, but rather philosophical. Indeed, Eteocles, Polyneices, and Iocasta, in addition to presenting differing views on the proper scope of competition, go so far as to speculate about the origin of competitive rhetoric itself.

As in the *Suppliants*, speech is here marked early on as the defining feature of freedom and political life, when Polyneices first sees his mother and begins lamenting about his exile. She asks him if being deprived of his country is a great evil, and he responds: μέγιστον ἔργω δ' ἐστὶ μείζον ἢ λόγῳ ('the greatest; but it is greater in deed than in word,' 389). There is some word play here, since the greatest evil of exile has everything to do with λόγος. She asks what it is that is so hard on exiles, and he tells her ἐν μὲν μέγιστον, οὐκ ἔχει παρρησίαν ('one greatest difficulty: it has no free speech,' 391). And Iocasta immediately equates such a condition with slavery: δούλου τόδ' εἶπας, μὴ λέγειν ἅ τις φρονεῖ ('this is the state of a slave that you speak of, not to say what one thinks,' 392). Thus, the agon, which will give Polyneices an opportunity to speak his mind, represents his reentry, if only temporarily, into a life of freedom. And after the two brothers have made their arguments and have failed to come to any agreement, Polyneices again characterizes his exile, to which he must now return, by the loss of speech: οὐ γὰρ οἶδ' εἴ μοι προσειπεῖν αὐθις ἔσθ' ὑμᾶς ποτε ('for I don't know if it will be possible for me to speak to you ever again,' 633).

Since Eteocles believes that he should be the sole ruler of Thebes, in contrast to Polyneices, who believes that they should take turns, each ruling for a year at a time, it should come as no surprise that Eteocles is opposed to sitting down with his brother and engaging in the kind of discussion where the disputants take turns presenting arguments of more or less equal length. He makes it clear that he is only participating in this debate as a favor to his mother, who has had to do some persuading (446-451).<sup>135</sup> So we can see that the agon, which is characterized by balance, freedom of expression, and turn-taking, is here itself a metaphor for just the sort form of government that Polyneices is proposing - more than that, it is an instantiation of it. Just as, in the *Suppliants*, Theseus described the citizens in a democracy as ruling ἐν μέρει, a phrase which, as we saw above, is used elsewhere specifically to describe the turn-taking format of the agon,<sup>136</sup> Polyneices here explains that he willingly turned over the rule of Thebes to Eteocles with the intention of taking it up

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<sup>135</sup> His statement here suggests that there was another agon before the play started, one between Eteocles and Iocasta, about whether or not he should agree to have this agon with his brother – and in that agon, Iocasta was victorious. Note though that she has had to persuade Polyneices as well, and he seems to have his own reservations about setting foot in an enemy land (272-3).

<sup>136</sup> *Heracles* 182 and *Hecuba* 1130.

himself, after a year's time, ἀνά μέρος (478). In this agon, in fact, the word μέρος, 'share,' becomes a refrain, repeatedly reminding the audience what is at stake for Polyneices (through the rhesis and the stichomythia, forms of the word appear at 478, 483, 541, 601, 603, 610); and after his death, Antigone carries on the contest on his behalf, as she fights for his claim to a μέρος of earth.<sup>137</sup>

Polyneices begins his rhesis with a contrast between ὁ μῦθος τῆς ἀληθείας, which he says is simple (ἀπλοῦς) and does not require intricate interpretations, and ὁ ἄδικος λόγος, which is sick and needs clever drugs:

ἀπλοῦς ὁ μῦθος τῆς ἀληθείας ἔφν,  
 κού ποικίλων δεῖ τ'ἀνδιχ' ἐρμηνευμάτων·  
 ἔχει γάρ αὐτὰ καιρόν· ὁ δ' ἄδικος λόγος  
 νοσῶν ἐν αὐτῷ φαρμάκων δεῖται σοφῶν.

The story of the truth is by nature simple, and just claims do not require elaborate interpretations; for they have the proper measure; but the unjust argument, since it has sickness in itself, has need of wise drugs.  
 (469-72)

Considering that this statement is made in the context of a Euripidean agon, which is by definition not ἀπλοῦς and will certainly require both some interpretation and some cleverness on the part of the audience members, we might say that Polyneices comes off as a bit naïve here. He is confident that words can be simple, transparent expressions of the truth, and he proceeds to state his case in very straightforward terms. At the end of the rhesis, he sums up by saying that he has spoken without collecting together weavings of words (περιπλοκάς λόγων) and has kept himself apart from clever and base men (494-6). Again, it is hard not to see a metatheatrical hint here, since περιπλοκαὶ λόγων would be an appropriate metaphor for poetic composition.<sup>138</sup> So there is some tension between the model of (competitive) speech offered by Polyneices and the 'first-order' model currently being exhibited by Euripides. And even if Polyneices certainly appears in a better light than his brother, his approach to verbal competition is nonetheless too extreme.

In contrast to the hints by Polyneices and Iocasta that the agon itself is something that should be considered good and valuable, Eteocles begins his rhesis with a cynical reflection on the origin of verbal disputes:

εἰ πᾶσι ταύτῳ καλὸν ἔφν σοφόν θ' ἅμα,  
 οὐκ ἦν ἂν ἀμφίλεκτος ἀνθρώποις ἔρις·  
 νῦν δ' οὐθ' ὅμοιον οὐδὲν οὔτ' ἴσον βροτοῖς,  
 πλήν ὀνομάσαι, τὸ δ' ἔργον οὐκ ἔστιν τόδε.

If to all men the same thing were by nature noble and wise at the same time, men would have no contentious verbal quarrels; but as it is, nothing is either similar or the same for mortals, other than the naming, but in reality this is not the case.

<sup>137</sup> 1655: τί πλημμελήσας, τὸ μέρος εἰ μετῆλθε γῆς;

<sup>138</sup> Cf. *LSJ* II.2. Aristotle uses πλέκω to refer to the composition of the plot of a tragedy (*Poet.* 1456a9). Pindar also uses it to describe poetic composition (*O* 6.86 and *N* 4.94). See Snyder 1981 for weaving imagery as a metaphor for poetic activity in Homer and the lyric poets.

Such a comment clearly reflects his negative feelings about the present debate. While both Polyneices and Iocasta see this agon as beneficial, both practically (since it has the potential of resolving the dispute) and symbolically (since it represents the sharing of power that they desire), Eteocles considers it a rather pointless nuisance. In attributing the cause of the verbal dispute to the lack of consensus about ethical terms, he avails himself of the *λόγος* / *ἔργον* dichotomy: nothing is alike or equal for men except in naming, but the reality is entirely different.<sup>140</sup> However, even as he rejects any stable definition for such ethical terms as *καλόν* and *σοφόν*, he goes on to give an explicit definition for another ethical term, *ἀνανδρία*: he is not willing to give up the tyranny, *ἀνανδρία γάρ, τὸ πλεόν ὅστις ἀπολέσας/ τοῦλασσον ἔλαβε* ('for that is cowardice, whoever throws away the greater share and takes the lesser,' 509-10) – a definition which, we might say, formulates competition itself in very basic, albeit cynical, 'Thrasymachan' terms. And it is even more striking that the word *καλόν* appears in the very first line and in the very last line of Eteocles' rhesis, but in very different ways. In the first line, *καλόν* is an example of an unstable, relative ethical term. In the last line, we get the much more emphatic and confident superlative of the same word, *κάλλιστον*, employed in an extremely bold defense of injustice for the sake of tyranny: *εἴπερ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν χρή, τυραννίδος πέρι/ κάλλιστον ἀδικεῖν, τᾶλλα δ' εὐσεβεῖν χρεών* ('for if one should do injustice, it is most noble to do it concerning tyranny, but in other matters one should be pious,' 524-5). We could say that Eteocles is contradicting himself, by first suggesting that *καλόν* has no stable meaning and then using that very word to make such a bold and brazen assertion; or perhaps there is no contradiction, and the last line of his rhesis simply serves as a perfect illustration of the principle set forth in the first line: clearly *καλόν* can have no stable meaning if he is able to apply it to *τυραννίς* and *ἀδικία*.

The chorus immediately responds with its condemnation of Eteocles' verbal performance. They offer the more orthodox formulation of *καλόν*, which is defined, of course, by justice rather than injustice, and they simultaneously comment on Eteocles' use of the *λόγος* / *ἔργον* dichotomy: *οὐκ εὖ λέγειν χρή μὴ 'πὶ τοῖς ἔργοις καλοῖς/ οὐ γὰρ καλόν τοῦτ', ἀλλὰ τῇ δίκη πικρόν* ('one should not speak well about things that are not noble; for that is not noble, but is bitter to justice,' 526-7). While Eteocles' comment at the beginning of his rhesis concerned the meanings of words, and was thus concerned with verbal competition on the level of the content of the arguments – his point being that the very meaning of the content will always be in contention – the chorus steps back and introduces a distinction between the level of the argument's content and the level of its rhetoric. Eteocles gave himself license to say whatever he wanted on the grounds that words are divorced from things. The chorus insists, on the other hand, that words do refer to things, *ἔργα*, and notes that one can use words to present artful, compelling arguments (to 'speak well') about good things or about bad things. Thus, they interpret Eteocles' comment as an attempt to make the competition entirely rhetorical and to disqualify any judgments made on the basis of content, since, according to him, the content is all relative. They acknowledge that his rhetorical performance was a good one but refuse to ignore the

<sup>139</sup> Dubischar 2001: 288-9 cites this line as a very straightforward expression of one of the central problems explored in agons of reckoning. He comments, "Zu diesem Ergebnis muß man wohl kommen, wenn man die von Euripides in den Agonszenen enthaltenen ambivalenten Signale zur Steuerung der Zuschauerperspektive als solche ernst nimmt und ihnen ihre angemessene Bedeutung beimißt." But I am arguing that Euripides does not actually want us to come to this conclusion, but rather wants us to consider the alternative offered by Iocasta.

<sup>140</sup> Mastrorarde *ad loc.* translates the line 'but in actual act there is nothing that is like or equal for men except in their use of <like or equal> words. The reality is not that (sc. like or equal).'

ethical content of his argument – in fact, they suggest that he has even failed on the rhetorical level, since, given the content of his argument, he should have spoken poorly, not well!

One feature of this agon is that, in addition to the usual, brief judgments made by the chorus at the end of each of the competing speeches, we also have a lengthy rhesis made by Iocasta, who is designated as the βραβεύς.<sup>141</sup> She offers a critique of Eteocles' position that is even more subtle than that of the chorus. By intentionally misreading Eteocles' use of ἴσον in his opening statement, she hints that his relativist viewpoint is no mere external consideration, which he uses to inform his ethical positions, but rather is itself an ethical position, and one that has been adopted out of purely selfish motivations. When Eteocles said οὐθ' ὅμοιον οὐδὲν οὐτ' ἴσον βροτοῖς, he clearly meant something along the lines of, 'there is no ethical term that is alike or the same for men.' But Iocasta seems to interpret ἴσον, not as an adjective meaning 'the same,' but as a substantive, ethical term in itself, as if he had meant, 'there is no fairness/equality for men.'<sup>142</sup> She then makes ἴσον, and other forms of the word, the main theme of her response to Eteocles.<sup>143</sup> She reproaches Eteocles for rejecting the existence of τὸ ἴσον and choosing instead to recognize the existence of τὸ πλεόν, which, she claims, is the real empty name: τί δ' ἔστι τὸ πλεόν; ὄνομα ἔχει μόνον (553).

Thus, while Eteocles meant to say that all ethical terms are unstable, empty names that can be defined differently by each person, Iocasta recasts his statement and makes the debate with him about *which* ethical terms are empty names and which ones convey a real ἔργον. The real cause of ἀμφίλεκτος ἔρις, she seems to suggest, is not the instability of ethical terms *per se*, but rather the rejection of τὸ ἴσον as an ethical term that conveys a real, concrete reality, in favor of the opposite term, τὸ πλεόν.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, she tries to demonstrate the reality of τὸ ἴσον by appealing to its manifestation in nature, describing the balance and fairness of the relationship between night and day. Likewise she demonstrates the unstable, relative nature of τὸ πλεόν with two arguments: (1) for the σώφρονες, that which is adequate (ικανά) suffices (554), and (2) mortals do not actually own anything but merely care for things which are really owned by the gods (555-7).

If my understanding of Iocasta's strategy is correct, then we may have a solution to the question of what we should read for line 538: τὸ γὰρ ἴσον μόνιμον (or νόμιμον) ἀνθρώποις ἔφω. Plutarch clearly read νόμιμον, while the best evidence for μόνιμον is the explanatory note by a scholiast, βέβαιον καὶ ἀσφαλές ('stable and secure'). Mastronarde prefers νόμιμον, explaining that μόνιμον "would here make the point that equality is 'long-lasting' or more accurately 'supportive of prolonged stability'." He continues, "this seems to me a narrower and a weaker point than Joc. intends, and than she is entitled (on her construct of the universe) to make, for she views peace as not merely long-lived, but as the

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<sup>141</sup> The agons in *Tro.* 860-1059 and *Hec.* 1109-1292 also take place before judges, and in *Hipp.* 902-1101, Theseus is both disputant and judge.

<sup>142</sup> E.P. Coleridge, in his 1938 translation, unintentionally misreads Eteocles' line the same way that Iocasta intentionally misreads it.

<sup>143</sup> Forms of the word appear at 536, 538, 542, 544, 547. Similar to the use of the word μέρος, ἴσος is a word that has application both to the balance of power in a shared government and to the balance of speeches in the agon (i.e., both ἰσονομία and ἰσηγορία).

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Plato *Rep.* 359c, where πλεονεξία is contrasted with τὸ ἴσον in very much the same way that Iocasta is accusing Eteocles of understanding the terms. Glaucon suggests that, if the just man were given the opportunity, he would behave the same way as the unjust man: ἐπ' αὐτοφώρῳ οὖν λάβοιμεν ἄν τὸν δίκαιον τῷ ἀδίκῳ εἰς ταῦτόν ἰόντα διὰ τὴν πλεονεξίαν, ὃ πᾶσα φύσις διώκειν πέφυκεν ὡς ἀγαθόν, νόμῳ δὲ βία παράγεται ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ ἴσου τιμὴν. The point is made through the φύσις / νόμος antithesis (which is really an extension of the λόγος / ἔργον antithesis, which Iocasta employs): πλεονεξία has a stable reality (it is φύσις), while the honoring of τὸ ἴσον is merely relative (νόμος).



natural, permanent condition when equality is present.”<sup>145</sup> If we read νόμιμον, as Mastronarde prefers, then Iocasta would be explicitly invoking the φύσις / νόμος antithesis, trying to convince Eteocles of the importance of νόμος.<sup>146</sup> But I would like to argue in favor of μόνιμον by suggesting that we read it with a dual significance, applying to τὸ ἴσον both as a system of government and as an ethical term; and thus Iocasta would be making both a political and a linguistic point. Even as it applies to τὸ ἴσον as a system of government, I still believe that μόνιμον is the better reading because, when she contrasts τὸ πλεόν in the next lines, her emphasis seems to be on its *instability*, not its incompatibility with νόμος: τῷ πλεόνι δ’ αἰεὶ πολέμιον καθίσταται τοῦλασσον ἐχθρᾶς θ’ ἡμέρας κατάρχεται (539-40). But in addition, μόνιμον could serve as a contrast (granted, a subtle one) with line 553 (τί δ’ ἔστι τὸ πλεόν; ὄνομ’ ἔχει μόνον). While τὸ πλεόν has only a name (ὄνομα μόνον), τὸ ἴσον is a stable ethical term (μόνιμον). And indeed, the scholiasts gloss, βέβαιον καὶ ἀσφαλές, could apply to either the political or the ethical sense.

At any rate, along with, and related to, this point of contention between Eteocles and Iocasta regarding the stability of ethical terms, we can also see a sharp disagreement about the nature and proper scope of competition. If Eteocles summed up his understanding of the ethics of competition in his definition of cowardice, when he suggested that one should never give up the greater share (τὸ πλεόν) and take the less, Iocasta offers a model of competition that might have appealed to the democratic masses in the audience, but is nonetheless not without some problems, or hints of tension. In her model, described through the analogy of the equal sharing of the day and the night, she acknowledges that there will still be conquering and defeat, winning and losing, but she tries to do away with the element of envy, φθόνος.<sup>147</sup> What makes the interaction between the day and the night stable and harmonious is that, each time one of them is defeated, it has no envy: κούδύτερον αὐτῶν φθόνον ἔχει νικώμενον (545).<sup>148</sup> Even if some in the audience might have found the prospect of suffering a regular, daily defeat a bit hard to swallow, most of them would at least agree that envy is harmful and should be avoided. But when Iocasta notes in the next lines (546-8) that the day and the night are slaves to men (εἴθ’ ἥλιος μὲν νύξ τε δουλεύει βροτοῖς, σὺ δ’ οὐκ ἀνέξει δωμάτων ἔχων ἴσον καὶ τῷδε νείμαι);<sup>149</sup> the happy glow of her vision is surely darkened somewhat. In comparing the night and day, which are slaves to men, with Eteocles, a ruler who will not submit to sharing this rule with his brother, she brings about an uncomfortable blurring of the lines between being ruled

<sup>145</sup> Mastronarde *ad loc.*

<sup>146</sup> Mastronarde must be right when he suggests that Iocasta does not see any distinction between φύσις and νόμος. But he thinks that, by using the term νόμιμον here, she would be trying to convince Eteocles to recognize the value of νόμος. To my mind, however, it would seem a bit weak for Iocasta to bring in νόμος here, when the thrust of her argument has been to emphasize the *naturalness* of τὸ ἴσον.

<sup>147</sup> Note that φθόνος is an element in Hesiod’s *good* kind of ἔρις, even though it almost always has negative connotations elsewhere. Nietzsche reproaches those scholars who tried to emend the word in Hesiod (in *Homer’s Wettkampf*).

<sup>148</sup> *Pace* Mastronarde *ad loc.*, who translates ‘neither...is defeated and (so) feels envy,’ arguing that the negative should carry over to the participle, for which he cites K-G II.199, Anm. 1. But the note in K-G only suggests that the single negative at the beginning is a possibility, not that it is the norm (“Wenn ein Particip mit dem Verbo finito verbunden ist, und beide negiert sein sollten...”). And furthermore, every single example offered in the note (Th. 1,12; 4,126; vgl. 1,141.6; 2,65; 3,33; X. *Hell.* 1.7,24; 3.5,18; Pl. *Men.* 243,c; *Il.* Θ, 165) begins with the negation of the participle, and that negation then extends to the finite verb. But here the main verb precedes the participle, which, to my mind, makes it quite different from the examples in K-G. But even if Mastronarde’s reading is possible, I do not believe that it would have been without ambiguity.

<sup>149</sup> Here too Mastronarde would like to soften the potentially dark undertones of Iocasta’s statement. Though he recognizes that her language “verges on extravagance,” he suggests the translation “do service to mankind.”

and being a slave. If day and night are slaves, who are happy to be defeated on a daily basis, then why would Eteocles want to follow their example?<sup>150</sup>

The model that she describes brings to mind Aristotle's discussion of the nature of a citizen. Aristotle suggests that the virtue of a good citizen lies in both ruling and being ruled (ἄρχειν, ἄρχεσθαι). But recognizing that the notion of 'being ruled' might suggest to some readers a suggestion of servility, he takes pains to distinguish between two different kinds of rule, the rule of a master (ἀρχὴ δεσποτική) over his slaves, and political rule (ἀρχὴ πολιτική), which is exercised over free men and equals (*Pol.* 3.4, 1277a-b). While a master need not learn how to perform the activities of his slaves (indeed, if he engaged in such practices regularly, there would cease to be a distinction between master and slave), the only way a citizen can learn how to rule well is through being ruled: οὐκ ἔστιν εὖ ἄρξαι μὴ ἀρχθέντα. Iocasta seems to be endorsing a similar view, though she focuses primarily on the virtues of equality and fairness, ἰσότης, and only briefly hints that such an arrangement might involve submission to rule when she notes the defeat (νικώμενος), and then the slavery, of the day and night. Unlike Aristotle's discussion, however, her language would do little to assuage her son's, or the audience members', anxieties about the potentially servile connotations of submitting to another's rule.

One further term – and one with important agonistic connotations – that becomes a theme in Iocasta's response to Eteocles is φιλοτιμία (531-4). She personifies it, calling it the most wicked of all the demons (κακίστης δαιμόνων) and an unjust god (ἄδικος θεός). It has caused the destruction of many houses and wealthy cities, and now Eteocles is driven mad with it. It is much better (κάλλιον), she argues, to honor equality/fairness (τιμᾶν ἰσότητα), which binds friend to friend, city to city, ally to ally. Thus, the love of honor is opposed to the honoring of equality. And she goes on to make it clear that by 'love of honor,' φιλοτιμία, she understands specifically the honoring of τὸ πλεόν, which she also associates with the honoring of tyranny, which may appear to be honorable/valuable, but is in fact empty: περιβλέπεσθαι τίμιον; κενὸν μὲν οὖν (551).

As Dover points out, φιλοτιμία (much as with another Greek word with immediate connotations of competitiveness, φιλονικία) is an extremely ambiguous term, which might be translated in one context as "patriotism," but "could shade into aggression, pride, and boastfulness."<sup>151</sup> Aristotle also notes, and attempts to give an explanation for, the ambiguity of the word. He explains that words beginning with φιλο-are generally ambiguous, and that we use φιλότιμος as a term of praise, when we are suggesting that someone is more φιλότιμος than οἱ πολλοί, while we use it as a term of reproach when suggesting that someone is 'too' φιλότιμος. In fact, since there is no word that properly signifies the 'golden mean' of ambition, or competitiveness, the two extremes (φιλότιμος and ἀφιλότιμος) are actually in competition with each other!<sup>152</sup>

But Iocasta's pejorative use of the word does not exactly reflect Aristotle's explanation of how it is generally used as a term of reproach. She is not criticizing Eteocles merely for loving honor too much, but rather for misunderstanding the true nature of honor and the honorable. φιλοτιμία, or at least the φιλοτιμία exhibited by Eteocles, is misguided because it assumes that τὸ πλεόν and ἡ τυραννίς are τίμια, even though, as Iocasta argues, the former holds nothing but a name, and the latter is empty. So while the agonistic society described by such scholars as Gouldner and Cohen is made up of aristocratic rivals who compete in an ongoing 'zero-sum' contest for honor, τιμή, (a view

<sup>150</sup> There is perhaps some ambiguity in her statement. It might be an argument *a fortiori*: "even slaves can share, but you cannot, even though you are a ruler?" Or she may intend to invoke the great benefit that day and night provide for men through their sharing and to suggest that her sons ought to do the same.

<sup>151</sup> Dover 1974: 231-3.

<sup>152</sup> *NE* 1125b: ἀνωνύμου δ' οὔσης τῆς μεσότητος, ὡς ἐρήμης ἔοικεν ἀμφισβητεῖν τὰ ἄκρα.

that is not challenged by Aristotle, who merely points out that one's competitive zeal should be kept to the proper level), Iocasta complicates the game considerably by problematizing the very meaning of honor. By setting herself in opposition to φιλοτιμία, and in favor of equality and fairness, we might be tempted to say that Iocasta is rejecting competition altogether. But remember that she is the one who summoned her sons to this agon in the first place. Rather, she envisions a healthy competition in which the prize sought after is true honor, which she argues is to be identified with τὸ ἴσον, not τὸ πλεόν.<sup>153</sup> Eteocles, in fact, is the one who is hostile to any formal, or rule-oriented competition, since he prefers to place himself above all rivals, as is evidenced by his reluctance to debate his brother. In this respect, Eteocles is like Alcibiades, who, according to Andocides, stole his fellow Athenian's horses to use in the chariot race at the Olympics and would allow no one to compete with him. Andocides says that he differs from the Spartans in the following respect: while they tolerate defeat (ἀνέχονται ἠττώμενοι) even from their allies competing with them, he has clearly stated that he will not allow anyone to compete with him in his desires.<sup>154</sup> Note the similarity between Andocides' description of the Spartans (ἀνέχονται ἠττώμενοι) and Iocasta's description of night and day, which are defeated without experiencing any envy (κουδέτερον αὐτῶν φθόνον ἔχει νικώμενον).

Jocasta's appearance in this agon as arbitrator suggests a model for competitive discourse that could potentially have real practical value. Her analysis of the debate between her two sons, and her criticisms of both of them, seem to be more or less recommended to the audience. But the reason there is still no resolution is that she does not have the power to bind her sons to her decision - they simply ignore her and carry on their quarrel. The model that would appear to be recommended here, however, is not that of democracy, but is rather more along the lines of a philosopher king, or in this case, queen. The mentality according to which Jocasta forms her judgment is a far cry from that, for example, of the fickle and boisterous democratic assembly described by the messenger in the *Orestes* (866-956). She does, in fact, come across quite a bit like a philosopher, who, sadly, is in no position to affect the outcome of the narrative.

#### 4. φιλοτιμία and reversal in *Iphigenia in Aulis*

If one approaches verbal competition with the assumption that its function is to produce a resolution of the conflict between the two parties, then the agon between Agamemnon and Menelaus in *IA* seems to offer one of the very few successes in Greek tragedy.<sup>155</sup> However, it may be argued that it is *too* successful, since both members prove to be so persuasive that each becomes convinced of the other's position, with the result that, even if there is no longer any animosity between them, the actual content of their disagreement has not really been advanced, only the positions have been reversed. Nonetheless, they do manage to move from a state of enmity to one of proper fraternal friendliness. And in the course of their fierce debate and subsequent reconciliation, a

<sup>153</sup> We might understand hers as a non-zero-sum model, in which the honor of winning is retained without there being any shame in losing.

<sup>154</sup> *In. Alc.* 28: τοσοῦτον δὲ διαφέρει Λακεδαιμονίων, ὥστ' ἐκεῖνοι μὲν καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν συμμάχων ἀνταγωνιζομένων ἀνέχονται ἠττώμενοι, οὗτος δὲ οὐδ' ὑπὸ τῶν πολιτῶν, ἀλλὰ φανερώς εἴρηκεν οὐκ ἐπιτρέψειν τοῖς ἀντεπιθυμοῦσί τινος.

<sup>155</sup> Lloyd 1992: 15 notes that it is unclear to what extent Agamemnon's arguments have persuaded Menelaos and to what extent Menelaos' change of heart is due rather to his brother's tears and to the interrupting messenger speech.

transformation of their attitudes toward verbal competition is revealed through their use of the words φιλότιμον and φιλοτιμία.

Menelaus has just intercepted a letter that Agamemnon is trying to send to his wife, in which he begs her to ignore his former request that she come to Aulis with their daughter, Iphigenia. He is furious that Agamemnon has changed his mind about sacrificing his daughter, and, among his litany of reproaches regarding Agamemnon's fickle, disloyal character, he accuses him of trying to buy τὸ φιλότιμον from his peers through his fawning, servile behavior (ταπεινός) – shaking everyone's hand and addressing even those who don't wish to be addressed:

ὡς ταπεινός ἦσθα, πάσης δεξιᾶς προσθιγγάνων  
καὶ θύρας ἔχων ἀκλήστους τῷ θέλοντι δημοτῶν  
καὶ διδούς πρόσρησιν ἐξῆς πᾶσι - κεί μή τις θέλοι -  
τοῖς τρόποις ζητῶν πρίασθαι τὸ φιλότιμον ἐκ μέσου;

How humble you were, grasping every right hand and keeping the doors unlocked for any commoner who wished to enter and addressing everyone in turn - even if he didn't wish to be addressed - seeking by those manners to buy a competitive edge (τὸ φιλότιμον) from the 'middle'.  
(339-42)

This is a very odd use of the word φιλότιμον. Instead of accusing Agamemnon of being so φιλότιμος that he tried to buy τιμή, as one might expect him to do, Menelaos instead makes the neuter substantive τὸ φιλότιμον, not the motive, but the target of his actions. But elite competition is supposed to be a competition for honor, not for 'honor-loving,' and at any rate, surely Agamemnon already had plenty of the latter, so why should it be of particular value to him? This somewhat uncommon use of the word, I suggest, marks it as of particular thematic significance; and when it is repeated three more times, its importance to the scene is made all the more certain.<sup>156</sup> Its agonistic connotation is further emphasized by ἐκ μέσου, 'from the middle,' since 'the middle' is the place where contests traditionally take place, and where the prizes of a contest are placed.<sup>157</sup>

Agamemnon, in his subsequent rhesis, deploys the term in a different kind of attack, which simultaneously serves as a kind of defense to the charge that his brother has made. He suggests that Menelaus is not really angry (or bitter) about Agamemnon's φιλότιμον: οὐ δάκνει σε τὸ φιλότιμον τοῦμόν (385). Again, we would expect the word τιμή here instead, since we understand the scarce commodity, the prize of elite competition, to be honor, not the love of honor, and thus it would make sense for the winner's τιμή to 'bite,' 'sting,' 'eat at' the loser. But both of the brothers seem to agree that what Agamemnon won (or purchased) when he obtained the leadership of the Greek forces was not τιμή but rather τὸ φιλότιμον. As we will see in Chapter 3, Aeschines similarly uses the word φιλοτιμία as a kind of commodity - and in both cases, it is a commodity that is obtained unfairly.<sup>158</sup> But what is Euripides trying to get at here?

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<sup>156</sup> Mastronarde notes in his *Phoen.* commentary (for line 532) that the word φιλότιμον here, in the *IA*, virtually means "the supreme command." That may be true, but my suggestion is that such a use of the word would strike the audience as somewhat unusual.

<sup>157</sup> At *Il.* 3.69, Paris asks that he and Menelaus be placed ἐν μέσσω to fight over Helen and all her possessions. And Dem. 4.5 mentions the ἄθλα τοῦ πολέμου κείμεν' ἐν μέσσω.

<sup>158</sup> I.e. when these words are used concretely, as the object, rather than the motive, of desire, they always suggest the kind of 'bad exchange' described by Ferrari 1988.

The point, I suggest, of using the word in this way is to focus in on the brothers' attitudes to competition and to make this aspect of the debate not just about honor, but about the complicated ethics of the competition for honor. Menelaos suggests that Agamemnon was concealing his true desires (τῷ δοκεῖν μὲν οὐχὶ χρήζων, τῷ δὲ βούλεσθαι θέλων, 'in appearance not desiring it, but in actual will wanting it,' 338) when he tried to buy τὸ φιλότιμον (which I suggest we might consider translating as 'a competitive edge'). But even so, the behavior that he exhibited did not appear to be very 'honorable' – in fact, it was quite the opposite. One would assume the honor-loving man to be characterized by aggression and military exploits, but Agamemnon was overly friendly to everyone (not just his φίλοι), he was fawning, cloying, ταπεινός.<sup>159</sup> Thus, along with the charges of fickleness and dishonesty, there clearly seems to be the additional criticism that he affected this kind of utterly non-competitive disposition in order to obtain the position in which he could act competitively. Then once he obtained his objective, he completely transformed his character, stopped being φίλος to his φίλοι, and returned the bolts to his doors. Unlike Iocasta in *Phoen.*, Menelaos is not rejecting φιλοτιμία but rather reproaching Agamemnon both for his *lack* of it before he obtained the command of the army and for his failure to care for his φίλοι afterwards. It is as if he has gone from the Aristotelean defect directly to the excess without ever pausing at the mean.

But if, in both speeches of the agon, τὸ φιλότιμον represents for both men an object of value and desire and a potential cause of envy (though not one without complications), after their reconciliation it becomes a much more straightforward term of reproach, which they can now employ, from a united front, against their opponents. Agamemnon calls prophesy, the art that he holds responsible for pressuring him to kill his daughter, a φιλότιμον κακόν (520). And a few lines later, Menelaos complains that Odysseus, who knows about the whole affair, is consumed by φιλοτιμία, a frightful evil: φιλοτιμία μὲν ἐνέχεται, δεινῷ κακῷ (527).<sup>160</sup>

Significantly, both of these objects of derision manifest their 'love of honor' through speech. Soothsayers use the divine authority of their utterances to increase their influence and honor; while Odysseus, of course, is the paragon of artful speech. Furthermore, just before Menelaos mentions Odysseus' φιλοτιμία, Agamemnon notes his shiftiness and his alliance with the 'mob': ποικίλος αἰεὶ πέφυκε τοῦ τ' ὄχλου μέτα ('he is always shifty by nature and with the crowd,' 526). This language echoes Agamemnon's critical assessment of his own noble status, which, paradoxically, makes him a slave to the mob and prevents him from expressing himself freely:

ὑπῆλθε δαίμων, ὥστε τῶν σοφισμάτων  
πολλῷ γενέσθαι τῶν ἐμῶν σοφώτερος.  
ἢ δυσγένεια δ' ὡς ἔχει τι χρησιμον.  
καὶ γὰρ δακρυῖσαι ῥαδίως αὐτοῖς ἔχει,  
ἅπαντά τ' εἰπεῖν. τῷ δὲ γενναίῳ φύσιν  
ἄνολβα ταῦτα. προστάτην δὲ τοῦ βίου  
τὸν ὄγκον ἔχομεν τῷ τ' ὄχλῳ δουλεύομεν.

<sup>159</sup> This description of Agamemnon's behavior actually corresponds quite well to Plato's description of the timocratic man, who is generally characterized by his θυμοειδές but is nonetheless gentle (ἡμερος) to free men and excessively obedient (σφόδρα ὑπήκοος) to those in power (*Rep.* 549a).

<sup>160</sup> The connection between the mantic art and Odysseus is reinforced by the fact that the word σπέρμα is used to describe both: 520 τὸ μαντικὸν πᾶν σπέρμα φιλότιμον κακόν, 524 τὸ Σισύφειον σπέρμα πάντ' οἶδεν τάδε.

A divinity came upon me and proved to be much wiser than my rationalizations (σοφισμάτων). But indeed ignoble status contains something useful. For it allows one to cry easily, and to say everything. For the man who is noble by nature, these blessings are absent. I keep the masses the leader of my life, and I am enslaved to the crowd. (444-50)

Along with his newfound rejection of φιλοτιμία, Agamemnon has replaced the old σοφίσματα with a divine wisdom (or rather a wise divinity), which makes him lament his responsibility to the masses and wish that he could weep and ‘say everything.’ Similarly, Menelaos, after the reconciliation, will now say what he believes clearly, from the heart, without any motive or premeditation: κατόμνυμ’...ἔρεϊν σοι τὰ πὸ καρδίας σαφῶς/ καὶ μὴ ᾠπίτηδες μηδὲν ἄλλ’ ὅσον φρονῶ (‘I swear that I will tell you clearly from the heart nothing calculated, but all that I think,’ 473-6).

In order for this reconciliation to take place (an extremely rare outcome for a tragic agon, as we noted), the two disputants have had to firmly reject artful speech, the love of honor, the influence of the masses, and even the noble, elite status (τῷ γενναίῳ φύσιν) that might compel one to engage in such verbal competition in the first place. In short, the ‘success’ of this agon has been brought about through a complete and total rejection of the entire agonistic culture that made it possible. And the practical utility of verbal competition, in this case, seems to be like Wittgenstein’s early model for the use of language in general: you climb up the ladder only to knock it down once you have reached the top.<sup>161</sup>

But it must be noted that this rejection of elite competitive culture manifests itself in a decidedly competitive stance. In their disdainful reproaches against the art of prophecy and against Odysseus, they no longer invoke φιλοτιμία as a potential motivator of bribes or envy, that is, as something of great value but (or rather, for that very reason) susceptible to corruption and misuse. Yet they do continue to use the term as a sort of weapon against their opponents. In the agon proper, the relative status of the two brothers was very much a point of contention. Even before the brothers began their debate speeches, when Agamemnon first came across Menelaos arguing with the old man about the letter, Menelaos felt compelled to assert his superiority over the old man, insisting that his higher status should give his words more authority: οὐμὸς οὐχ ὁ τοῦδε μῦθος κυριώτερος λέγειν (‘my account, not his, has more authority to be spoken,’ 318). And after establishing his superiority to the old man, he proceeded to disabuse Agamemnon of any notions that he might have had about his own status relative to his brother, insisting that he is no slave to Agamemnon: σὸς δὲ δοῦλος οὐκ ἔφην (330). After the reconciliation, however, it is as if their relationship as φίλοι, and all the obligations that such a relationship entails, all of a sudden trumps their relationship as elite competitors, who must compete with one another over the honors that come with positions of leadership, as well as the honors that come with the acquisition (and retention) of a wife who will arouse envy (whether because of her beauty, like Menelaos’, or her virtue, as Agamemnon believes of his).<sup>162</sup> But free from the competition for honor, and the enslavement to the ὄχλος that such a competition entails, their competitive drives are not dissipated but only realigned.<sup>163</sup> Thus, I suggest that Euripides, in this agon, gives the audience an opportunity to reflect on the impossibility of stepping outside of the agonistic culture in which elite Greeks lived. On the other hand, Euripides himself, the poet, does have the privilege of keeping his head above the fray and

<sup>161</sup> *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 6.54.

<sup>162</sup> Note Agamemnon’s reproach of the φιλόγαμοι μνηστῆρες at 392.

<sup>163</sup> One might think here of the ‘middling’ ideology that Morris 1996 examines in early Greek poetry, which “contested on all points” (21) the “agonal society” described by Burckhardt (34-5).

of presenting the competition from a more disinterested position, though of course within the context of a dramatic competition.

## 5. Competitive disparities in *Andromache*

The *Andromache* is a particularly agonistic work through and through. It contains three full agons,<sup>164</sup> and the first one, between Andromache and Hermione, arises quite abruptly (though there may be a lacuna just before the agon) very early in the play (by Lloyd's rather strict list, earlier in the play than any other Euripidean agon). It is this first agon that establishes the tensions that will pervade the rest of the play, and it is also the one that takes competition (verbal and otherwise) as one of its major themes. One of the striking features of the way this agon thematizes competition is the seemingly endless multiplication of disparate competitive relations that are invoked: between free and slave, Greek and foreign, man and woman, young and old, parent and child, and more abstractly, between beauty and virtue. While equality, τὸ ἴσον, was a major theme in the debates that we examined above, this debate is all about inequality.

The parodos and the first two stasima are also explicitly concerned with competition.<sup>165</sup> And it is worth dwelling on these choral passages for a moment, since they will help to give us some context for our interpretation of the agon. In the first stasimon, the women of the chorus describe the judgment of Paris, using language that emphasizes the agonistic elements of the scene in a number of ways:

ἢ μεγάλων ἀχέων ἄρ' ὑπήρξεν, ὅτ' Ἰδαίαν  
ἔς νάπαν ἦλθ' ὁ Μαί-  
ας τε καὶ Διὸς τόκος,  
τρίπωλον ἄρμα δαιμόνων  
ἄγων τὸ καλλιζυγές,  
ἔριδι στυγερά κεκορυθμένον εὐμορφίας  
σταθμούς ἐπὶ βούτα...

(This) indeed began the great sorrows, when the son of Maia and Zeus came to the glen of Ida, leading a beautifully yoked, three-horse chariot of divinities, helmeted with the hateful contest of beauty, to the stables of the shepherd...

(274-80)

The three goddesses that Hermes leads to the glen of Ida are described as a beautifully yoked, three-horse chariot of divinities. Since a ἄρμα can be either a racing-chariot or a war-chariot, the imagery of both athletic and military competition is achieved by the single word. Furthermore, the word for 'leading,' ἄγων here may be a pun for 'competition,' ἄγων. We are given a clue that the pun is intended by the fact that ἄγων, as the first word in its line, receives a sort of echo in the first word of the following line, ἔριδι, another word for 'competition.'

<sup>164</sup> This is the only play in which Lloyd recognizes so many agons (Dubischar, who defines the agon scene less strictly, finds three agons in *Hec.*, *Supp.*, *Or.*, and *IA.* as well). I will only be discussing the first one.

<sup>165</sup> Though competition is not thematized to the same extent in the third or fourth stasima, they do contain some agonistic language as well. Cf. 779-80, κρεῖσσον δὲ νίκαν μὴ κακόδοξον ἔξειν ἢ ξὺν φθόνῳ σφάλλειν δυνάμει τε δίκαν; and 1020-21, καὶ φονίους ἀνδρῶν ἀμίλλας ἔθετ' ἀστεφάνους.

In the second stasimon (465-493), they express their disapproval of the husband who takes two wives and of the resulting rivalries (ἔριδας).<sup>166</sup> They then extend the theme of rivalry to other fields of endeavor where there should be a single authority figure. Two tyrants are not easier to bear than one, and indeed they give rise to στάσις (471-5); the Muses tend to produce rivalry (ἔριν) among poets (τεκόντοιν θ' ὕμνον ἐργάταιν δυοῖν/ ἔριν Μοῦ- / σαι φιλοῦσι κραίνειν, 476-8); and a single steersman is better than two (479-80). The first example, about the tyrants, seems more or less appropriate to the context. Likewise, the third example, about the steersman, makes perfect sense, although it is concluded with a proposition that might seem unreasonably hostile to democratic government: the chorus generalizes that a large group of wise men is weaker than a single, less intelligent man who has full authority (σοφῶν τε πλῆθος ἀθρόον ἀσθενέστερον/ φαυλοτέρας φρενὸς αὐτοκρατοῦς. 481-2). But the second example is the most striking, and, not surprisingly, it has given scholars some trouble. The idea seems to be that two poets should not try to compose a single work together because they will inevitably quarrel. But it is difficult to see how this kind of rivalry is commonplace, as the chorus claims; and their statement, at any rate, is cast in quite general terms about the undesirability of ἔρις between two poets ('fashioners of song'). Why would poetic rivalry as such be a bad thing? Would we really be better off without any of these poetic contests? It is hard not to see this mention of rival poets here as an echo, and a reversal, of Hesiod's poets, who were engaged in *good* competition (though spurred by envy).<sup>167</sup> It seems to me that there is a hint here that competition is very far from a cut and dry ethical issue. The Phthian women are simply trying to generalize their disapproval of the rivalry between Hermione and Andromache, but in so doing, they end up going so far as to appear to reject poetic rivalry in general, presumably including the very dramatic competition in which they are taking part as chorus. Instead of wracking our brains to come up with an example of a poetic rivalry with sufficiently negative associations to fit the context, as scholars have done, I believe the chorus' sentiment is much more powerful when seen as a decidedly metatheatrical moment – one that is meant to make us question the very point the chorus is making and regard with suspicion any attempt to devalue competition wholesale.

Going back to the parodos, which is the scene that anticipates the agon, the women of the chorus there introduce the themes of the agon, expressing their hope that they can provide some relief from the irresolvable toils that have locked Hermione and Andromache in 'hateful feud,' ἔριδι στυγερά (122) - the exact phrase that they use to describe the beauty contest of the goddesses in the first stasimon (279). They caution Andromache against engaging in a competition with her masters (δεσπότηαις ἀμιλλᾶ, 127). And they also hint that there is at least a mild transgression in their allegiance to Andromache, since they have decided to overlook ethnic differences and come to this Asian woman despite the fact that they are Phthian:

Φθιάς ὅμως ἔμολον ποτὶ σὰν Ἀσιήτιδα γένναν,  
εἴ τί σοι δυναίμαν  
ἄκος τῶν δυσλύτων πόνων τεμεῖν,  
οἱ σὲ καὶ Ἐρμιόναν ἔριδι στυγερά συνέκλησαν.

<sup>166</sup> However, as Stevens notes, ἔριδας is probably corrupt, since the first syllable should be long. The rare Ionic accusative δήριας, also meaning 'contest,' has been suggested.

<sup>167</sup> Stevens *ad loc.* notes that some scholars have suggested Hesiod *WD* 11-26 as an example of the type of competition that Euripides has in mind (even though Hesiod is talking about *good* ἔρις); others cite the contest between Aeschylus and Simonides over the composition of an epitaph for the men who died at Marathon; and one suggests Aristophanes' and Eupolis' collaboration over the *Knights*. None of these poetic contests appear to be terribly destructive (as Stevens notes).



Although a Phthian woman, I came to your Asian stock, to see if I could contrive a remedy for your irresolvable toils, which have locked you and Hermione together in hateful contention.

(119-22)

This allegiance is explained partly by their pity for her, but it is clear that there is also some degree of class solidarity at play here, since they are afraid of their mistress, and significantly, are reduced to silence at her approach (φόβω δ' ἠσυχίαν ἄγομεν, 142-3).

Hermione suddenly appears, and launches into the first rhesis of the agon, beginning with what at first seems to be a vain boast about the luxury of her clothing, but finally reveals itself to be an assertion of her right to free speech.

κόσμον μὲν ἀμφὶ κρατὶ χρυσέας χλιδῆς  
στολμόν τε χρωτὸς τόνδε ποικίλων πέπλων  
οὐ τῶν Ἀχιλλέως οὐδὲ Πηλέως ἄπο  
δόμων ἀπαρχὰς δεῦρ' ἔχουσ' ἀφικόμην,  
ἀλλ' ἐκ Λακαίνης Σπαρτιάτιδος χθονὸς  
Μενέλαος ἡμῖν ταῦτα δωρεῖται πατήρ  
πολλοῖς σὺν ἔδνοις, ὥστ' ἔλευθεροστομεῖν.

I came with an ornament of golden luxury about my head and this raiment of colorful clothing on my skin, not the choice offerings from the homes of Achilles or Peleus; but my father, Menelaos, from the Laconic, Spartan land, gives them to me along with a great dowry, so I may speak freely.  
(147-53)

Though Stevens (*ad loc.*) interprets the statement as a claim that her wealth should give her the right to speak, I think that the emphasis is rather on her status as wife versus Andromache's status as concubine.<sup>168</sup> She wants to contrast her legitimate marriage to Neoptolemus with Andromache's illegitimate pretensions to marriage. She has a real dowry and clothing of her own (which happens to be golden, luxurious, and ornate), which she received from her father, while whatever Andromache has is only hers out of the generosity of her new household. Thus, she should be able to speak freely, and the dowryless Andromache, she implies, should not.

The very next line (154), in which she says, 'So then, I respond to you (pl.) with these words' (ὕμᾱς μὲν οὖν τοῖσδ' ἀνταμείβομαι λόγοις) has been suspected. Diggle excises the line because it is unclear exactly to whom or to what statement Hermione would be responding. Stevens suggests that, instead of excising the line, we might assume a lacuna after the chorus' last line, in which the coryphaeus would have announced the arrival of Hermione in iambs or anapaests and may also have said something to which Hermione's opening statement might have been an appropriate response (he cites *Alc.* 136-40 as a parallel). The suggestion that she would be asserting her right to speak freely as a response to the chorus' comment about their own sympathy with Andromache is rejected because "actors do not normally allude to what is said in choral odes" (though he notes the exception at *OT* 216).

I think there very well may be a lacuna, but I also wonder if we might read Hermione's opening statement as a response, not to the chorus members' expression of

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<sup>168</sup> As Kovacs 1980: 56 recognizes.

pity, but to their announcement that they must keep silent (ἡσυχίαν ἄγομεν) when Hermione approaches.<sup>169</sup> Since Hermione's statement is not only an insistence that her status affords her a right to speak, but also a denial of anyone else's right to speak, it could be a response to the chorus that affirms their own abdication of the right to speak. Her comment would be aimed directly at the chorus, but also indirectly at Andromache, since she proceeds to contrast Andromache's status with her own. And her lumping Andromache and the chorus together, as all lacking the credentials to speak freely, could be seen as an attempt to hijack the agon: if her opponent has no right to speak, and the chorus, which would normally make a short comment at the end of each speech, has no right to speak, then perhaps we will be treated to a single-speech agon, from which Hermione will most certainly emerge victorious.<sup>170</sup> And thus Hermione would be exhibiting the same kind of behavior that we saw in Eteocles in *The Phoenician Women*, who likewise was reluctant to engage in the agon and generally wanted to remain above all potential rivals.

At any rate, before Hermione ever gets to the actual charge – that Andromache has used magic to render her barren in order to take over her position in Neoptolemus' home – she spends most of her rhesis enumerating all of the reasons why Andromache's status makes her unworthy as a rival. She is a slave, and one whose reduction to slavery came about as a consequence of defeat in war (155); she is a foreigner, and her shameful 'marriage' to her husband's killer (as if she had a choice in the matter) reflects the lawless, incestuous relations endorsed by barbarians (170-3). In fact, if she hopes to find salvation, she must humble herself and fall before Hermione's knees: δεῖ ζ' ἀντὶ τῶν πρὶν ὀλβίων φρονημάτων πτήξαι/ ταπεινὴν προσπεσεῖν τ' ἐμὸν γόνυ ('instead of your former happy thoughts, you must cower humbly and fall before my knee,' 164-5).<sup>171</sup> It is a commonplace in Greek oratory to characterize one's opponent as beneath his circle of rivals; and as Cohen suggests, such posturing about the absence of any feud can be taken as a sure sign that there is a feud.<sup>172</sup> But in this agon, Hermione takes that strategy to an extreme, spending a good deal of her speech, in a sense, arguing about the impossibility of there being any agon. And of course, unlike the supercilious scorn exhibited by elite orators in real trial speeches, Hermione's complaint about the extreme disparity in status is both more and less truthful: Andromache really is a slave, but she used to be a queen.

One of Hermione's charges that scholars have found particularly unreasonable is her association of Andromache's relationship to her husband's killer with the barbarian endorsement of incest. But here, I think, we might better understand her point if we consider what she might be trying to say about competition and rivalry within the household. As for the structure of the argument, first she notes how foolish Andromache is to dare to sleep with her husband's killer; then she compares such behavior to the mixing of father with daughter, son with mother, and sister with brother, which she claims is typical of barbarians; then she comments that such behavior results in the murder of οἱ φίλτατοι; and finally, she generalizes that it is bad for a husband to hold the reins of two women.

εἰς τοῦτο δ' ἤκεις ἀμαθίας, δύστηνε σύ,  
ἢ παιδὶ πατρός, ὃς σὸν ὤλεσεν πόσιν,  
τολμᾷς ξυνεύδειν καὶ τέκν' αὐθέντου πάρα

<sup>169</sup> And if there is a lacuna, perhaps they further emphasized their need to keep silent in the missing passage.

<sup>170</sup> This impression is reinforced if we consider that forms of ἀμείβομαι usually appear only in the *second* speech of an agon. Thus, Hermione fashions her rhesis as the final one (which Schlessinger 1937: 96 argues is generally the better, and the victorious, one).

<sup>171</sup> Note that ταπεινός was the word that Menelaos used to describe Agamemnon in his servile campaigning.

<sup>172</sup> Cohen 1995: 78-9: "In such relationships the quasi-ritual act of denigrating the standing of one's opponent as not within the community of rivals for honor is at the same time an affirmation of that standing."

τίκτειν. τοιοῦτον πᾶν τὸ βάρβαρον γένος·  
πατήρ τε θυγατρὶ παῖς τε μητρὶ μίγνυται  
κόρη τ' ἀδελφῶ, διὰ φόνου δ' οἱ φίλτατοι  
χωροῦσι, καὶ τῶνδ' οὐδὲν ἐξείργει νόμος.  
ἅ μὴ παρ' ἡμᾶς εἴσπερ'· οὐδέ γὰρ καλὸν  
δυοῖν γυναικοῖν ἄνδρ' ἔν' ἠνίας ἔχειν...

You have come to such a level of foolishness, you wretch, that you dare to sleep with the son of a father who killed your husband and to bear children from the murderer. The whole barbarian race is like that: father mixes with daughter, son with mother, and girl with brother, and those most closely related depart through murder; and law prevents none of these things. Don't bring these practices among us; for neither is it good for a single man to hold the reins of two women...  
(170-178)

What is the connection between sleeping with someone who by all rights should be your bitterest enemy and sleeping with someone who is not an ἐχθρός, but is too close a φίλος for that kind of relation? In both situations, there is a failure to recognize boundaries that should designate certain people as improper objects of sexual desire. And in bringing up the matter of incest, Hermione is not merely bolstering her invective with sexual slander, but she is also hinting that there are practical consequences for the failure to acknowledge such boundaries. The problem with the custom of barbarians is that it imagines *everyone* as a potential object of desire, which means that the field of potential rivals is likewise extended to an insupportably wide group. In the case of incest, φίλοι are allowed to pursue amorous relations with one another, and thus rivalries develop where there should be none. And murder, Hermione claims, is often the result. But the failure to respect boundaries of enmity can also produce unwanted rivalry in the household, as is the case in the current situation. And these rivalries likewise can result in the murder of οἱ φίλτατοι, as is demonstrated when Neoptolemus is killed at the end of the play, with Hermione's tacit approval.<sup>173</sup>

The chorus, in commenting on Hermione's rhesis, presents an alternate, and much more simplistic, explanation for the cause of household rivalry. It is caused not so much by these various improper sexual relations as simply by the way women think: ἐπίφθονόν τι χρῆμα θηλείας φρενός/ καὶ ξυγγάμοισι δυσμενές μάλιστ' αἰεί ('the possession of a female mind is a hateful thing, and it is always most hostile to the husbands,' 181-2). The word ἐπίφθονον serves both as a general term of disapproval ('hateful') and as an account of agonistic motive ('prone to envy').<sup>174</sup>

Andromache's rhesis in response to Hermione, as has been noted by scholars, is a better organized and more sophisticated piece of rhetorical argumentation than that of her

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<sup>173</sup> Kovacs 1980: 57-8 suggests that Hermione's point is that Andromache, and barbarians generally, favor familial ties, which are ties of blood and thus representative of φύσις, over the ties of marriage, which are representative of νόμος. But his suggestion is not consistent with Andromache's later description of her rather extreme loyalty to Hector. As for Hermione's comment about familial murder, he suggests that this too reflects an over-insistence on blood ties, since "it occurs in the same overly close families as incest." I would say rather that it warns of the practical consequences (whether of an over-insistence on blood ties or, as I suggest, of a failure to recognize boundaries, i.e. an excess of φιλία).

<sup>174</sup> Agamemnon uses the word in a similar way in *IA*, in the line right before Menelaos begins the first rhesis of the agon (333), though the text is uncertain. Both Diggle and Murray print it as εὖ κεκόμψευσαι πονηρά· γλῶσσ' ἐπίφθονον σοφῆ.

opponent.<sup>175</sup> It includes a prooimion, in which she laments the futility of her pleading, despite the justice of her case. The rhetorical topos acquires a singular force in this agon however because, in contrast to its use as a kind of rather disingenuous *captatio benevolentiae* in forensic oratory, her pleading really is futile. She then goes on to make a series of arguments ἐξ εἰκότων, which, again, though in form typical of Greek forensic rhetoric, in this particular context are rather remarkable. Her arguments are meant to demonstrate that it would be preposterous for her ever to compete with Hermione. In that sense she is echoing Hermione's own arguments and using them against her: if her status is so lowly as Hermione describes it, then why would she ever imagine that there would be any point in competing with her? That argument would seem to be contradicted somewhat by the fact that it is made in the course of a verbal competition with Hermione, and a skillful one at that.

But Andromache goes even further in characterizing herself as non-competitive. She explains that whenever Hector was 'tripped up' by Aphrodite, far from competing with those women as rivals, she helped him in his love (ξυνήρων, 223),<sup>176</sup> and even offered her breast to the bastard offspring. It is difficult to say exactly how the audience members would have reacted to this statement, whether they would have approved of Andromache's total submission to the authority of her husband or would have been shocked by the extremity of her selflessness – perhaps they would have had both reactions simultaneously. But they certainly would see that Andromache is presenting herself as completely devoid of competitive drive, either with her husband or with any of his love interests.

Her characterization of Hermione, not surprisingly, is the opposite. But part of her strategy is to reconfigure the elements of the contest that Hermione has outlined. While Hermione seemed to imagine that the competition was between herself and Andromache over Neoptolemus as the prize, Andromache makes the contest between Hermione and Neoptolemus. A wife, she argues, should never engage in a contest of wits with her husband, even if he is a bad husband: χρή γὰρ γυναῖκα, κὰν κακῶ πόσει δοθῆ, / στέργειν, ἄμιλλάν τ' οὐκ ἔχειν φρονήματος ('for a woman, even if she is given to a bad husband, should love him and not have a contest of intellect,' 213-14). The implication is that, in pursuing a rivalry with Andromache, Hermione is presuming to know better than her husband what is best for the household and is thus in competition with him. Andromache on the other hand, in showing love toward Hector's love interests, was showing that she considered his opinions to be superior to her own. Thus, in a sense she is reminding Hermione that the contest they are engaged in is not the same one that elite males engage in for their sexual prizes. In this contest, where two women are fighting over an elite male, it is the prize itself that by all rights should be holding the reins.<sup>177</sup>

Andromache goes on to make another charge against Hermione of inappropriate rivalry. After suggesting that Hermione is so afraid to lose her husband that she will not even allow a drop of dew to settle upon him, she warns her not to seek to surpass her mother, Helen, in her love of men: μὴ τὴν τεκοῦσαν τῇ φιλανδρία, γύναι, / ζήτει παρελθεῖν ('do not seek, woman, to surpass your mother in zeal for men,' 229-30). The meaning of the word φιλανδρία can range from 'devotion to one's husband,' or 'wifely jealousy,' to 'love of men in general.' Stevens suggests that since Hermione is demonstrating an excess of devotion to her husband, whereas Helen's brand of φιλανδρία is quite the

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Lloyd 1992: 53-4.

<sup>176</sup> Stevens suggests 'I helped you in these affairs' rather than Paley's 'I loved those whom you loved.'

<sup>177</sup> An interesting parallel for this confusion of the different participants in the contest emerges from Cohen 1991: 183, where he discusses Pausanias' speech in Plat. *Symp.* As Cohen notes, there was often fierce rivalry between admirers, but here he describes the contest as between the lover and the beloved: "...[T]he victory of the *erastes* means the defeat of the *eromenos*."

opposite, Andromache may be exploiting the ambiguity of the word here. But I am inclined to say that she is doing more than that. She is suggesting that the two different kinds of φιλανδρία are derived from the same fundamental trait. If we understand φιλανδρία as a kind of competitive zeal for men, then we can see that, at one time, a husband may be its target, and at another time, some other man may be. And, if that is the point that Andromache is making, then it is certainly borne out by the subsequent action of the play. If the only thing Hermione was suffering from was ‘wifely jealousy,’ then it would be hard to imagine how she could so easily drop her husband for Orestes – and not lift a finger to prevent his murder. So Hermione’s inappropriately excessive competitiveness is such that not only is she in competition with her husband, but she is also in competition with her mother to see who can be more competitive in regard to men. Excessive indeed.

Thus, the two rheses of the agon, in addition to clarifying the positions of the two women, also present contrasting versions of how a household rivalry such as theirs comes about. In Hermione’s account, it is not so much excessively competitive behavior that is to blame, but the failure to respect boundaries and the resulting promiscuity. In Andromache’s account, it is the competitive zeal that manifests itself in rivalry both *with* one’s husband and *for* one’s husband, and indeed for men in general.

As we have seen, the structure and format of the agon is sometimes thematically significant in itself. As hostile and uncooperative as the participants may be, for a brief moment they are taking turns, speaking and listening, ruling and being ruled. In the agons of the more political tragedies, *The Suppliants* and *The Phoenician Women*, the sharing of speeches served as a kind of reflection on the questions that were being debated about the sharing of power. However, politics is a man’s business, and despite Iocasta’s very significant role as arbitrator in *The Phoenician Women*, the first three agons that we examined were between males, who argued over male concerns, like power, government, and war. The *Andromache*, on the other hand, is very much concerned with female character and female affairs, even if only as a foil for masculinity.<sup>178</sup> But this agon from the *Andromache*, like the other agons above, does instantiate a kind of cooperation, by the mere fact that, for a brief moment, the two women are taking turns speaking and listening. And like the agons in *Supp.* and *Phoen.*, the form of the agon does serve as a reflection for some of the content. The turn-taking of this agon, however, is a metaphor not for the sharing of power, but the sharing of husbands. After Andromache instructs Hermione not to engage in a contest of wits with her husband, she continues by asking her what she would do if she were married to a tyrant in Thrace, where polygamy is the norm. Would she kill all the other women...

...εἰ δ’ ἀμφὶ Θρήκην χιόνι τὴν κατάρρυτον  
 τύραννον ἔσχεσ ἄνδρ’, ἴν’ ἐν μέρει λέχος  
 δίδωσι πολλαῖς εἷς ἀνὴρ κοινούμενος;

...if you got a kingly husband near Thrace, watered with snow, where one man shares and gives out his marriage bed to many women in turns?  
 (215-18).

Here the language of sharing is emphatic. In addition to the participle κοινούμενος, the phrase ἐν μέρει appears once again, a phrase that, as we have seen, is used variously to describe the format of the tragic agon, Polyneices and Eteocles’ sharing of power, the turn-taking of democratic institutions, and now the sharing of husbands. Just as Polyneices was

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Zeitlin 1990 for the idea that the feminine in tragedy is a foil for masculinity.

more willing than his brother both to share the rule and to share arguments in the agon, Andromache is comfortable sharing both speeches and husbands, while Hermione insists that her status should make her exempt from both kinds of sharing – and both kinds of rivalry.

In conclusion, the agon scene itself represents a fair, rule-oriented kind of competition, and its form can serve as a reflection on other kinds of turn-taking, equality, and shared rule (even if not all of the participants exhibit these qualities in their behavior). But whether the competitors make their discussion about democracy and tyranny, or about taking turns in the ruling of a state, or about taking turns with a polygamous husband, the symbolic value of the agon generally serves to problematize the issues under discussion even further. And the *practical* value of the agon is highly questionable in all four of the plays that we looked at. The only one that resulted in a resolution was the *IA*, and there the only thing that was really resolved was the animosity between the brothers, but not their disagreement about the issue. Yet, even if the characters in the play derive little practical benefit from the verbal competitions in which Euripides has them engage, we the audience members are invited to reflect on the practical benefit that we are receiving from these agons, to ponder the valuable questions that they raise in us about the utility and the dangers of verbal competition in general, and to consider the broader context of the poetic agon between the playwrights.

## Chapter 3: Character and Competition in the Courtrooms

### I. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we examined the thematization of competition in the Euripidean agon and found that the audience members' critical faculties were constantly challenged and/or frustrated by multiple levels of balanced oppositions. Such difficulties are appropriate for epideictic rhetoric, in which, as Aristotle notes, the spectator is not a judge of events but only a judge of the ability (δύναμις) of the speaker, or in this case, of the playwright.<sup>179</sup> Thus while the tragic agon is clearly inspired by the speeches in the law courts, its purpose is almost the opposite, since it seems that the audience members' inability to arrive at a confident decision about the winner of the tragic agon will be a factor in their *positive* judgment of the poet's ability. In forensic rhetoric, on the other hand, both speeches are not written by the same person, and neither speaker is particularly interested in achieving balance or in hindering the jury's ability to make a decision – he naturally always wants them to decide in his favor.

But the relationship is not that simple. If tragedy is greatly influenced by forensic rhetoric, the reverse is also true: forensic rhetoric draws a great deal from tragedy as well.<sup>180</sup> And even if the jury members were expected to make judgments about τὰ γενόμενα, past events, they were hardly able to suspend their appreciation of the rhetor's δύναμις. Indeed, once it is generally accepted that rhetoric is an art, then the contents of a speech can never be judged with a total disregard for its artistry. It is abundantly clear that the Athenians in particular derived great pleasure from hearing a good speech, that they liked to be moved by words, and that they loved to judge compositions of all sorts. In fr. 23, Gorgias suggests that the spectator of a tragedy (which he says is just a λόγος ἔχων μέτρον) who is deceived shows himself to be all the wiser for it, since not being deceived would suggest a numbness to the pleasure of words. And Philocleon, in Aristophanes' *Wasps* is addicted to serving on the jury, in part, because of the entertainment provided by the litigants. He notes that, if the tragic actor, Oiagros, finds himself a defendant in court, he will not be acquitted without first performing a beautiful rhesis from *Niobe* (578). When an Athenian citizen came to court to hear two famous rhetors such as Demosthenes and Aeschines, whether as a member of the jury or as a mere spectator, he undoubtedly had some anticipation of the opportunity to appreciate, and to critique, the artistry of their speeches.

In fact, although it was often in the orator's interest to insist that the jury members attend only to the facts and that they try diligently to ignore the rhetorical gifts of *both* disputants as, at best, a mere distraction, it is clear that, especially in those cases where the

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<sup>179</sup> *Rhet.* 1358b 2-7: ἀνάγκη δὲ τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἢ θεωρὸν εἶναι ἢ κριτὴν, κριτὴν δὲ περὶ τῶν γεγενημένων ἢ τῶν μελλόντων. ἔστιν δ' ὁ μὲν περὶ τῶν μελλόντων κρίνων ὁ ἐκκλησιασστής, ὁ δὲ περὶ τῶν γεγενημένων ὁ δικαστής, ὁ δὲ περὶ τῆς δυνάμεως ὁ θεωρός, ὥστ' ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἂν εἴη τρία γένη τῶν λόγων τῶν ῥητορικῶν, συμβουλευτικόν, δικανικόν, ἐπιδεικτικόν. Thus the audience member of a piece of epideictic rhetoric is not a judge, but a spectator, and yet the spectator is the one who 'judges' ability.

<sup>180</sup> See especially Hall 1995. Ober 1989: 152-155 discusses the similarities between theatrical and legal competition, noting that both were contests between elite men judged by mass audiences; he argues that the theater functioned in part as a kind of training ground for the juries, who would likewise be exposed to fictionalized narratives, in this case by elite orators presenting themselves as non-elite. Also, note that, when Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1413b) distinguishes between 'the written style (ἡ λέξις γραφικὴ) and 'the competitive style' (ἡ λέξις ἀγωνιστικὴ), he calls the written style 'the most precise' and the competitive style 'the most theatrical' (ὑποκριτικωτάτη - the word here means 'best suited for delivery' but is derived from ὑποκρίνομαι, 'to play a theatrical role').

disputants were politicians (*rhetors*), they knew very well that rhetorical ability was not actually irrelevant to the case at all. In addition to proving the facts of his case, it is clear that a major part of a litigator's task was to demonstrate the uprightness of his character not only in order to secure the trust of the jury for the factual claims he was making, but also because it was understood that the judges would be pronouncing their judgment, to a degree that is perhaps surprising to us, on the basis of which of the disputants they decided was more useful to the people generally.<sup>181</sup> And given that his very career, as a successful rhetor, was dependent on his ability to be an effective verbal competitor on behalf of the people, a demonstration of rhetorical δύναιμις was essential.

It may seem that I am suggesting that we entirely collapse the distinction between forensic and epideictic rhetoric. As I noted above, Aristotle distinguished the two genres by saying that, in the former, the audience was to make a judgment about τὰ γενόμενα (past events), and, in the latter, they were to make a judgment only about the δύναιμις (ability) of the speaker; and here I am suggesting that the δύναιμις of the speaker was an extremely important criterion of judgment in forensic as well. But we can keep the two genres distinct by considering the great importance that Aristotle accords to 'character arguments,' which he claims are in fact the most persuasive of the three types of rhetorical argument.<sup>182</sup> He suggests (1356a 4-7) that the purpose of 'character' arguments is indeed simply to make oneself appear trustworthy (and presumably to make one's opponent seem the opposite). But it is clear, as we see in the analyses of several scholars,<sup>183</sup> that the jury's consideration of character was far from limited to their interest in the immediate allegations: they wanted to preserve the rhetor who was more beneficial to the city and get rid of the one who was harmful. Further, if one's character, in fifth and fourth century Athens, was established at least as much by the way one spoke as by any other factor,<sup>184</sup> then we have good reason to understand the jury's consideration of rhetorical δύναιμις in a legal trial as part of its general consideration of character. And if one major challenge in a legal contest was to offer the jury a more compelling depiction of one's own character than that of one's opponent, then rhetoric could potentially be not only the medium of the arguments but, to some extent, the (often implicit) topic as well.

Indeed, one thing that makes the speeches from the long-lasting feud between Demosthenes and Aeschines so remarkable is the extent to which both men thematize rhetorical competition, quite explicitly at times. These speeches are not exactly typical of Greek forensic rhetoric, since the stature of the litigants, their fame as rhetorical experts, and the nature of the allegations all combine to make rhetorical competition itself much more of a central theme than in any of the other authentic trial speeches that we have. But like the agons of Euripides, and like the debate speeches in Thucydides, these speeches give us a sense of the possibilities within the genre for a quasi-theoretical discussion of rhetorical competition (and its importance for Athenian society); and they also reveal the great influence that each genre had on the others, and the way that assumptions and expectations of the other genres could be utilized and exploited within the speeches. Thus we see Demosthenes and Aeschines exploiting both ethical and generic assumptions about rhetorical competition.

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<sup>181</sup> Cohen 1995: 115: "On the Athenian view, reaching a 'just result' in a particular case meant considering the full play of those forces as portrayed in the rhetorical performances of the litigants, performances which aimed at demonstrating the congruence of the interests of the litigants with those of the *demos*."

<sup>182</sup> 1356a 13: ἀλλὰ σχεδὸν ὡς εἰπεῖν κυριωτάτην ἔχει πίστιν τὸ ἦθος..

<sup>183</sup> E.g., Dover 1974: 158: "...the question which a lawsuit or an indictment posed to a Greek jury was not necessarily or always, 'How can we be fair to this individual?', but 'What action in respect of this situation is likely to have the best consequences for the strength of the community?' See also Todd 1993, Cohen 1995, Ober 1989.

<sup>184</sup> A connection often emphasized by Isocrates.



Jeffrey Walker has argued for a more positive evaluation of epideictic rhetoric, which he sees as not only an occasion for clever display, but as "that which shapes and cultivates the basic codes of value and belief by which a society or culture lives."<sup>185</sup> The formal distinguishing feature between the *epideiktikon* and the *pragmatikon* is that the latter is ultimately concerned with some sort of institutional transaction of the public business. But, contrary to modern assumptions, Walker argues (as we noted) that epideictic is the original form of rhetoric.<sup>186</sup> But while Walker is primarily concerned with identifying early rhetorical practice in the poets, we can just as easily work in the other direction. If pragmatic rhetoric, such as was performed in the assemblies and courtrooms, originated in the sweet, pleasing words of praise and blame reflected in the poems of Homer and Hesiod, then the poetic, epideictic nature of such performances surely would have continued to be felt. Indeed, as Walker notes, "Gorgias takes poetic 'incantation' as a paradigm of all persuasive discourse,"<sup>187</sup> and we see the epideictic aspect of rhetoric explicitly acknowledged by Plato quite often when (following Gorgias) he speaks of rhetoric as a kind of witchcraft or a τέχνη ψυχαγωγίας ('art of leading the soul').<sup>188</sup> The only point that I would add is that epideictic also tends to have a particular kind of competitive edge that the other rhetorical genres, at least theoretically, need not have. This point is perhaps obvious. When the audience is judging on the basis of the skill of the speakers, then those speakers will be much more motivated to try to demonstrate their technical superiority than they will when the judgment only concerns events. On the other hand, epideictic, unlike forensic, need not be performed in the context of a formal competition, which is why Aristotle differentiates between 'the written style' and 'the agonistic style' (*Rhet.* 1413b). Such a division, however, is particularly difficult to maintain if we agree with Walker that formally agonistic types of rhetoric emerged from epideictic.

The speech that may be the best parallel for the speeches of Aeschines and Demosthenes, in terms of the way it both acknowledges and seeks to control the epideictic aspect of the competition, is Isocrates' *Antidosis*, which is not even a real forensic speech.<sup>189</sup> Modeled on Plato's *Apology*, it is an epideictic speech in the form of a trial speech, in which Isocrates seeks to defend, and simultaneously to demonstrate, his rhetorical expertise. He characterizes the trial as not only *about* the effects of his rhetoric but as very much a contest *of* rhetorical excellence. His opponent, he claims, expects that if he is victorious against Isocrates, who is a teacher of others, then his own power will seem unassailable to everyone (25). 'If my speeches are harmful,' he writes, 'I ask to receive no forgiveness from you, but if they are not of a quality such as no one else has delivered (τοιούτοις οἷοις οὐδεις ἄλλος), to receive the gravest punishment' (51). He takes pains to justify his 'cleverness,' arguing that he should be praised for using his speaking skill well and moderately;<sup>190</sup> but he seems to go a little beyond mere justification when he comes very close to boasting that he is, in fact, the cleverest of all men: "Thus, if I were to agree with the prosecutor and admit that I am the cleverest of all men (πάντων ἀνθρώπων εἶναι δεινότατος)...it would be more just for me to be recognized as an honest man than to be

<sup>185</sup> Walker 2000: 9.

<sup>186</sup> Though he notes that Hesiod's favorite word for the "flow" of eloquence is ῥέω and mistakenly suggests that this is the word from which 'rhetoric' ultimately derives (p 5). The root of ῥέω is \*srew-, and the root of εἶρω, from which ῥήτωρ derives, is \*werh<sub>1</sub>-/\*wrē- (Chantraine).

<sup>187</sup> Walker 2000: 25.

<sup>188</sup> *Idem* 5. Of course, the metaphor of witchcraft does not figure rhetoric as *solely* for pleasure, since the point of witchcraft is to influence people or things in concrete ways, but still, the image of enchantment suggests that the success of rhetorical persuasion will depend on the creation of pleasure.

<sup>189</sup> See De Romilly 1992, Too 1995, and Walker 2000: 29 for a discussion of Isocrates' importance to the development of rhetoric.

<sup>190</sup> As we will see, Demosthenes defends his cleverness in the same way.

punished' (36). And, in a demonstration of that cleverness, he comes right out and addresses the thin line that an orator with a reputation for cleverness must walk: 'Lysimaches has slandered my speeches themselves most of all, so that if I appear to speak satisfactorily, I will appear to be guilty of the charges he made against my cleverness, but if my speech turns out to be inferior than what he has led you to expect, you will think that my actions are worse (16).' Note the implicit connection that he thus draws between character and speaking ability. He also takes great pains to distance himself from forensic oratory, arguing that he has never concerned himself with law court speeches (even though Isoc. 16-21 all appear to be authentic trial speeches), and rather embraces epideictic as far more pleasurable, beneficial, and skillful than forensic (46-50).<sup>191</sup> As we will see, Demosthenes and Aeschines likewise implicitly acknowledge that there is a strong epideictic element to their contests; each seeks to position himself and his opponent in relation to the different rhetorical genres; and each seeks to establish himself as the superior rhetor.

We should take a moment here to note that the Greeks tended to use terms having to do with speech and speaking in a variety of ways. Thus the word *logos* can be used either in a very limited, negative sense or in much broader, positive sense. When contrasted with *ergon*, a *logos* is a 'mere' word, an empty signifier that can be manipulated in any way one chooses. But on the opposite end of the spectrum, *logos* can also refer to the highly valued 'reason' that alone can fill those mere words with content. Similarly, a rhetor is a 'mere' public speaker, with all the connotations of empty verbiage and manipulation that such a term might convey (as it does especially in Plato).<sup>192</sup> On the other hand, in the city of words, speaking ability is no small matter; and a rhetor is not merely a mouthpiece, but a politician, whose occupation may be primarily associated with public speaking but need not be limited to it. And the notion of a good brand of rhetor, one who uses his ability to help his fellow-citizens, and to protect them from the bad rhetors, is certainly intelligible. Hyperides says that all rhetors are like snakes and thus detestable, but some are vipers, who harm the people, while others eat the vipers.<sup>193</sup> When I suggest that there was often an epideictic element to forensic debate, I do not mean to imply that the words and the arguments were judged entirely out of context, irrespective of the facts, or that the contest was merely one of verbal manipulation and cleverness. Indeed, perhaps the most common, and most successful, means of asserting one's rhetorical superiority over an opponent was to convince the jury that the opponent's speech consisted of nothing but 'mere' words, while one's own speech was truly substantive, based on facts, good judgment, etc. The word 'rhetoric' (ῥητορικὴ, sc. τέχνη) (which, as we noted in Chapter 1, may have been coined by Plato) does not appear as such in any of the extant courtroom speeches; but the adjective, ῥητορικός, is used more generally as 'having to do with the rhetors,' more often than not with a pejorative sense. Aeschines, for example, refers to Demosthenes' 'rhetorical cowardice' (ῥητορικὴν δειλίαν, 3.163), which he exhibited by his silence when Alexander came to power. If the trials between Demosthenes and Aeschines were in part contests in rhetorical display, we should understand 'rhetorical' in the broader sense of 'having to do with public speakers,' as the orators themselves use the term. And while speaking ability is

<sup>191</sup> Later, Philodemus argued that epideictic was the *only* branch of rhetoric that was a real τέχνη (Wilcox 1942: 126, fn 20).

<sup>192</sup> Pilz 1934 argues that the term *rhetor* developed its negative connotations in the 4th century and that, even before that, it was never used to describe leading statesmen such as Pericles. Wilcox 1942: 128 points out that Pericles was in fact called a *rhetor* by Eupolis (fr. 94) and notes that the word could always be used in a positive sense.

<sup>193</sup> Fr. 80. εἶναι δὲ τοὺς ῥήτορας ὁμοίους τοῖς ὄφεισι· τοὺς τε γὰρ ὄφεις μισητοὺς μὲν εἶναι πάντας, τῶν δὲ ὄφειων αὐτῶν τοὺς μὲν ἔχεις τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀδικεῖν, τοὺς δὲ παρείας αὐτοὺς τοὺς ἔχεις κατεσθίειν.

certainly central to a rhetor's job description, the rhetors themselves will insist that it must not be thought of as 'mere' speaking ability.<sup>194</sup>

The feud between Demosthenes and Aeschines seems to have begun in 346, when they both participated in a series of embassies to Philip. The purpose of the first was to discuss terms for peace, and after both men, on their return, supported Philocrates' proposal, the Peace of Philocrates, which subsequently proved to be disastrous for Athenian interests, was approved by the assembly. The purpose of the next embassy was to receive Philip's oaths for the peace, but when the ten ambassadors arrived in Pella, Philip was on campaign in Thrace and did not return to swear the oaths until he had already added several more territories to his domain. Later that same year, Aeschines prosecuted Timarchos for speaking in the assembly despite having prostituted himself in his younger years. The real purpose of the prosecution, however, was to preempt Timarchos' prosecution of Aeschines for misconduct on the embassies. Aeschines was successful, and Timarchos was disenfranchised, but Demosthenes resumed the prosecution against Aeschines in 343, accusing him of taking bribes from Philip and misleading the assembly about Philip's intentions (the two speeches on the *False Embassy*). Aeschines was acquitted, but only by a very narrow margin. The final legal showdown between the two men was several years later, in the aftermath of the Athenian defeat at Chaeronea in 338, when Demosthenes had convinced the Athenians to join with their former enemy, Thebes, and wage open war with Philip. After the defeat, however, the Athenians did not blame Demosthenes and in fact chose him to deliver the funeral oration over the war dead. Two years later, in 336, a man named Ctesiphon proposed that Demosthenes be awarded a crown, primarily for private contributions that he had made toward the city's fortifications, but more generally for 'always acting and speaking in the city's best interest.' Aeschines saw in Ctesiphon's motion an opportunity for a final contest with Demosthenes and lodged an indictment against Ctesiphon for making an illegal proposal (*γραφὴ παρανόμων*): because of a series of major international events, including the assassination of Philip and Alexander's rise to power, the trial was postponed until 330. It was clear that the prosecution was really directed at Demosthenes and his policies, and indeed Demosthenes gave the main defense speech as Ctesiphon's *συνήγορος* ('fellow-pleader,' 'advocate'). Aeschines failed to win one fifth of the votes and fled Athens.

Two of the three trials involved in this feud are the only ones, among all extant Greek oratory, for which we have both the prosecution and the defense speeches in their entirety;<sup>195</sup> thus they enable us to see how each rival responds to the other's attacks. The speeches are notoriously nasty and vitriolic, which offers us a glimpse into the sort of license and theatricality that was accepted, or perhaps even expected, in such high profile trials. And finally, the contexts of the three trials are such as to cover some very crucial issues in regard to Athenian competitive culture: in the prosecution of Timarchos, we see a discussion of the problematic nature of erotic rivalry and its relation to political rivalry; in the speeches on the false embassy, questions are raised about the use and abuse of different kinds of competitive rhetorical skill; and the speeches on the crown put into question the motivations and the rewards of elite competition for honor.

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<sup>194</sup> One further complication in arguing that these trials were, in part, epideictic contests is that we only have the speeches in the form of published texts, which are epideictic in a much more obvious way. Walker 2000: 21 notes that the advent of writing meant that meter was no longer necessary to lend permanence to words: "It was now possible for nonverse discourse, non-"poetry," to acquire the permanence of epideictic, and to become a kind of counterpart to verse, simply by virtue of being written down."

<sup>195</sup> Lysias' fragment of the prosecution against Andocides, whose defense speech we have, is the only partial exception.

## 2. Shame and temperance

Not only is Aeschines' prosecution speech against Timarchos an extremely valuable resource for our understanding of the complex workings of pederastic rivalry,<sup>196</sup> but it is also important to note that the question at issue in the trial is 'who has the right to be a rhetor,' that is, who has the right to speak on behalf of the city. More than that, Aeschines comes very near to acknowledging that his real aim in this prosecution is to prevent another prosecution, one against himself by Timarchos.<sup>197</sup> In Aeschines' interpretation, the man who has prostituted himself cannot speak for the city in any capacity whatsoever – as herald, ambassador, judge of ambassadors, sycophant (which should go without saying), or as vocal participant of any kind in either the council or the assembly – not even if he is the most skilled of speakers (μηδ' ἂν δεινότατος ἦ λέγειν). Aeschines suggests several reasons why this law is a good one: the contaminated bodies of the former prostitutes will tarnish the sacredness of the office (this is especially the case with any priestly office); their ability to find success in society will serve as a bad influence on the youth; they will be prone to accepting bribes, since, if they are willing to sell their own bodies, then they surely would also sell out the state (29); and finally, as men who have committed such heinous wrongs, they should receive no honor of any kind. Thus, the reason Aeschines gives for not allowing them to hold the office of any of the nine archons is that such offices involve the wearing of crowns (ὅτι οἶμαι στεφανηφόρος ἢ ἄρχη). In giving this reason, Aeschines is hinting both at the purity of the office, and at the inappropriateness of letting dishonorable men bask in the glow of honor, for which, as we will see in the final pair of speeches in this chapter, the crown was the ultimate symbol.

As has been noted by several scholars, the world of Greek pederasty was complicated, and the expectations of both lover and beloved were ethically ambiguous at best. It is clear that it was a world in which rivalry between lovers of the same boy was taken for granted. But the 'game' was also understood as a sort of competition between lover and beloved, hunter and quarry.<sup>198</sup> And furthermore, beautiful boys could certainly compete with one another for the affections of would-be lovers, though such behavior was generally frowned upon.<sup>199</sup> So while Aeschines admits that he himself is a lover of boys, who has in fact been quite zealous and rivalrous in his pursuit of them, he uses his own behavior to offer the jury an image of the proper conduct and the proper character of a noble erotic competitor. But when he describes Timarchos as the object of erotic rivalry, it is important to remember that such a role does not denote merely a passive prize, waiting to be awarded to the winner of the contest, but is rather a competitor in his own right, albeit one with different (and even more problematic) expectations. Thus, putting to the side for the moment Aeschines' appeals to the laws, as well as his suggestions about the contamination of Timarchos' body, we can see in the arguments that he makes on the basis of *character* the contention that Timarchos' inability to conduct himself properly in the realm of erotic competition should disqualify him from any participation in political competition.

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<sup>196</sup> For which, see Dover 1989, Foucault 1985, Cohen 1991, Fisher 2001, and Davidson 2007.

<sup>197</sup> ὁρῶν δὲ τὴν τε πόλιν μεγάλα βλαπτομένην ὑπὸ Τιμάρχου τουτουὶ δημηγοροῦντος παρὰ τοὺς νόμους, καὶ αὐτὸς ἰδίᾳ συκοφαντούμενος... ('seeing that the city is being greatly harmed by this here Timarchos' public speaking contrary to the laws, and that I myself am privately suffering a frivolous prosecution...,' I.1).

<sup>198</sup> Cf. e.g. Cohen 1991: 183 on Plato *Symp.* 181a-5b.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Yates 2005, Dover 1989: 84-85 notes that 'Right' in Arist. *Clouds* 979-83 criticizes the boy who tries to seduce the lover, "acting as his own procurer with his eyes." The classic example of the beloved chasing the lover is Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*.

The first strong indication that Aeschines intends for the jury to think of Timarchos not just as a passive prostitute, but as an inappropriate competitor, is his description of Timarchos' recent disruption in the assembly as a nude pankration:

...ρίψας θοιμάτιον γυμνὸς ἐπαγκρατίαζεν ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, οὕτω κακῶς καὶ αἰσχρῶς διακείμενος τὸ σῶμα ὑπὸ μέθης καὶ βδελυρίας ὥστε τοὺς γε εὖ φρονούντας ἐγκαλύψασθαι, αἰσχυνθέντας ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως, εἰ τοιούτοις συμβούλοις χρώμεθα.

...casting off his cloak, he fought a pankration naked in the assembly, his body in such an awful and shameful/ugly condition from the drinking and debauchery that those at least with any sense covered their faces, ashamed for the city at the notion of using men like that as advisors. (26)

We don't know exactly what transpired that day in the assembly, or what the issue was that so exercised Timarchos, but Aeschines claims that he threw off his cloak and (metaphorically) competed in the most brutal of Greek contact sports, the 'mixed martial arts' pankration. Later, he describes the scene again as a pankration, adding that the Athenians were compelled to enact a new law to prevent such disruptions in the future (33). Most people, probably rightly, take Aeschines' metaphorical use of the verb παγκρατιάζω here to suggest some sort of harangue involving wild gesticulations (so in *LSJ*), rather than an actual fight. Although the word is used nowhere else in such a way, a fight in the assembly would have been a much greater offense, and Aeschines surely would have dwelt more on the topic, describing the violence and the ὕβρις of the event in some detail. One further question is whether or not Aeschines envisions the pankration as waged against the entire assembly or against one or more of Timarchos' personal enemies in the assembly. I think the sense must be the latter, since, as we will see, the members of the assembly are figured, not as opponents, but as spectators. But if Timarchos' pankration was merely a speech, then what kind of speech was it?

Surely it was a violently competitive speech. The verb παγκρατιάζω only appears a handful of times, but interestingly, both Plato and Isocrates<sup>200</sup> use it when describing the illegitimate use of violent athletic or military skills against one's friends, as a parallel for the illegitimate use of rhetorical skills. In his defense of the teachers of rhetoric, Gorgias argues that they should not be blamed if their students use the art in the wrong way:

καὶ γὰρ τῇ ἄλλῃ ἀγωνίᾳ οὐ τούτου ἔνεκα δεῖ πρὸς ἅπαντας χρῆσθαι ἀνθρώπους, ὅτι ἔμαθεν πυκτεύειν τε καὶ παγκρατιάζειν καὶ ἐν ὅπλοις μάχεσθαι, ὥστε κρείττων εἶναι καὶ φίλων καὶ ἐχθρῶν, οὐ τούτου ἔνεκα τοὺς φίλους δεῖ τύπτειν οὐδὲ κεντεῖν τε καὶ ἀποκτείνουσαι.

Indeed, neither should one use other kinds of competition against all men just because he has learned to box and fight the pankration and fight with weapons, so as to be stronger than both friends and enemies – not for that reason should he beat his friends nor should he stab and kill them. (*Gorg.* 456.d)

But the comparison between rhetoric and the pankration that Aeschines is making is very different from the one that Gorgias makes. The problem that Gorgias envisions is the use of

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<sup>200</sup> *Ant.* 252.4. Isocrates is probably imitating Plato.

any competitive skill, whether that skill is verbal or combat-oriented, against one's friends instead of one's proper opponents. And as the context of the dialogue makes clear, the particular kind of abuse of rhetoric that Gorgias and Socrates have in mind would involve some kind of deception or harmful flattery of the masses, the *demos*, who are thus designated as φίλοι. Timarchos' transgression, on the other hand, is more complicated.

First of all, he is conflating two different types of competition, which have different rules. Rhetorical competition is supposed to be non-violent; and this should be especially true in the assembly, where everyone should be considered primarily as fellow-citizens, and only secondarily as personal friends or enemies. But Timarchos has let his private enmity get the better of him, and he seems to have attacked his opponent with excessive vehemence. Though his words probably were violent enough, it must have been the physical gestures that inspired Aeschines to describe the speech as a pankration. In particular, the casting off of the cloak may have been an attempt to intimidate his opponent, and it may have reminded Aeschines of an athlete disrobing in preparation for a good pummelling. The use of gestures during the delivery of a speech was commonplace enough, and by the time of Quintilian, of course, it had become a science,<sup>201</sup> but Timarchos' use of gestures here shows him to be out of control and overly aggressive.

Another, perhaps even more important, aspect of Timarchos' transgression involves his behavior, not toward his opponent, but toward the main body of the assembly. After all, we should note that Aeschines does not even mention the opponent at all, but he describes the assembly's reaction to Timarchos' speech in some detail. Unlike the scenario in the *Gorgias*, Timarchos is not accused of seeking to deceive or flatter the audience with his rhetoric, but there may be a veiled accusation that he tried to seduce them in a much more concrete sense. In short, in addition to illegitimately smuggling athletic competition into an arena for rhetorical competition, Timarchos has also smuggled in erotic competition. And it is this latter transgression that Aeschines emphasizes. I suggested that the casting off of the cloak was an act of aggression, and that it was that act that inspired Aeschines to call the harangue a pankration; however, what Aeschines emphasizes is rather Timarchos' resulting nudity. In fact, it is the comparison with an image of Solon, who kept his hand tucked into his cloak (as if to conceal as much skin as possible), that brings the event to Aeschines' mind.<sup>202</sup> Timarchos is a slave to physical pleasures, he needs desperately to be desired sexually, but sadly he is now past his prime and, according to Aeschines, is in terrible physical condition. Could his nude pankration be a desperate attempt to display his body in a way that might capture a desiring gaze or two? We know that athletes, and particularly those who engaged in the more manly and serious combat sports, were indeed a common object of homosexual desire. Dover cites a Greek epigram, in which the author boasts of kissing a boxer "smeared all over with blood."<sup>203</sup> But the proper goal of athletic competition is to win honor for oneself and one's city; so even as a kind of violent athletic competition, Timarchos' speech is all wrong. In so much as he is engaged in a rhetorical competition, he is reproached for making it an athletic competition; and in so much as he is engaged in an athletic competition, he is reproached for making it an erotic competition or seduction. And what makes that erotic competition not just illegitimate, but shameful and repulsive is the fact that Timarchos is too old and too ugly to be displaying himself in such a way.

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<sup>201</sup> In particular *Inst. Or.* xi. See Fantham 1982 and Gunderson 2000.

<sup>202</sup> On this statue and other representations of intellectuals, see Zanker 1996.

<sup>203</sup> Dover 1978: 69. *Greek Anthology, i: Hellenistic Epigrams*, 30. Dover cites this epigram, along with other evidence for the Greek ideal of tough, manly beauty, by way of contrast with Aeschines' description of Timarchos' physique; but interestingly, he never mentions Aeschines' use of the language of combat sport and translates ἐπαγκρατίαζεν simply "in the course of a passionate speech."

In addition to the explicitly agonistic metaphor of a pankration, the evaluative terms that Aeschines uses to describe Timarchos also help to characterize him as competitive in improper ways. He certainly wants to describe Timarchos in such a way as to emphasize his deviation from the accepted norms of society. Indeed, Aeschines says that he wants to examine τούς τρόπους τούς Τιμάρχου, ἵν' εἰδῆτε ὅσον διαφέρουσι τῶν νόμων τῶν ὑμετέρων ('the character of Timarchos, so that you may know how far it differs from your laws,' 1.37). As Timarchos' τρόποι are being contrasted with the jury member's νόμοι, we might take νόμοι to mean not only 'the laws' but also 'customs, traditions, etc.' But the terms he uses also have important agonistic connotations. In particular, words from the root αἰσχ-, usually translated by 'shame' or 'ugliness,' appear 49 times in the speech, and words from the root σωφρ-, usually translated by 'temperance' or 'moderation,' appear 28 times. As we are often reminded, both groups of words reflect the differences between the moral preoccupations and evaluations of ancient Greece and that of modern, western cultures; and thus neither term has an exact equivalent in English. In general terms, however, we can say that αἰσχύνη commonly has to do with one's attitude toward τιμή, 'honor,' and that σωφροσύνη quite often (and particularly in this speech) has to do with the control of one's desires. And it is also fair to say that the combination of a man's attitude toward honor and his ability to control his desires will go a long way toward describing the manner in which he will compete with others.

The legitimacy of the distinction between 'shame-cultures' and 'guilt-cultures' – along with the notion that ancient Greece should be placed in the former category – has been, at least partially, challenged by Cairns and others.<sup>204</sup> The original idea was that a shame-culture is one that relies on 'external sanctions' to regulate behavior, while a guilt-culture relies on 'internal sanctions.' But, as Cairns points out, the emotion of shame is always "a matter of the self's judging the self in terms of some ideal that is one's own" and thus reflects just as much of an internal sanction as does guilt. And at any rate, all societies will necessarily have both internal and external sanctions, though of course they may have them in differing (not easily quantifiable) proportions. Nonetheless, although he dispenses with such an over-simplified, and often ideologically fraught, distinction, he does acknowledge that the ancient Greeks appear to have placed a particularly great emphasis on reputation, honor, and appearance. And he suggests that the association of shame with visual imagery, with the feeling of being "under scrutiny, even the scrutiny of oneself" might offer "more hope of a broad distinction in character between societies which tend to construe their moral experience in terms which suggest shame and those which do so in terms of guilt," even if, again, this distinction should not be overestimated.<sup>205</sup> It is clear, at any rate, that the notion of honor, τιμή, is central to the meaning of αἰδώς, 'shame' (which can often be translated as 'guilt,' or even 'embarrassment').<sup>206</sup> In Homer, αἰσχρόν, 'ugly,' describes something that is disgraceful, for which the reaction is usually αἰδώς, 'shame.'<sup>207</sup> And the noun αἰσχύνη eventually comes to be used in a subjective sense basically equivalent to αἰδώς.<sup>208</sup> Thus, when Aeschines constantly refers to Timarchos' lack of

<sup>204</sup> Cairns 1993. The original application of the distinction between shame cultures and guilt cultures to ancient Greece was by Dodds 1962. See also Williams 1993.

<sup>205</sup> Cairns 1993: 45-6

<sup>206</sup> He does challenge Adkins' suggestion that shame and honor in Homer appealed more strongly to 'the competitive virtues' (courage, martial skill, etc.) than to 'the cooperative virtues' (justice, moderation, etc.), and he demonstrates that an appeal to one's shame (or to one's honor) could be an inducement to either cooperation or competition. However, that revision does not have direct bearing on questions about the competition *for* honor, in which the grounds for victory might be superiority of any kind, cooperative or competitive. See also Long 1970.

<sup>207</sup> Cairns 1993: 60.

<sup>208</sup> *Idem* 175, n. 100.

αἰσχύνῃ, he characterizes him as unconcerned with his own τιμή, and immune to any appeal on the basis thereof. If we accept the notion that honor was, to some degree, a scarce commodity, and that, at least among the elites, there was an on-going contest taking place for which honor was the prize, then we can see the agonistic connotations of Aeschines' line of attack.

Timarchos' nude pankration demonstrated his shamelessness and his divergence from the norms of the rest of the community. The first time Aeschines mentions the pankration, he draws a connection between the 'ugliness' of Timarchos' body and the shame that Solon, and the other rhetors of old exhibited when they spoke: ἐκεῖνοι μὲν γε ἡσχύνοντο ἔξω τὴν χεῖρα ἔχοντες λέγειν, οὐτοσὶ δὲ...αἰσχροῦς διακείμενος τὸ σῶμα... ('those men felt enough shame to keep their hands tucked in when they spoke, but this man...with his ugly body..., 1.26). Thus the visual disgrace of Timarchos' nudity, which should rightly cause him to feel shame regardless of the condition of his body, is considerably heightened by his ugliness. What is more, faced with this spectacle, the assembly members themselves felt shame at the fact that such a man could be an advisor to the city, so much so that the sensible ones covered their faces. Dover appears to suggest that the assembly members felt shame solely on account of Timarchos' ugliness,<sup>209</sup> but it seems to me rather that it is Timarchos' general lack of shame – demonstrated by his treating the assembly as though it were a gymnasium full of his *erastai* – that causes the feeling of shame in the viewers, and that it is the visual (as well as etymological) connection between ugliness and shame that makes Aeschines' dig at Timarchos' appearance even more pointed.

When Aeschines mentions the 'beautiful' pankration again (τὸ καλὸν παγκράτιον, 1.33), he uses Timarchos' shamelessness to draw a contrast between the shame-based sanctions of Greek agonistic society and the legal sanctions reserved for more extreme, otherwise incorrigible behavior, and to explain why Timarchos must be subject to the latter, more severe sanctions. Again, he notes that the spectators were ashamed at the event, to an extraordinary degree (ὑπεραἰσχυνθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ πράγματι, 1.33). As a result, they passed a new law that, at each assembly, one tribe would be selected to stand guard over the platform. Aeschines explains:

...ἔστι δ' οὐδὲν ὄφελος, ὦ Ἀθηναῖοι, ζητεῖν τοὺς τοιούτους ἀνθρώπους ἀπελαύνειν ἀπὸ τοῦ βήματος ταῖς κραυγαῖς· οὐ γὰρ αἰσχύνονται· ἀλλὰ τιμωρίαις τούτους ἀπεθίζειν χρή.

...but it is no use, my fellow Athenians, to seek to drive men such as this off the platform with shouts, for they have no shame; but you must correct their habits with punishments. (1.34)

Thus, with no shame, no concern for honor, Timarchos has obviously placed himself entirely outside of his society's elite competition for honor, which implies, on the one hand, that he will be impervious to the extra-legal sanctions on behavior that function through an appeal to one's honor, and, on the other hand, that when he does compete, he will be competing for other, dishonorable rewards.

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<sup>209</sup> Dover 1974: 238: "Abroad, one may on occasion be ashamed of one's compatriot, in the sense that one does not want foreigners to draw any conclusions about oneself from observation of someone else. It seems to us more unusual when Aiskhines i 26 alleges that when Timarkhos spoke in the assembly decent men were embarrassed and ashamed that they should be addressed by a fellow-citizen who had allowed his figure and muscular development to deteriorate so shockingly."



Along with these charges of 'shamelessness,' Aeschines also repeatedly reproaches Timarchos for a lack of σωφροσύνη. Contrary to Dover's claim that Demosthenes 26.25 is the only place in the orators where "ἀκρασία is antithetic to σωφροσύνη,"<sup>210</sup> Aeschines makes the contrast very clear when, in his explanation of the difference between good and bad pederasty, he says that the jury can see in the great poets ὅσον κεχωρίσθαι ἐνόμισαν τοὺς σώφρονας καὶ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐρῶντας, καὶ τοὺς ἀκρατεῖς ὧν οὐ χρὴ καὶ τοὺς ὑβριστάς ('how great a distinction they thought there was between the temperate, the lovers of their equals, and those unable to control their desires for improper things, committers of outrage, 1.141). Foucault, in his discussion of ἐγκρατεία, 'self-control' (which is the antonym for ἀκρασία) explains its significance for the competitiveness of Greek culture: "this combative relationship with adversaries was also an agonistic relationship with oneself."<sup>211</sup> The control of one's desires was imagined as a sort of contest, in which the ἐγκρατής always emerged the victor, and the ἀκρατής was always defeated. Foucault acknowledges that ἐγκρατεία and σωφροσύνη were often employed together but suggests that only the former term meant 'self-mastery,' while the latter term signified 'proper or just action' in a far more general sense. But I suggest that it would be more accurate to say that ἐγκρατεία deals only with the personal competition waged with oneself, whereas σωφροσύνη (at least in its most common use in the orators) assumes that that personal competition has already been won and goes on to draw conclusions about what kind of behavior such self-mastery will imply in the arena of interpersonal competition. This suggestion is not inconsistent with Aristotle's claim that there is no real struggle in σωφροσύνη because the σώφρων man will not be subject to any potentially overwhelming desires. The struggle may indeed be long over, but there is nevertheless an agonistic connotation, as we see in passages like *Lys.* 21.19: διὰ τέλους τὸν πάντα χρόνον κόσμιον εἶναι καὶ σώφρονα καὶ μὴθ' ὑφ' ἡδονῆς ἠττηθῆναι... (to be orderly and temperate at all times until the end and neither to be defeated by pleasure...)<sup>212</sup> However, the upshot of Aristotle's distinction at *EN* 3.10-23 is that ἀκολασία, or lack of σωφροσύνη, is blameworthy, since it is a matter of choice, while ἀκρασία is not; and such a distinction is very important in a discussion about the long-standing philosophical problem of the possibility of ἀκρασία.<sup>213</sup> But Aeschines clearly intends both terms as matters of reproach. We could say that Aeschines wants to have it both ways, portraying Timarchos' lack of control as both a matter of choice *and* a matter of weakness; and in ordinary usage, such a contradiction is hardly glaring.<sup>214</sup>

Rademaker, in a recent monograph on the concept of σωφροσύνη, argues that there is only a sort of Wittgensteinian 'family resemblance' between the many different senses of the term. He rightly dismisses the traditional division of the different uses into 'intellectual' versus 'moral,' since there is often a moral connotation to the more intellectual uses. Instead he suggests as broad categories those uses which primarily emphasize 'self-interest' and those which primarily concern one's 'conduct vis-à-vis others.'<sup>215</sup> While he

<sup>210</sup> Dover 1974: 10.

<sup>211</sup> Foucault 1985: 67. He makes (too strong) a distinction between σωφροσύνη and ἐγκρατεία, but does note that the two are often synonymous.

<sup>212</sup> The less nuanced definition that Aristotle's offers in the *Rhetoric* for σωφροσύνη is simply 'comporting oneself in relation to the pleasures of the body as the law (or custom) demands' (σωφροσύνη δὲ ἀρετὴ δι' ἣν πρὸς τὰς ἡδονὰς τὰς τοῦ σώματος οὕτως ἔχουσιν ὡς ὁ νόμος κελεύει, 1366b.13).

<sup>213</sup> See especially Plato *Prot.* 358db-e and *Rep.* 439.

<sup>214</sup> The standards for intentionality and blame are naturally not as strict in the orators as they are in the philosophers. Thus, the author of the *Rhet. ad Alex.* suggests that, when the jury is assessing the penalty, the prosecutor should try to demonstrate that the crime was intentional; and if that is impossible, he should argue that the defendant should be punished nonetheless (1427a).

<sup>215</sup> Rademaker 2005: 9.

discovers some eighteen different uses, he suggests that the ones that are found in Euripides, Aristophanes, and the orators "are probably to be bracketed as conforming rather more closely to ordinary language use."<sup>216</sup> In the orators (as in Aristophanes), he identifies three different senses: "(i) control of desires and emotions, (ii) aversion to injustice and violence, and (iii) aversion to πράγματα and inexperience with lawsuits."<sup>217</sup> Clearly the first sense is primarily concerned with the agent's relation to himself, and the second and third are primarily concerned with his conduct vis-à-vis others. Rademaker argues (rightly, I think) that, for adult males, the first sense was *the* prototypical meaning of σωφροσύνη (for women, he suggests that it was 'fidelity,' and for boys 'quietness'). His notion of prototypicality involves the ease of activation of a particular use, "without a great deal of contextual preparations," but also the assumption that prototypical uses of a term "should be likely to reflect current and relevant norms of everyday life, rather than the constructs of high literature or philosophical discourse."<sup>218</sup> Thus, part of the rationale for identifying 'control of desires' as the prototypical meaning of σωφροσύνη for adult males is that such a use would be more relevant to their lives than any of the more specialized uses. On the one hand, there is some evidence that 'control of desires' was the most easily activated use;<sup>219</sup> on the other hand, it is not entirely clear why, say, 'aversion to injustice or violence' would be any less relevant to everyday life. I do think, however, that we can draw a more explicit connection between the three uses found in the orators, and that we can see a logic in the movement from the first, prototypical sense, to the other two senses – and that we can do so specifically by thinking about their agonistic connotations.

At the beginning of Aristotle's discussion of forensic rhetoric, he suggests that there are two explanations for why people choose to commit crimes: wickedness and lack of self-control: δι' ἃ δὲ προαιροῦνται βλάπτειν καὶ φαῦλα ποιεῖν παρὰ τὸν νόμον κακία ἐστὶν καὶ ἀκρασία ('the reasons they choose to harm and to do base acts against the law are badness and lack of self-control,' *Rhet.* 1368b). Again, Aristotle's use of the term ἀκρασία is meant to suggest that criminal acts may not always be strictly intentional or premeditated. But nonetheless, it is important to remember that, while it may seem that σωφροσύνη is often merely a synonym for δικαιοσύνη, or a similar term, its prototypical meaning for adult males was the 'control of desires,' and that the controlling of one's desires was generally understood to be an enormous factor in one's ability to refrain from criminal behavior. Thus I suggest that describing a man as lacking in σωφροσύνη can tell us a great deal about his competitive stance both toward himself *and* toward society (either of which may be emphasized according to the context): he has failed in his own personal contest, as his base desires have conquered him (regardless of whether his defeat was by choice or not); and being thus left at the mercy of those desires, he will be bound to ignore the rules of fair play in the competition with his peers, if only he can satisfy those desires.<sup>220</sup> Furthermore, this kind of illegitimate, unbridled competitiveness can manifest itself either in criminal behavior *or* in overly litigious behavior, thus linking together the second and third senses that Rademaker identifies in the orators.<sup>221</sup>

<sup>216</sup> *Idem* 275.

<sup>217</sup> *Idem* 225.

<sup>218</sup> *Idem* 35.

<sup>219</sup> Rademaker notes, e.g., that many philosophers assume that meaning alone.

<sup>220</sup> Note also that Aristotle says that both virtue and political science are entirely concerned with pleasures and pains, since the man who uses them well will be good, and the one who uses them badly will be bad, *EN* 2.3.10.

<sup>221</sup> The classic overly-litigious character is Philocleon, who is described as φιληλιαστικός (*Wasps* 88). Aristotle notes that *philo-* words are used to describe people who like things that they should not like, or like them more than most people, or like them in the wrong manner; and he associates the words with the ἀκόλαστοι, those lacking *sophrosune* (*EN* 1118b.22).

In the contrast (quoted above) that Aeschines makes between the temperate men, the *σώφρονες*, and those who cannot control their desires, the *ἀκρατεῖς*, we should note that he further describes the *ἀκρατεῖς* as *ὑβρισταί*, 'those who commit acts of outrage,' thus making the same connection that Aristotle made between lack of self-control and criminal behavior. An act of *ὑβρις* was in legal contexts a very serious crime, potentially punishable by death, and while it covered a wide range of behaviors, the common element appears to have been the notion that the act was perpetrated with the primary intention of harming the victim's honor.<sup>222</sup> Interestingly, Aeschines makes it clear that the victim of Timarchos' *ὑβρις* was actually himself – which should not be all that surprising given Timarchos' complete imperviousness to shame and the sanctions of honor.

As I mentioned before, this speech is part of the feud between Aeschines and Demosthenes; and indeed, even though the bulk of it is directed at Timarchos, Demosthenes, who was delivering a speech (which did not survive) on behalf of Timarchos, is not given any immunity from attack. As we will see, Aeschines begins his characterization of Demosthenes as a shameless verbal technician in this speech. And furthermore, he was able to enhance his subtle attacks on Demosthenes' own brand of 'self-prostitution,' i.e. the writing of speeches for pay, by associating him with Timarchos. In what follows, we will have occasion to return to Aeschines 1, but we will concentrate primarily on the subsequent speeches to see how the two men confront each other more directly.

### 3. A contest of *epideixis*

As I mentioned above, one feature of a forensic agon that differentiates it from a tragic agon is the absence of well balanced, symmetrical characters or viewpoints. Of course, the litigants are real people rather than fictionalized characters, and they cannot push the bounds of believability too far in their characterizations either of their opponents or of themselves. As we would expect, they will certainly try to exploit any mannerisms or biographical information that can be used to harm their opponent's integrity. But one remarkable fact, which we would not be able to appreciate fully if these pairs of speeches by Demosthenes and Aeschines had not survived, is just how similar the strategies of both litigants are when they seek to tarnish their opponent's character.

Both Demosthenes and Aeschines, each as depicted by the other, are deceivers and charlatans (magician, siren).<sup>223</sup> Both have ignoble and/or questionable lineage.<sup>224</sup> Both take bribes and have little concern for the welfare of the polis.<sup>225</sup> And, most importantly for my purposes, both men are incapable of competing in a fair or legitimate manner. One fairly straightforward way that both men are characterized as unfair competitors is that they are both charged with continually trying to silence their opposition<sup>226</sup> (a very common topos in the other orators as well). But, more importantly, both are reproached for trying to turn the trial into an epideictic competition of one type or another.

Within the parameters of these general charges of illegitimate competitiveness, there are indeed some striking differences between the strategies that each man employs. And

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<sup>222</sup> For a detailed study of *ὑβρις* see Fisher 1992. His definition on p. 1: "*hybris* is essentially the serious assault on the honour of another, which is likely to cause shame, and lead to anger and attempts at revenge."

<sup>223</sup> There are 24 instances of words with the stem *ψευδ-* (deceptive, false) in Dem. 19 and 20 alongside 33 in Aesch. 2 and 3. Aeschines is accused of telling greater lies than any man in history (Dem. 19.97), and Demosthenes is said to be unable to tell the truth even by accident (Aesch. 2.153).

<sup>224</sup> Aesch. 2.23, 2.180 and Dem. 19.199-200.

<sup>225</sup> Aesch. 2.166 and Dem. 19.9 and *passim*.

<sup>226</sup> E.g. Aesch. 2.1 and Dem. 19.26.

several scholars have suggested that a kind of balance does emerge from these speeches between the characters, or caricatures, that each man paints of his opponent. Worman suggests that Aeschines, the blusterer, represents one extreme version of the misuse of one's voice, and Demosthenes, the chatterbox, represents the opposite extreme.<sup>227</sup> Gotteland focuses on the attention drawn to both voice and gesture, the two parts of 'rhetorical action,' and concludes that each man – Aeschines, 'the siren,' and Demosthenes, the 'enchanter' – represents a different kind of dangerous deviation from σωφροσύνη. But for both men, she argues, "il s'agit de montrer que l'action oratoire participe directement au processus de séduction de l'auditoire, à ce charme, cette ψυχαγωγία qui opère soit par les yeux, soit par les oreilles."<sup>228</sup>

This subtle symmetry in their characterizations of each other may emerge from the fact that they really were 'opposite' types of rhetors in some sense. But one striking feature of the speeches between Demosthenes and Aeschines is that, while it may appear that both men present their own rhetoric as *pragmatic* and the other's as *epideictic* (and thus illegitimately competitive), in actuality each man fully acknowledges and accepts the epideictic nature of the competition and merely tries to disqualify his opponent for overemphasizing a particular *aspect* of epideixis. Thus, each litigant is, in essence, claiming superiority for his own particular brand of epideictic rhetoric. Aeschines is charged with overemphasizing rhetorical *delivery*, and Demosthenes with overemphasizing rhetorical *composition*. Both faults were clearly capable of suggesting unfair competition. Just as Timarchos was shown to be an illegitimate competitor when he turned a political agon in the assembly into a particularly shameless version of an erotic competition, we will see that Aeschines keeps trying (according to Demosthenes) to turn the legal agon into a tragic agon; while Demosthenes keeps trying to turn it into (for lack of a better term) a sophistic agon. Thus each is accused of turning a legal agon into a different type of epideictic agon, one judged on the basis of the δύναμις of delivery and the other on the basis of the δύναμις of composition.

Like the tragic agons that we examined in the last chapter, the legal contests between Demosthenes and Aeschines are also ἀμιλλαι λόγων in several different senses: they are competitions by means of words; competitions, to a significant extent, judged on the basis of rhetorical ability; and they are also competitions in which rhetoric and rhetorical competition appear as themes.<sup>229</sup> Unlike the tragic agons, the stakes here are certainly higher. Accordingly, from a more modern perspective, one might imagine that the gravity of the situation would result in more attention to the facts and less to rhetorical style and technique. But it is important to remember that, as a contest between two self-professed rhetors, it can hardly fail to be a 'rhetorical' competition. This is not to say that the content, the policy, was not a very important part of the rhetorical ability being assessed: a rhetor's job was to speak *well* in terms of both λόγος and ἔργον. But I suspect that the jury would have given little credence to the most serious charges leveled by each of the litigants.<sup>230</sup> So I propose that we take the parts of the speeches that deal directly with

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<sup>227</sup> Worman 2004.

<sup>228</sup> Gotteland 2006: 607-8.

<sup>229</sup> However, the speeches are not, of course, part of a broader competition between playwrights. And the contrast that is drawn between Demosthenes and Aeschines is not at all like that in the first agon of the *Andromache*, e.g., where one woman is represented as highly competitive and the other as overly uncompetitive; nor is it like the agon in the *Phoenician Women*, where the two brothers are competitive in diametrically opposed ways, one more or less in accordance with *nomos*, and one in accordance with his own conception of *physis*. In these trial speeches, on the other hand, each man represents himself as the tireless champion of the *demos* and its laws and his opponent as illegitimately competitive in one way or another.

<sup>230</sup> Cawkwell 1978 argued that there was little merit to Demosthenes' claim that Philip's influence had created a 'crop of traitors' (Dem. 18.61), though Cargill 1985 disagrees.

rhetorical ability as the real content of the speeches, the *more* relevant parts, and that we understand the rather sophisticated arguments, which attempt to prove all manner of outrageous allegations, primarily as *demonstrations* of the speaker's own rhetorical ability. After all, the pivotal question that is being debated in both pairs of speeches is 'who has harmed the city with his speeches, and who has helped it?' And the quality of the speeches delivered at the trials must necessarily serve as direct evidence.<sup>231</sup>

Both in Demosthenes' prosecution speech *On the False Embassy* and in his defense speech *On the Crown*, he refers several times to Aeschines' powerful, sonorous voice, his exaggeratedly majestic movements, and his former profession as a third-string actor.<sup>232</sup> As both Gotteland (2006) and Easterling (1999) point out, these references to Aeschines' theatrical abilities are part of a strategy of impeaching Aeschines' credibility. Words related to ἀπάτη (deceit), φέναξ (cheat), and ψεῦδος (lie) abound. In contrast, Demosthenes claims, naturally, that his own speech is simple and straightforward (19.179). But, as often occurs in a heated and highly developed rhetorical contest, there is a sort of overdetermination of motivation, and Demosthenes is able to achieve a number of objectives by this strategy. He does indeed impeach Aeschines' credibility, but he also directs the jury's attention, not away from rhetoric and toward 'the facts,' but away from rhetorical delivery (a field in which he must have felt he could not compete with Aeschines) and toward rhetorical composition and argument. He charges Aeschines with attempting to turn the present trial into the wrong kind of contest. This aspect of his characterization of Aeschines is summed up near the end of his speech *On the Crown*:

...καὶ μοι δοκεῖς ἐκ τούτων, Αἰσχίνη, λόγων ἐπίδειξιν τινα καὶ  
φωνασκίας βουλόμενος ποιήσασθαι τοῦτον προελέσθαι τὸν ἄγωνα,  
οὐκ ἀδικήματος οὐδενὸς λαβεῖν τιμωρίαν.

...and on the basis of these facts, Aeschines, you seem to me to have initiated this contest out of a desire to make some sort of display (*epideixis*) of speeches and vocal training, not to receive satisfaction for any injustice. (18.279-80)

Aeschines is an actor through and through and is incapable of competing in a forensic contest without trying to turn it into an epideictic contest. But note that the word ἐπίδειξις is joined to φωνασκία by a καὶ that I would suggest is expegetical: φωνασκία serves to describe the exact nature of the display that Demosthenes believes Aeschines wants to make. So not only can his arguments not be trusted, but the jury must beware of his attempts to make theatrical spectators out of them and thus make them judge the

<sup>231</sup> One might challenge that it seems preposterous that an inconsistent, patently false argument could be offered as a demonstration of good rhetoric; but it seems to me that the Greek audience was willing to give a great deal of leeway when it came to conventional argumentative strategies. For the idea that *dianoia* (whose effects consist of "proving and confuting, rousing emotions – pity, fear, indignation and the like – and also exaggerating and minimising") could be appreciated separately from considerations of character (*ethos*), see Dale 1969: 139-155.

<sup>232</sup> E.g. on his return from the second embassy, where peace was negotiated with Philip, Aeschines reported back to the council, congratulating himself and making all kinds of grandiose promises (19), and then 'priding himself on these remarks, as was to be expected, and appearing to be both a first-class rhetor and a very impressive man, he descended from the podium most majestically' (εὐδοκιμῶν δ' ἐπὶ τούτοις εἰκότως, καὶ δοκῶν καὶ ῥήτωρ ἄριστος εἶναι καὶ ἀνὴρ θαυμαστός, κατέβη μάλᾳ σεμνῶς, 23). See also 2.120, 126, 189, 200, 206, 216-7, 238, 246 ff., 251 ff., 254, 255, 336 ff.; and 3.15, 35, 82, 122, 127, 133, 138, 139, 180, 226, 232, 265, 280, 308.

competition on the basis of the wrong criteria.<sup>233</sup> Likewise, at the end of the embassy speech, Demosthenes makes an almost identical charge, suggesting that, indeed, he has heard that Aeschines' strategy is exactly that: to overawe the jury with his acting ability. *καίτοι καὶ περὶ τῆς φωνῆς ἴσως εἰπεῖν ἀνάγκη· πάνυ γὰρ μέγα καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ φρονεῖν αὐτὸν ἀκούω, ὡς καθυποκρινόμενον ὑμᾶς* ('yet it is perhaps also necessary to speak about his voice; for I hear that he has the greatest confidence also in that, expecting to overwhelm you with his acting abilities,' 19.337). The fact that Demosthenes would feel the need to remind the jury of this particular criticism right at the end of his speech suggests (a) that he recognized just how important rhetorical *δύναμις* was to the trial, (b) that he saw Aeschines' ability as a real threat, and (c) that he also saw in it an excellent opportunity to emphasize his own talents and to create a forceful contrast between the two men's characters.

Although Demosthenes urges the jury to ignore the force of the litigants' rhetorical *delivery*, he does not go so far as to suggest that this contest should be only about facts and not about rhetorical *ability*. Or rather, he recognizes that rhetorical ability, in this case, must be included among the relevant facts. Part of his strategy is certainly to exploit the often discussed Athenian distrust of rhetorical skill, and Gotteland highlights this aspect of his argument very well, noting that he indicates several times that there is an inconsistency between Aeschines' voice (*φωνή*) and his soul (*ψυχή*).<sup>234</sup> But he by no means contents himself with mocking Aeschines' abilities, or with arousing the jury's suspicions of them. At least as important to his argument is the claim that, whatever the dangers of rhetorical expertise may be, he himself is the far better speaker. Indeed, he has no qualms about acknowledging his own skill with a touch of false modesty that only brings more attention to the boast: *κάκεῖν' εὔ οἶδ' ὅτι τὴν ἐμὴν δεινότητα - ἔστω γὰρ* ('and I know this, that my talent/cleverness/impressiveness - well, let it be so,' 19.277).<sup>235</sup>

Far from trying to divert the jury's attention from mere words, he acknowledges that words are largely what these trials are about. In fact, in his speech on the embassy, he criticizes Aeschines for trying to downplay the relevance of mere words to the present contest: *μὴδ' ἀνάσχησθ' ὡς οὐ δεῖ δίκην ὧν εἶπεν ὑποσχεῖν. τίνος γὰρ ἄλλου δεῖ δίκην παρὰ πρέσβεων ἢ λόγων λαμβάνειν;* ('and do not put up with his claim that he should not pay a penalty for what he said; for what else is there to convict ambassadors of besides words?' 19.183). In the speech regarding the awarding of the crown, he puts the present trial in the context of the larger political contest between prominent rhetors. He complains that Aeschines has sought to malign him by comparing him with the venerated rhetors of the past, although no politician in present times can hope to compete with them. Instead, Aeschines must judge him only by his present competition – just as poets, choruses, and athletes are judged only against their contemporaries (18.318). Philammon did not go without a crown because he was weaker than Glaucus of Carystus or any other athlete of the past, but he was crowned victor because he was the best fighter among those who went up against him. Just so, Aeschines must compare Demosthenes only with himself or with any of the other current rhetors; and in that contest, Demosthenes wins:

<sup>233</sup> Gotteland 2006 argues that Demosthenes' character is being compared to that of Cleon. While his strategy of seeking to downplay the 'theatrical' aspect of the contest is certainly similar to Cleon's as represented by Thucydides, it is Aeschines who is the loud blusterer.

<sup>234</sup> Gotteland 2006: 592.

<sup>235</sup> The adjective *δεινός* (along with the noun *δεινότης*) already has two very different meanings in Homer (cf. *LSJ*), where it can either mean 'terrible, frightful' or 'wonderous, strange.' Herodotus is the first to use it to mean 'clever, skillful', which is the basic sense that it has later when applied to rhetoric. But the two original meanings perfectly capture the deep ambivalence the Greeks had about the powers of rhetorical cleverness. And given that it can just as easily have negative connotations as it can positive, it is perhaps remarkable that Demosthenes applies it to himself (as we saw Isocrates do at *Ant.* 36).

ὦν, ὅτε μὲν τῇ πόλει τὰ βέλτισθ' ἐλέσθαι παρῆν, ἐφαιμίλλου τῆς εἰς τὴν πατρίδ' εὐνοίας ἐν κοινῷ πᾶσι κειμένης, ἐγὼ κράτιστα λέγων ἐφαινόμην, καὶ τοῖς ἐμοῖς καὶ ψηφίσμασι καὶ νόμοις καὶ πρεσβείαις ἅπαντα διωκεῖτο, ὑμῶν δ' οὐδείς ἦν οὐδαμοῦ, πλὴν εἰ τούτοις ἐπηρεάσαι τι δέοι.

...(the current rhetors), among whom, when the city was able to choose the best course of action, when a public contest was set up for all over patriotism toward the fatherland, I was shown to speak the best/most powerfully, and all matters were arranged according to my votes, laws, and embassies, while not one of you was anywhere, unless you felt some need spitefully to oppose those policies. (18.320)

There is a dual ambiguity in the phrase *κράτιστα λέγων*, which highlights the ethical value placed on competitive superiority. First of all, *κράτιστα* can be either a substantive adjective ('the best things') or an adverb ('in the best manner'), which makes it unclear whether the competition was about giving the best advice or demonstrating the greatest skill at giving advice. And secondly, the root *κράτ-* in its original sense suggests dominance, rule, overpowering, but comes to be used, in comparative and superlative forms, for general approbation.<sup>236</sup> So *κράτιστα λέγω* might simply be taken as, 'I speak the best' (or 'I say the best things'); but here, where the competitiveness of the occasion is emphasized, the original sense of the word is brought out, and Demosthenes is able to hint that he 'crushed' his opponents.

Demosthenes also boasts of his victory over Aeschines in an entirely different type of rhetorical competition: the contest for the honor of giving the funeral oration for those who died at Chaeronea: *χειροτονῶν γὰρ ὁ δῆμος τὸν ἐροῦντ' ἐπὶ τοῖς τετελευτηκόσιν παρ' αὐτὰ τὰ συμβάντα, οὐ σ' ἐχειροτόνησε προβληθέντα, καίπερ εὐφωνον ὄντα...* ('for when the people were voting for someone to speak on behalf of the dead just after the events, they did not vote for you though you were nominated, despite your beautiful voice..., 18.285). He gives a number of reasons why the Athenians would reject Aeschines. They knew of his injustice (and of Demosthenes' patriotism), they saw how he profited from their misfortunes, and they thought that the man to receive such an honor should not be one who shared the home and the cup of their enemy, or who took part in revels over the Athenians' defeat. But the final reason that Demosthenes gives is that the Athenians did not think it proper for the speaker 'to theatrically mourn their fate with his voice, but rather to experience fellow-suffering with his soul' (*μηδὲ τῇ φωνῇ δακρῦειν ὑποκρινόμενον τὴν ἐκείνων τύχην, ἀλλὰ τῇ ψυχῇ συναλγεῖν*, 18.287).<sup>237</sup> The opposition between *φωνή* and *ψυχή* is a clear variation on the *λόγος/ ἔργον* opposition: Aeschines is nothing but a voice, but Demosthenes speaks with his soul, and thus his *λόγος* reflects an *ἔργον*, a real substance. However, there is another point, which should not be missed. Demosthenes is mentioning a precedent, another contest in which he was deemed the superior rhetor; and the reason for Aeschines' defeat was, at least in part, that he was a less persuasive, less believable orator. So surely it would be very odd for him to defeat Demosthenes now.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Chantraine: *κράτος* comes from a root expressing the notion of 'durability,' but signifies (especially physical) force, and hence 'victoire, pouvoir, souveraineté.'

<sup>237</sup> Gotteland 2006: 594 highlights this passage to show why Aeschines' theatrical background made him untrustworthy.

Even when Demosthenes mocks Aeschines for the sheer loudness of his voice in his speech on the embassy, and contrasts it with his own quietness, he makes a point of asserting his rhetorical dominance:

τίνα δὲ φθέγγεσθαι μέγιστον ἀπάντων καὶ σαφέστατ' [φήσαιτ'] ἂν εἰπεῖν ὅτι βούλοιτο τῇ φωνῇ; Αἰσχίνην οἶδ' ὅτι τουτονί. τίνα δ' οὔτοι μὲν ἄτολμον καὶ δειλὸν πρὸς τοὺς ὄχλους φασὶν εἶναι, ἐγὼ δ' εὐλαβῆ; ἐμέ· οὐδὲν γὰρ πώποτ' οὔτ' ἠνώχλησα οὔτε μὴ βουλομένους ὑμᾶς βεβίασμαι. οὐκοῦν ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις, ὡσάκις λόγος γέγονε περὶ τούτων, καὶ κατηγοροῦντος ἀκούετέ μου καὶ ἐλέγχοντος αἰεὶ τούτους καὶ λέγοντος ἀντικρυσ ὅτι χρήματ' εἰλήφασι καὶ πάντα πεπράκασι τὰ πράγματα τῆς πόλεως. καὶ τούτων οὐδεὶς πώποτ' ἀκούων ταῦτ' ἀντείπεν οὐδὲ διῆρε τὸ στόμα, οὐδ' ἔδειξεν ἑαυτόν. τί ποτ' οὖν ἐστὶ τὸ αἴτιον ὅτι οἱ βδελυρώτατοι τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει καὶ μέγιστον φθειγόμενοι τοῦ καὶ ἀτολμοτάτου πάντων ἐμοῦ καὶ οὐδενὸς μείζον φθειγόμενου τοσοῦτον ἠττῶνται;

Who would you say speaks the loudest of everyone and says most clearly whatever he wishes with his voice? Surely Aeschines here. And who do those men say is timid and cowardly when addressing the masses, though I call it careful? Me. For I never caused any annoyance, nor have I forced you to do anything against your will. Well, in every assembly, whenever there has been a discussion about these men, you always hear me accusing them and exposing them, saying to their faces that they have taken bribes and have sold out all the interests of the city. And not one of these men, after hearing these charges, spoke a word in opposition, nor even opened his mouth, nor even showed himself. So what in the world is the reason that the most impudent men in the city and the loudest speakers are defeated so soundly by me, the least daring of everyone, and able to speak louder than no one? (19.206-8)

He goes on to explain that the reason he is able to defeat them is that they are paralyzed by the consciousness of their guilt. But again, Demosthenes has presented a picture of another rhetorical competition, this time in the assembly, and he has characterized Aeschines as a loser and himself as a very decisive victor, despite his own vocal shortcomings. He embraces the charge of being ἄτολμος, which of course can be either a positive or a negative term, meaning either 'not brave' or 'not brazen.' In fact, he is quite heroic when it comes to verbal confrontation, always denouncing his enemies to their faces (ἀντικρυσ), while they appear cowardly, not even showing up for the battle. Demosthenes is considered timid only when addressing the masses (πρὸς τοὺς ὄχλους), i.e. the kind of audience before which a voluble actor such as Aeschines thrives; but when it comes to real confrontation, he shows his mettle.

The contrasts that Demosthenes makes between his own rhetorical talents and those of Aeschines, and his suggestions of his own superiority, are not limited to direct assertions; he also seeks to demonstrate, rather than merely assert, his own superiority precisely at those times that he is criticizing or mocking Aeschines' theatricality and vocal power. One way that he does this is simply to make a sort of display of his mastery of sophisticated, syntactically complex composition. For example, at 19.125-7 he makes Aeschines, who is mockingly referred to as ὁ σοφὸς καὶ δεινὸς οὔτος καὶ εὐφρωνος ('that wise and clever



man, not to mention lovely-voiced'), the centerpiece of an enormous periodic sentence beginning with an almost endless subordinate clause:

ἐπειδὴ δ' ἀπώλωλεσαν οἱ Φωκεῖς ὕστερον ἡμέραις πέντ' ἢ ἕξ, καὶ τέλος εἶχε τὸ μίσθωμ' ὥσπερ ἂν ἄλλο τι τούτῳ, καὶ ὁ Δερκύλος ἐκ τῆς Χαλκίδος ἦκεν ἀναστρέψας καὶ ἀπήγγειλεν ὑμῖν ἐκκλησιάζουσιν ἐν Πειραιεῖ ὅτι Φωκεῖς ἀπώλωλασι, καὶ ὑμεῖς, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ταῦτ' ἀκούσαντες εἰκότως κάκεινοις συνήχθεσθε καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐξεπέπληχθε, καὶ παῖδας καὶ γυναῖκας ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν κατακομίζειν ἐψηφίζεσθε καὶ τὰ φρούρι' ἐπισκευάζειν καὶ τὸν Πειραιᾶ τειχίζειν καὶ τὰ Ἡράκλει' ἐν ἄστει θύειν, —ἐπειδὴ ταῦτ' ἦν καὶ τοιαύτη ταραχὴ καὶ τοιοῦτος θόρυβος περιεστήκει τὴν πόλιν, τηνικαῦθ' ὁ σοφὸς καὶ δεινὸς οὔτος καὶ εὐφώνος, οὔτε βουλῆς οὔτε δήμου χειροτονήσαντος αὐτόν, ὥχθετο πρεσβεύων ὡς τὸν ταῦτα πεπονηκότα, οὔτε τὴν ἀρρωστίαν ἐφ' ἣ τότε' ἐξωμόσαθ' ὑπολογισάμενος, οὔθ' ὅτι πρεσβευτῆς ἄλλος ἦρητ' ἀνθ' αὐτοῦ, οὔθ' ὅτι πρεσβευτῆς ἄλλος ἦρητ' ἀνθ' αὐτοῦ, οὔθ' ὅτι τῶν τοιούτων ὁ νόμος θάνατον τὴν ζημίαν εἶναι κελεύει, οὔθ' ὅτι πάνδεινόν ἐστιν ἀπηγγελκόθ' ὡς ἐπικεκήμεναι χρήματ' αὐτῷ ἐν Θήβαις, ἐπειδὴ Θηβαῖοι πρὸς τῷ τὴν Βοιωτίαν ἄπασαν ἔχειν καὶ τῆς Φωκέων χώρας ἐγκρατεῖς γεγόνασι, τηνικαῦτ' εἰς μέσας τὰς Θήβας καὶ τὸ τῶν Θηβαίων στρατόπεδον βαδίζειν.

But when after five or six days the Phocians had been destroyed, and the payment was ended (just as any other payment to him would have), and Derkylos had arrived on his way back from Chalcis and announced to you when you were holding the assembly in Piraeus that the Phocians had been destroyed, and you, my fellow Athenians, after hearing these things, were reasonably both vexed at those men and quite stunned yourselves, and you voted to bring both children and women in from the country and to prepare garrisons and to fortify Piraeus and to celebrate the festival of Herakles in the city, —after these things occurred and such confusion and such tumult surrounded the city, at that time this wise and clever and lovely-voiced man, though neither the council nor the people elected him, set off on an embassy to the man who had done these things, taking no account either of the illness for which he earlier excused himself on oath, nor of the fact that another ambassador had been chosen in place of him, nor that the law commands that the penalty for such acts be death, nor that it is outrageous for him, after announcing that there was a price on his head in Thebes, at the very time when the Thebans, in addition to holding all of Boeotia, had also become masters of the land of the Phocians, to walk right into the middle of Thebes and the encampment of the Thebans. (19.125-7)

This seemingly interminable sentence is ostentatiously removed from both the simplicity of conversational speech and the theatricality of Aeschines' speech, and it leaves little doubt as to who is truly σοφὸς καὶ δεινός.

Another example of Demosthenes' strategy of demonstrating his own superiority in the realm of rhetorical composition while simultaneously mocking Aeschines' theatrical talents is found at the very moment that Demosthenes directly confronts Aeschines' accusations of sophistry and *logographia*. Demosthenes argues that, while Aeschines calls other men sophists and logographers, seeking to commit *hybris* against them, he himself is

liable to the same charges (19.246). For he quotes lines from Euripides' *Phoenix*, even though he himself has never acted the part. Instead, he should have quoted some lines delivered by Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*, since he has often delivered them and knows them by heart – after all, it is a great honor for all third-string actors to play the role of the tyrant. He then goes on to quote from Creon's patriotic speech about his intolerance for unpatriotic citizens. Ober takes this passage as evidence that the masses looked down on specialized education and book-learning.<sup>238</sup> Thus, in his interpretation, Demosthenes would be reproaching Aeschines for digging up some tragic lines from a written text rather than simply delivering lines that he already knew from memory (which would have been perfectly democratic). But if that were Demosthenes' point, then it would make little sense for him to proceed to quote lines from a tragedy that he likewise did not perform and likewise must have dug up from a text. Demosthenes (with some justification) presents Aeschines as very much concerned with demonstrating and justifying his theatrical talents, as well as with denigrating and marginalizing Demosthenes' more forensic talents. So Demosthenes is suggesting that, when Aeschines quoted from the *Phoenix*, he was offering a demonstration of his acting abilities and seeking to contrast those abilities with Demosthenes' dishonorable talents as a speech-writer. But the fact that Aeschines did not choose to perform some relevant passage that he had previously learned for the stage, but instead dug up a different one and memorized it *especially for his trial speech*, suggests some pretension not just to theatrical ability but also to forensic, logographic ability. In that contest, Demosthenes implies, Aeschines loses. Thus his point, at least in part, is that he himself has dug up a better, more persuasive passage – one which supports his argument that Aeschines is a hypocrite, a talentless logographer, and even a bad actor. So it appears that Demosthenes' defense against the charge of *logographia* amounts to a demonstration of his own superiority in that very field: 'I may be a logographer, but you are a worse one.'

If Aeschines is represented as always engaged in a kind of theatrical competition over who has the loudest and the prettiest voice, Demosthenes, in turn, is represented by his opponent as always engaged in a competition for ability in rhetorical composition and sophistication. Just as Aeschines tried to lead the jury astray with his powerful delivery, Demosthenes will try to lead them astray with his subtle and 'sophistic' arguments. Already in the speech against Timarchos, Aeschines warns the jury that some of Demosthenes' students are present at the trial, and that he has promised them that he will transform the contest and the audience's attention without their noticing, thus conducting his profession at the jury's expense (ἐργολαβῶν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς 1.173). Note that, like Aeschines, Demosthenes is here accused of using the courtroom as a platform for an ἐπίδειξις, but there is the added charge that he hopes to gain financially from his display. The jury members are invited to imagine what Demosthenes would say as he returns home after the trial and brags about how he tricked everyone:

ἀπαγαγὼν γὰρ αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν περὶ Τίμαρχον αἰτιῶν, ἐπέστησα φέρων ἐπὶ τὸν κατήγορον καὶ Φίλιππον καὶ Φωκέας, καὶ φόβους ἐπήρτησα τοῖς ἀκροωμένοις, ὥσθ' ὁ μὲν φεύγων κατηγορεῖ, ὁ δὲ κατηγορῶν ἐκρίνετο, οἱ δὲ δικασταί, ὧν μὲν ἦσαν δικασταί, ἐπελάθοντο, ὧν δ' οὐκ ἦσαν κριταί, περὶ τούτων ἤκουον.

For, leading them away from the charges concerning Timarchos, I brought them over and fixed (their attention) on the prosecutor and on Philip and the Phocians, and I stirred up fears in the listeners, so that the defendant was

<sup>238</sup> Ober 1989: 172-3.

prosecuting and the prosecutor was being judged, and the jury members forgot the matters they were there to decide and listened to arguments about matters about which they were not judges. (1.175)

Demosthenes is thus clearly breaking the rules of the game, trying to turn the contest inside out and trick the jury into judging the wrong people on the basis of the wrong criteria about the wrong matters. Note Aeschines' shift at the end of the passage from the word *δικασταί*, a word that refers specifically to *courtroom* judges, those judging on matters of justice, to *κριταί*, which could be judges of any kind of competition, legal, athletic, or otherwise. Demosthenes has transformed the *δικασταί* into judges of an entirely different kind.

But it is also important to notice that at this point in his speech, when Aeschines makes perhaps his most powerful attack on Demosthenes' rhetorical abilities,<sup>239</sup> he does so in a manner that simultaneously emphasizes his own rhetorical talents. In a full demonstration of his mastery of delivery, he takes on the role of Demosthenes, most likely mimicking his gesture and his speaking style. In the speech *Against Ctesiphon*, Aeschines again quotes Demosthenes, mocking his poetic, metaphorical language and his gestures: (3.166), and Demosthenes later complains about the triviality of that imitation (*ρήματα καὶ σχήματα μιμούμενος*, 18.232). But again, we can see that Aeschines' strategy is to denigrate Demosthenes' rhetorical talents and mock the artificiality of his composition, and to do so in a way that simultaneously emphasizes his own talents, by demonstrating his expert control of voice and gesture.

Like Demosthenes, Aeschines also seeks to emphasize the agonistic nature of the trials, often using athletic metaphors; though often, instead of presenting himself as the undisputed champion, as Demosthenes does, he refigures the contest as one between, not Demosthenes and himself, but between Demosthenes and the *δημος*. In the speech against Timarchos, after warning the jury about Demosthenes' deception and sophistry, he compares the trial to a horse race (while also throwing in a military metaphor for good measure):

ὑμέτερον δ' ἐστὶν ἔργον πρὸς ταῦτα ἀντιτετάχθαι, καὶ πανταχῇ παρακολουθοῦντας μηδαμῇ παρεκκλίνειν αὐτὸν ἕαν, μηδὲ τοῖς ἐξαγωνίοις λόγοις δισχυρίζεσθαι· ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς ἵπποδρομίαις εἰς τὸν τοῦ πράγματος αὐτὸν δρόμον εἰσελεύετε.

But it is your job to array yourselves against these tactics, and to follow him everywhere and not allow him to deviate anywhere, nor to give any authority to his extraneous arguments; but just as in the horse races, keep steering him onto the proper track of the matter. (1.176)

Here the charge is very clearly that of cheating in a contest, and the jury is exhorted to remember that part of their duty as judges is to compel the contestants to follow the rules. But in order to do so, they must also array themselves (*ἀντιτετάχθαι*) against the would-be cheater; thus a new contest emerges, this time between the judges and one of the competitors.<sup>240</sup> Again, in the speech against Ctesiphon, Aeschines compares Demosthenes to a wrestler and a boxer. He says that Demosthenes will ask the jury to forgive the arrangement of his speech, promising to address the illegality of Ctesiphon's proposal at the end. But he advises them: *μὴ συγχωρεῖτε, μηδ' ἄγνοεῖθ' ὅτι πάλαισμα τοῦτ' ἐστὶ δικαστηρίου* ('do not give in to him, and don't be ignorant of the fact that this is a

<sup>239</sup> Carey 2000 *ad loc.* notes, "the taunt stung," since Demosthenes responds to it at 19.242.

<sup>240</sup> The idea that the real contest is between the jury and one's opponent is a topos in the orators.

'wrestling throw' of the courtroom,' 3.205). The jury is observing and judging a kind of wrestling match in which one of the wrestlers is attempting to throw and pin, not his opponent, but the whole arena. Aeschines continues with an expansion of the metaphor:

ὥσπερ οὖν ἐν τοῖς γυμνικοῖς ἀγῶσιν ὁρᾶτε τοὺς πύκτας περὶ τῆς  
στάσεως ἀλλήλοις διαγωνιζομένους, οὕτω καὶ ὑμεῖς ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν  
ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως περὶ τῆς τάξεως αὐτῶ τοῦ λόγου μάχεσθε, καὶ μὴ  
ἔατε αὐτὸν ἔξω τοῦ παρανόμου περιστάσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐγκαθήμενοι καὶ  
ἐνεδρεύοντες ἐν τῇ ἀκροάσει εἰσελάυνετε αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς τοῦ  
πράγματος λόγους, καὶ τὰς ἐκτροπὰς αὐτοῦ τῶν λόγων ἐπιτηρεῖτε.

Just as you see boxers in athletic contests competing with each other for position, so must you also fight with him all day long on behalf of the city over the arrangement of his speech, and not allow him to shift outside of the question of illegality, but lying in ambush as you listen, you must steer him into arguments about the matter at hand and watch out for the digressions of his speeches. (3.206)

The participles ἐγκαθήμενοι and ἐνεδρεύοντες, both of which mean to 'lie in ambush,' might suggest the feints of a boxer, but it also may be that, yet again, Aeschines has mixed in some military metaphors.<sup>241</sup> When he says that the jury needs to fight against Demosthenes regarding the arrangement of his speech, the verb μάχεσθαι could refer either to boxing or to a military battle, and the dual meaning of τάξις (an 'arrangement' of any sort, but in particular the drawing up of a battle line) may suggest warfare as well. He also returns here to his metaphor of chariot racing, by repeating the verb εἰσελάυνετε, 'steer' or 'drive.' Such a profusion of agonistic metaphors helps to characterize Demosthenes, once again, as unfairly and illegitimately competitive.

The notion that rhetorical skill, as a distinctly agonistic skill, was comparable to athletic and military skills was nothing new. As we saw above, Plato and Isocrates both compare the misuse of rhetoric to the misuse of pankratic and other athletic and military skills. Aristotle, who tried in some sense to rehabilitate the art of rhetoric from Plato's attacks, also addresses its dangerous powers, but notes that it is a common feature of all good things, with the exception of virtue, that they can be used either for good or for bad (*Rhet.* 1355b). Furthermore, Aristotle continues, it is strange if not being able to defend oneself by means of the body is shameful, while not being able to defend oneself with *logos* is not shameful. But it is worth remarking here on the difference between the way these kinds of athletic and military metaphors are used in oratory and the way they are used in tragedy and comedy. As we saw in the last chapter, a speaker in the tragic agon is more likely to refer to his *own* speech than that of his opponent as a kind of athletic feint or a military maneuver. And in comedy, we can observe some similar cases.<sup>242</sup> In the speeches that were actually presented to a jury, on the other hand, the dictates of good taste surely required that one boasted of one's own rhetorical skill in more subtle ways; and at any rate, the kind of rhetorical skill that could be described by athletic or military metaphors was a matter of reproach, not boasting. Demosthenes and Aeschines use these metaphors to suggest both violent force and deceptive cleverness in their opponents. In an explicitly epideictic format such as the tragic agon, such metaphors could be used to bolster claims of one's own epideictic superiority, whereas in a trial, where the epideictic element of the competition must be very carefully negotiated (and contested), they are far more useful as

<sup>241</sup> Gwatkin *ad loc.*

<sup>242</sup> E.g. *Eq.* 264, *Nub.* 1047.

tools of reproach. The accusation that one's opponent is overly 'athletic' in his manner of speaking is a calculated attempt to divert the jury's trust toward one's own rhetorical style, and is thus itself a transparently agonistic rhetorical move (and I suspect that the audience would have appreciated it as such).

Just as Demosthenes found more or less subtle ways to vaunt his own skills and present himself as the long-standing victor in a series of rhetorical contests with Aeschines, likewise Aeschines feels compelled to show that Demosthenes is not just a sophistic, tricky, wrestler of an orator, but also a *much worse* orator than he himself. So he also describes a past rhetorical contest in which he soundly defeated his current opponent; and this time the decisive factor in the contest was rhetorical delivery. His story begins just before the ambassadors are to address Philip during the first embassy to Macedonia. They are having a discussion about what they should say to Philip, and Cimon (otherwise unknown) expresses his fear that Philip will defeat them with the 'pleading of his case' (ὅτι φοβοῖτο μὴ δικαιολογούμενος περιγένοιτο ἡμῶν ὁ Φίλιππος, 2.21). The word δικαιολογούμενος is perhaps a hint that the contest being narrated here is a kind of *comparandum* for the present trial. In response to Cimon, Demosthenes announces that he possesses 'unstinting torrents of arguments' (πηγὰς δὴ λόγων ἔχειν ἀφθόνους) and that he will speak about Athens' claims to Amphipolis and about the beginning of the war in such a way as to 'sew up Philip's mouth with a dry reed' (ὥστε ἀπορράψειν τὸ Φιλίππου στόμα ὀλοσχοίνῳ ἀβρόχῳ) and will persuade the Athenians to take back Leosthenes (a general convicted of treason and taking refuge in Macedonia) and Philip to give Amphipolis back to the Athenians. Demosthenes is thus consumed with arrogance (ὑπερφανία, 2.22) in regard to his own rhetorical abilities. Whereas Cimon is afraid of defeat, Demosthenes is overly confident that he will be able to reduce Philip to silence. Furthermore, as Aeschines claims the story will demonstrate, Demosthenes suffers from 'excessive envy' (φθόνον ὑπερβάλλοντα),<sup>243</sup> frightful cowardice (δεινὴν δειλίαν), and bad character (κακοήθειαν), and he engages in such plots against his fellow ambassadors and meal-mates that one would not lightly engage in against one's worst enemies. Demosthenes, 'who has left no part of his body unsold, not even the place from which he emits his voice,' (ὁ δὲ οὐδὲν ἄπρατον ἔχων μέρος τοῦ σώματος, οὐδ' ὅθεν τὴν φωνὴν προίεται, 2.23)<sup>244</sup> dares to rail against bribe-taking. The double entendre of the last insult recalls Aeschines' characterization of Timarchos and suggests that Demosthenes is likewise a prostitute; but the emphasis on 'voice' instead of 'mouth' makes it clear that the real prostitution that Demosthenes has engaged in is the selling of speeches, not of sexual favors. Demosthenes cannot accuse anyone of bribe-taking because the very nature of his profession, as a logographer, consists of taking 'bribes' for the writing of speeches.

The real contest, however, that Aeschines wants to relate is of course not the contest between Demosthenes and Philip, but the one between Demosthenes and himself, the contest over who is most able to persuade Philip, and thus who is the best ῥήτωρ; oddly, Philip is thus figured as the judge. Aeschines primes the jury to attend to the contrast: ἀκούσατε δὴ τοὺς τε ἡμετέρους λόγους οὓς εἶπομεν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, καὶ πάλιν οὓς τὸ μέγα ὄφελος τῆς πόλεως εἶρηκε Δημοσθένης ('indeed, listen to the speeches that I made on your behalf, and in turn those that Demosthenes, 'the great benefactor of the city,' has made,' 2.24). He begins by narrating his own speech to Philip, which is a model of good arrangement and thoroughness (πρῶτον μὲν...οὐδὲν παραλείπων, ἀλλ' ἐφεξῆς ἅπαντα ὑπομιμήσκων...δεύτερον δέ..., firstly...leaving out nothing, but recalling everything in order...and secondly..., 2.26). For everything that Aeschines said, he offered

<sup>243</sup> Perhaps there is some word play in the suggestion that Demosthenes' φθόνος is evidenced, in part, by his boast of having ἀφθονοὶ πηγαὶ λόγων.

<sup>244</sup> An insult that Aeschines repeats at 2.88.

evidence (2.31). Far from flattering him, he 'did not hesitate to speak against Philip himself, reproaching him for continuing the war against the city' (καὶ πάλιν οὐκ ὤκνουν κατ' αὐτοῦ λέγειν Φιλίππου, ἐπιτιμῶν ὅτι τὴν ἐκδοχὴν ἐποιήσατο πρὸς τὴν πόλιν τοῦ πολέμου, 2.30). In order to highlight his powers of delivery, he switches into direct speech a couple times, allowing the jury to transport themselves to the occasion of his performance. In one passage, he relates a rather far-fetched story in which Philip's mother delivers an emotional plea to Iphicrates, the Athenian general, to be a friend to her children. Aeschines takes on the role of Philip's mother and delivers part of the speech that she was supposed to have made to Iphicrates (2.28).

When Demosthenes' turn arrives, 'everyone pays close attention as though about to hear some supreme demonstrations of rhetorical power' (καὶ πάντες προσεῖχον ὡς ὑπερβολὰς τινὰς δυνάμεως ἀκουσόμενοι λόγων, 2.34). Demosthenes' arrogant boasting had ensured that the embassy would be an epideictic contest, that is, a contest over 'speech-making ability,' δύναμις λόγων, since, as Aeschines learned later, his boasting had been reported to Philip and his associates, thus setting the stage. Demosthenes' dismal and embarrassing effort takes up about one sixth of the space it took Aeschines to describe his own speech (which, incidentally, he had to cut short), and it is worth quoting in full:

οὕτω δὲ ἀπάντων διακειμένων πρὸς τὴν ἀκρόασιν, φθέγγεται τὸ θηρίον τοῦτο προοίμιον σκοτεινόν τι καὶ τεθηγκὸς δειλία, καὶ μικρὸν προαγαγὼν ἄνω τῶν πραγμάτων, ἐξαίφνης ἐσίγησε καὶ διηπορήθη, τελευτῶν δὲ ἐκπίπτει τοῦ λόγου. ἰδὼν δὲ αὐτὸν ὁ Φίλιππος ὡς διέκειτο, θαρρεῖν τε παρεκελεύετο καὶ μὴ νομίζειν, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις, διὰ τοῦτο οἴεσθαι τι πεπονθέναι, ἀλλ' ἡσυχῇ καὶ κατὰ μικρὸν ἀναμιμνήσκεσθαι καὶ λέγειν ὡς προείλετο. ὁ δ' ὡς ἅπαξ ἐταράχθη καὶ τῶν γεγραμμένων διεσφάλη, οὐδ' ἀναλαβεῖν ἔτι αὐτὸν ἐδυνήθη, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάλιν ἐπιχειρήσας λέγειν ταῦτ' ἔπαθεν. ὡς δ' ἦν σιωπῆ, μεταστῆναι ἡμᾶς ὁ κήρυξ ἐκέλευεν.

And thus, with everyone ready to listen, this creature here gave voice to some kind of prologue that was obscure and dead with cowardice, and continuing a little further, keeping above the matters at hand, he suddenly fell silent and was at a loss, and finally lost his lines altogether. Philip, seeing the state he was in, told him to take courage and not to imagine that he thought he had bombed, as though in the theater, but to relax and remember his speech little by little and say what he had planned. But once he had been befuddled and had stumbled from his written composition, he was no longer able to collect himself, but even when he tried to speak again, he suffered the same thing. And since there was silence, the herald told us to depart. (2.34-35)

Aeschines, far from trying to minimize, or apologize for, his own theatrical talents, argues compellingly that the job of a rhetor is indeed very much like that of an actor, and thus that he is far superior to Demosthenes. While he himself gave a bold and commanding performance, Demosthenes suffered from stage fright and memory lapses, lost his lines, 'bombed,' and was completely at a loss without his script (τῶν γεγραμμένων).<sup>245</sup>

<sup>245</sup> For the last criticism mentioned above, that Demosthenes was helpless without his notes, we could compare Alcidas, who, as another rhetorical expert seeking to set his own brand of expertise apart from his competitors, emphasized the importance of extemporaneous speaking.

Although Aeschines is more than happy to use the precedent of this contest to demonstrate his rhetorical superiority over Demosthenes, his description of the events leading up to the embassy meeting, when Demosthenes boasted of his own abilities, serve to place the responsibility of *initiating* the contest on Demosthenes. One is reminded of Theseus in *The Suppliants*, when he (questionably) accuses the herald of initiating the contest, as if to justify the combative tone of his own rhetoric. The ability to compete verbally, to defend oneself, or more importantly to defend the interests of the city, was certainly a virtue; but the compulsion to compete, to turn events that should properly be cooperative into contests, was clearly frowned upon.

From our examination of the legal feud between Demosthenes and Aeschines it is clear that popular Athenian attitudes to the ethics of rhetorical skill and rhetorical confrontation were rather complicated; and there is no need to imagine that Greek popular morality was any more consistent in this area than in any other.<sup>246</sup> But rather than simply viewing them as undecided on the subject, or as having mixed feelings, we should rather say that the Greeks, or the Athenians at least, had a very powerful ambivalence, that their attitudes were quite confident and strong, only they were simultaneously positive *and* negative. The comparison that the Greeks themselves regularly made between rhetorical skill and other kinds of athletic and military skills might help to explain this attitude to some extent. Legal debates were, in no small measure, competitions for status and honor and as such were very much like athletic contests – except that the stakes were often much higher, and cheating was more difficult to agree on or to detect. Likewise diplomacy was every bit as important as warfare in Athens' ongoing struggles with its international competitors. Thus the cowardice that Demosthenes revealed on the ambassadorial stage was no less harmful or shameful than cowardice on the battlefield would be. Rhetoric may have been the most important, the most honored of all agonistic skills in the late 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries; and thus a politician could be blamed just as much for being bad at it as he could for using it to deceive the people. Or, even better, as we see in the characterizations of Demosthenes and Aeschines, he could be blamed for both faults.

While the *topoi* that involve exploiting fears about the dangerous powers of rhetoric are very well recognized, I hope to have shown that the agonistic ethic of forensic oratory could produce a kind of epideictic contest where such *topoi* were subsumed under the broader strategy of demonstrating one's rhetorical superiority. Given the virulence of both Demosthenes' attacks on Aeschines' theatrical abilities and Aeschines' attacks on Demosthenes' logographic abilities, one might expect each to try to deflect those attacks, the one by minimizing the theatricality of his speech, and the other by speaking in as simple and conversational a style as possible. But that is not what happened. Instead, each man met the challenge head on and sought to maximize his own talents and to crush his opponent.

#### 4. Reward and recognition

In the last section, we saw that an important aspect of the legal feud between Demosthenes and Aeschines was the fact that each sought to portray his opponent as an unfair and illegitimate competitor who was always trying to hijack the contest with his own brand of rhetorical display. Thus part of their competition ended up being about the proper rules and boundaries of rhetorical competition itself. As Barker points out, "[w]here

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<sup>246</sup> As Dover regularly reminds us.

a debate is drawn up, for what reasons, and with what consequences when it is dissolved, all make a difference: its form is *always* a matter of trial, contest and negotiation."<sup>247</sup> In an athletic competition, although of course there may be disagreements, arguments with the judges, etc., every attempt is made to fix the rules *before* the match begins. Contests of words are very different in this respect. Of course there are various procedural rules that are fixed ahead of time: for example, each litigant only gets one or two speeches (depending on the kind of trial), each must stop speaking when the water-clock runs out, etc. But aside from these procedural rules, the acceptability of the strategies employed is judged mainly in terms of their persuasiveness. If a litigant manages to persuade the jury that the criteria for judgment should be what he wants them to be, then he has successfully defined the 'rules' for this particular contest. But his opponent will also be trying to contest that version of the contest and assert his own version. And the one who most successfully defines the contest will have an enormous advantage. In the speeches on the crown, however, we actually see the procedural rules themselves being contested – the rules not just for the present trial, but for the much broader societal competition for honor. And again, the element of spectacle, display, is central to the debate. Furthermore, even as the contest system itself is discussed and critiqued, below that surface argument we see an acknowledgment, and an agreement, that the real contest for honor is the one currently taking place in the courtroom, and the real (figurative) crown will be awarded to whichever contestant demonstrates that he is the superior ῥήτωρ.

This trial, more than any other, is explicitly *about* elite competition for honor. Ctesiphon has made a proposal that the *demos* present Demosthenes with a crown in the Theater of Dionysus during the city Dionysia to honor him for the benefits he has conferred on the state with his words and actions (ὅτι διατελεῖ καὶ λέγων καὶ πράττων τὰ ἄριστα τῷ δήμῳ, 3.49). Much of Aeschines' speech is taken up with his substantive, rather than procedural, arguments against the legality of the proposal. The proposed crown is illegal because it is based on a false premise: Demosthenes has not benefited the state with his words and actions, but rather has caused it a great deal of harm. But he also argues that the proposal violates two procedural rules for the awarding of such crowns: (1) Demosthenes must first undergo his *dokimasia* for the office that he currently holds before any awards can be given; and (2) a crown conferred by the *demos* cannot be presented to its recipient in the theater, as Ctesiphon has proposed. While this last point may seem rather trivial, Aeschines makes quite a lot out of it; he uses it, in fact, as a sort of springboard to launch into a critical assessment of Athenian practices in regard to the awarding of honor in general. In addition to Aeschines' personal interest in keeping the actors, producers, and spectators free from the annoyance of such unnecessary ceremonies (3.43), he is also concerned that those who are crowned in the theater may receive greater honors than those who are crowned in the assembly (μείζοσι τιμᾶσθαι), since the former are seen by all the Hellenes. And thus the lawgiver has prohibited the *demos* from crowning a citizen on the tragic stage to prevent people from 'collecting crowns and proclamations through contributions and thus acquiring false prestige' (ἵνα μηδεις ἐρανίζων στεφάνους καὶ κηρύγματα ψευδῆ φιλοτιμίαν κτᾶται, 3.45). This use of φιλοτιμία is similar to the use of τὸ φιλότιμον that we saw in *Iphigenia at Aulis*; and again, we notice that the word only appears with this kind of objective sense, as something that can be acquired, in contexts where it is being acquired by illegitimate means. That is to say, when φιλοτιμία refers not just to a motivation or a character trait, but to a kind of commodity that can be acquired, it is usually being stolen, not earned. Accordingly, Aeschines admonishes Demosthenes earlier in the speech not to snatch φιλοτιμία forcefully: μὴ ἄρπαζε τὴν φιλοτιμίαν (3.23).

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<sup>247</sup> Barker 2009: 19.



Clearly, part of Demosthenes' plan to steal φιλοτιμία is to scheme his way onto the tragic stage, where the display will make his honor greater.

As Aeschines later suggests, the system of awarding honors, which is so fundamental to the greatness of Athens and to the education of the youth, has been corrupted and is in danger of being destroyed entirely. There are three main problems, which are closely related: (1) as noted above, rule-breakers, who scheme for φιλοτιμία, succeed too often; (2) too many honors are given away, so that they have ceased to be a scarce commodity and consequently no longer have any protreptic force; and (3) the awarding of gold crowns has resulted in an excessive concern with display and recognition, as well as with material reward.

Aeschines conveys his understanding of the proper functioning of the contest system through a discussion of the purposes of punishments and rewards. He alludes to the 'results-oriented' nature of the Athenian legal system when he notes that there are laws against cowardice, despite the fact that cowardice may be a natural, congenital trait.<sup>248</sup> Such laws may seem unfair, but they are practical:

καίτοι θαυμάσειεν ἄν τις ὑμῶν εἰ εἰσὶ φύσεως γραφαί. εἰσὶν. τίνος ἔνεκα; ἴν' ἕκαστος ἡμῶν τὰς ἐκ τῶν νόμων ζημίας φοβούμενος μᾶλλον ἢ τοὺς πολεμίους ἀμείνων ἀγωνιστῆς ὑπὲρ τῆς πατρίδος ὑπάρχη.

Yet one of you might wonder if there are laws concerned with nature. There are. For what reason? So that each of us may be more afraid of the penalties of the laws than of our enemies and may thus remain a better competitor on behalf of our fatherland. (3.175)

Like punishments, rewards are also supposed to make bad citizens better, but in addition they serve to motivate the good citizens, which they can only do if they remain scarce. If the Athenians do not put a stop to the unstinting rewards and the indiscriminate distribution of crowns, those who are honored will bear them no gratitude and will not set right the affairs of state (3.177). The proof that Aeschines offers is that the past generation was far better than the current one, and in those times distinctions were much more scarce and the mere name of excellence was more valued (τότε μὲν ἦν σπάνια τὰ καλὰ παρ' ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς ὄνομα τίμιον, 3.178).

Aeschines goes on to compare the situation to the crowns awarded to Olympic athletes:

οἴεσθ' ἄν ποτε, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἐθελῆσαί τινα ἐπασκεῖν εἰς τὰ Ὀλύμπια, ἢ ἄλλον τινὰ τῶν στεφανιτῶν ἀγώνων, παγκράτιον ἢ καὶ ἄλλο τι τῶν βαρυτέρων ἄθλων, εἰ ὁ στέφανος ἐδίδοτο μὴ τῷ κρατίστῳ, ἀλλὰ τῷ διαπραξαμένῳ; οὐδεὶς ἄν ποτ' ἠθέλησεν ἐπασκεῖν. νῦν δ' οἶμαι διὰ τὸ σπάνιον καὶ τὸ περιμάχητον καὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ ἀείμνηστον ἐκ τῆς νίκης ἐθέλουσιν τινες τὰ σώματα παραθέμενοι καὶ τὰς μεγίστας ταλαιπωρίας διακινδυνεύειν.

Do you think, my fellow Athenians, that anyone would ever want to train for the Olympic games or for any other contest where crowns are awarded, a pankration or some other rather serious sport, if the crown were given not to the best, but to the one who schemed for it? No one would ever want to

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<sup>248</sup> See Adkins 1960 for the idea that Greece was a 'results-oriented' society.

train. But as it is, I think, on account of the scarcity, the great contestation, the distinction, and the eternal glory of the prize that comes from victory some are willing to sacrifice their bodies and subject themselves to the greatest hardships. (3.179-80)

He tells the jury to imagine that they are 'athletic judges of political excellence' (ἀγωνοθέται πολιτικῆς ἀρετῆς) and to understand that if they award prizes to the few and the worthy, in accordance with the laws, then they will have many competitors for excellence (πολλοὺς ἀγωνιστὰς ἔξετε τῆς ἀρετῆς), but if they please the schemers, they will destroy even the decent natures. The athletic analogy is of course more than just an analogy. The very name of a legal trial, an *agon*, shows that such trials were already seen very much along the lines of an athletic contest; and the present trial is especially similar to an Olympic event, since it is possible that the winner of this trial will end up actually being *crowned* victor. The contest for excellence, for which the jury members are supposed to imagine themselves as athletic judges, is at once the present legal contest and the larger on-going political contest in which Aeschines and Demosthenes have been long-standing rivals. And whether the contest is thus viewed narrowly or broadly, the jury's primary consideration should be how to produce the most competitors, ἀγωνισταί, for excellence; just as the rationale for the punitive laws against cowardice was likewise to produce more competitors for the city. Demosthenes, the schemer, has set an example for bad competition, and punishing him is the only way to produce more virtuous competitors for the city.

Aeschines' critique of the contest system, however, goes far beyond merely complaining about the unfair scheming for crowns and the consequent overabundance of them. He suggests that the very nature of a golden crown as a reward may have a corrupting influence and, even further, that too much recognition *per se* may be a bad thing. He compares Demosthenes to a number of great Athenians of the past, none of whom, despite their far more impressive achievements, ever received a gold crown. Were the people not appreciative? Rather they believed that they should honor them not through written proposals but through the memory of those whom they had benefited (οὐ γὰρ ᾤοντο δεῖν ἐν τοῖς γράμμασι τιμᾶσθαι ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ μνήμῃ τῶν εὖ πεπονθότων, 3.182). Those who defeated the Persians at the Strymon, during the ten years war, were honored with three *stelai*, but their names were nowhere inscribed on them, in order that the epigram might not seem to belong to the generals, but to the people. Miltiades requested that his name should appear on the painting which commemorates the battle of Marathon, and the people refused. They thought it sufficient to put his image first – yet everyone knows his name. The men who restored the democracy from exile in Phyle requested to be honored with olive wreaths, not with gold: back then a crown of olive was more valuable, but now even a gold crown is despised (τότε μὲν γὰρ ἦν ὁ τοῦ θαλλοῦ στέφανος τίμιος, νυνὶ δὲ καὶ ὁ χρυσοῦς καταπεφρόνηται, 3.187). We see in this critique a kind of play on the λόγος/ ἔργον contrast. Crowns, along with written proposals for crowns (τοῖς γράμμασι) and commemorative epigrams, are mere symbols that may be entirely empty; while a truly honorable deed will automatically find immortality through the living memory of the people.<sup>249</sup> If a name that would otherwise be forgotten is etched in stone, then an unmerited honor has been granted. Thus, in Aeschines' idealized version of the contest system, rewards and recognition are to be kept modest, and the names of the honorees should be inscribed nowhere.

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<sup>249</sup> A rather philosophical point that could be compared to Plato's critique of writing in the *Phaedrus*.

What is more, the competitors do not actually compete with one another at all, but only with the standards of excellence itself. In anticipation of Demosthenes' complaint that he should not be compared with the past generation, just as Philammon the boxer was not expected to defeat boxers from the past but only his contemporary competitors, Aeschines scoffs that everyone knows that those two types of competition are not comparable:

ὥσπερ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοοῦντας ὅτι τοῖς μὲν πύκταις ἐστὶν ὁ ἀγὼν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, τοῖς δ' ἀξιοῦσι στεφανοῦσθαι πρὸς αὐτὴν τὴν ἀρετὴν ἧς καὶ ἔνεκα στεφανοῦνται.

as if you were not aware that, for boxers, the contest is with each another, but for those seeking to be crowned, it is with virtue itself, and it is for the sake of that that they are crowned. (3.189)

Of course, the 'everyone knows' topos should probably be taken as an attempt by Aeschines to conceal the fact that he is saying something that is *not* completely obvious. The idea that politicians were not in competition with each other but only with some ideal of virtue would surely have sounded much more like philosophy than common wisdom to the average Athenian; and the notion that Demosthenes and Aeschines in particular were not in a personal competition with each other would have seemed preposterous.

Isocrates makes a brief mention of the increasingly relaxed standards for the awarding of crowns (*In Callim.* 65), but Aeschines' rather involved critique shares more with Plato and Plutarch. In the *Laws*, Plato indicates some degree of approval for the contest system when he suggests that soldiers ought to be crowned as a reward for their successes; while if they are found guilty of any offense, they should be barred altogether from any kind of competition for honor (943c). In the *Republic*, however, he offers his 'Phoenician tale' in part as a means of resolving some of the very problems that concern Aeschines (414b-417b). While the guardians of the republic are to receive all kinds of honors, and even a kind of cult status after their death, Plato is adamant that they should receive no gold, since gold has been the cause of so many evils. Instead they are to imagine that they already have a more pure, divine gold inside of them in comparison to which earthly gold would seem cheap. Plutarch suggests that this passage is entirely about the need to neutralize the negative effects of φιλοτιμία, which can 'puff men up' and make them intolerable and unmanageable. The gold that the guardians have in their souls represents the virtue, ἀρετή, that comes from their birth and strives toward its natural fulfillment. He goes on:

οὕτω παραμυθώμεθα τὴν φιλοτιμίαν, λέγοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἔχειν χρυσὸν ἀδιάφθορον καὶ ἀκήρατον καὶ ἄχραντον ὑπὸ φθόνου καὶ μώμου τιμῆν, ἅμα λογισμῶ καὶ παραθεωρήσει τῶν πεπραγμένων ἡμῖν καὶ πεπολιτευμένων ἀύξανόμενον· διὸ μὴ δεῖσθαι γραφομένων τιμῶν ἢ πλαττομένων ἢ χαλκοτυπουμένων, ἐν αἷς καὶ τὸ εὐδοκιμοῦν ἀλλότριόν ἐστιν

Let us soften ambition (φιλοτιμία) in this way, saying that men have gold in themselves, honor (τιμῆ) that is incorruptible and pure and undefiled by envy and blame, which grows along with the reasoning and contemplation of our actions and policies; and that for this reason there is no need of honors that are written or sculpted or fashioned in bronze - honors in which the glory too is external. (*Praec. Ger. Rei.* 820c)

Thus, in addition to the distrust of material commemoration, both Plutarch and Aeschines also agree that competition should be imagined, in some sense, as taking place with oneself and not with one's rivals. For Aeschines the competition is with virtue itself, and for Plutarch the prize of the contest is already inside the competitor. One is also reminded of Euripides' own 'Phoenician tale,' where Iocasta likewise critiqued the harmful, 'empty' kind of φιλοτιμία by seeking to identify proper τιμή with τὸ ἴσον. In all three of these critiques, there is no attempt to abolish competition or φιλοτιμία altogether, but rather a correction of the contest system is sought through a kind of redefinition of the terms, with the result that the interpersonal, rivalrous aspect of competition is reduced to a minimum.

So Aeschines' strategy is to suggest that, apart from some rather thorny questions about the legality of Ctesiphon's proposal, a much more serious consideration for the jury is that the entire structure of Athenian society, with its system of honor-based sanctions, is in danger of being destroyed by these bad habits. He offers them an ideal vision of Athens, in which a benefactor's confidence in the lasting appreciation engendered in the people by his good deed obviates any need for material commemoration, and in which there is no personal competition among citizens in the political arena, but only competition with one's own internalized standards of excellence.

But of course Aeschines is not a philosopher, and he is not offering these theoretical analyses for mere intellectual speculation. His strategy, as noted above, is to characterize Demosthenes as an illegitimate competitor, who deserves to be disqualified, not only from the present legal trial, but from the larger Athenian political competition, in which he is about to receive a crown. But there is more to it than that. In offering his own version of what contests should be like, how competitors should compete, and how victors should be rewarded, he is seeking to define the present contest. If the jury members decide that he has offered a more compelling version of competition generally than Demosthenes has, and that he has described (and exemplified) a better version of what a competitor should be like, then they cannot fail but 'crown' him victor, regardless of whether or not Demosthenes deserves his crown. After all, if they endorse Aeschines' version of the contest system, they will agree that nobody deserves an actual crown, so they will be compelled to return the only verdict that results in a wholly figurative crown.

The bulk of Demosthenes' defense speech is devoted to demonstrating that he has in fact always spoken and acted in the people's best interest, and that Aeschines has done quite the opposite. But he also responds to Aeschines' complaints about the corruption of the contest system by broadening the scope and introducing the arena of international competition. In his speech, Athens becomes a competitor in her own right who is engaged in a contest with the rest of the world, not just for power or survival, but also for honor – in fact, primarily for honor (19.66, 97). Demosthenes presents an alternate explanation of what the primary function of the contest system is: it is not only a means of producing citizens who will take risks on behalf of the state and on behalf of virtue itself, but it is also a means of determining how the state conducts itself in this broader, international contest. Leaving out any mention of the various self-correcting mechanisms of Athenian democracy, including ostracisms, public examinations, and prosecutions such as the present one, Demosthenes seeks to establish a direct one-to-one correspondence between the state's virtue and the virtue of its leading citizen. The fact that, in the arena of political competition, Demosthenes has been *the* perennial victor and has thus been responsible for shaping the state's course of action means that his level of honor must exactly parallel the state's level of honor; and thus, any aspersion on his conduct is likewise an aspersion on the state's conduct.

Demosthenes' defense speech on behalf of Ctesiphon, *On the Crown*, has long been considered perhaps the greatest piece of Greek oratory that has survived, and it has attracted a great deal of attention from scholars.<sup>250</sup> But here I only want to note that, far from agreeing with Aeschines that the contest system is broken, Demosthenes suggests that (thanks to him) it has never been better. While there have been many good politicians in the past, none has devoted himself so entirely to the city's welfare as has Demosthenes; and while many past politicians have been crowned, he himself is the very first whose own crowning has coincided with the city's crowning (19.94). He does suggest that the contest system can suffer from excessive personal competitiveness (*φιλονικία*), but insists that he is not guilty of such a trait and in fact has always devoted himself to trying to minimize it in the polis. He invites the jury to deprive him of all his possessions if the accusations that he makes against Aeschines are motivated by enmity, *ἔχθρα*, or private competition, *φιλονικία ἰδία* (19.141). And later he uses the same term to draw a very strong connection between the competitiveness of the individual politician and that of the collective polis. When it was announced that Philip had captured Elatea, a council was quickly convened, and the herald asked, "who wishes to speak?" As the city called with its collective voice (*τῇ κοινῇ φωνῇ*, 19.170) for someone to speak on behalf of its salvation, though all the generals and all the *rhetors* were present, no one came forward except Demosthenes. In the speech that he then delivered, he asked the jury to listen without any competitiveness to his arguments about making an alliance with Thebes:

ἂν μέντοι πεισθῆτ' ἔμοι καὶ πρὸς τῷ σκοπεῖν, ἀλλὰ μὴ φιλονικεῖν περὶ  
 ὧν ἂν λέγω γένησθε, οἶμαι καὶ τὰ δέοντα λέγειν δόξειν καὶ τὸν  
 ἐφεισθηκότα κίνδυνον τῇ πόλει διαλύσειν.

If however you are persuaded by me and apply yourselves to an examination of my arguments rather than to hyper-competitiveness, I believe both that I will appear to say what is needed and that I will remove the danger that is upon the city. (19.176)

Thus, the hyper-competitiveness that can so often cause a competitor to behave improperly can also be found in the judges of contests. But what exactly would it mean in this context for the judges to apply themselves to *φιλονικεῖν*? Yunis' translation (which is consistent with the word order) suggests that it would just mean that they were quarreling with Demosthenes' arguments.<sup>251</sup> And indeed, it is not uncommon to accuse an audience of hyper-competitiveness in exactly that way - Thucydides has Cleon make such a charge, and Andocides has a client do so as well (1.9). But although Demosthenes may primarily be referring to that kind of competitiveness, it seems to me that there is also an implicit warning against competitiveness in regard to the broader international issues.<sup>252</sup> The Athenians would be exhibiting *φιλονικία* if they were to refuse an alliance with the Thebans because of the wrongs that they had suffered from them in the past. They would be overly concerned with always being 'victorious' over Thebes and would thus fail to recognize that cooperation and mutual assistance would be to their advantage in the much more serious contest with Philip. Demosthenes claims that he was able to steer Athens away from a petty kind of competitiveness toward the truly honorable course of action. But the

<sup>250</sup> Although Yunis 2000: 97 noted that it had recently "fallen on hard times." See also Dyck 1985, Rowe 1966, and bibliography in Yunis 2001. Both Rowe 1966 and Yunis 2007 argue for a 'tragic' reading of the speech, which immediately suggests an epideictic element.

<sup>251</sup> Yunis 2005 translates, "apply yourselves to considering what I say rather than to quarreling with it."

<sup>252</sup> Aeschines uses the word in the context of international rivalry at 2.75.

ambiguity of his use of the word φιλονικία in this passage only strengthens the connection between the competition between Athens and its rivals and the competition between Demosthenes and his fellow-citizens, exemplified by his narrated speech to the assembly, as well as by his current trial speech.

In a later passage, Demosthenes argues that he should not be blamed for everything that happens to the city, but only for those things that fall under the job description of a politician. In addition to sensing the course of events ahead of time and communicating those insights with the people, the politician must also try to minimize the inherent flaws of governments:

καὶ ἔτι τὰς ἑκασταχοῦ βραδυτήτας, ὄκνους, ἀγνοίας, φιλονικίας, ἃ πολιτικὰ ταῖς πόλεσιν πρόσεστιν ἀπάσαις καὶ ἀναγκαῖ' ἀμαρτήματα, ταῦθ' ὡς εἰς ἐλάχιστα συστῆλαι, καὶ τούναντίον εἰς ὁμόνοιαν καὶ φιλίαν καὶ τὴν τοῦ τὰ δέοντα ποιεῖν ὀρμὴν προτρέψαι.

And further to reduce as much as possible the delays that are everywhere, the hesitations, the ignorance, the contentiousness – facts of political life and necessary flaws that are present to all states – and to turn them in the opposite direction toward harmony and friendship and the desire to do what is needed. (19.246)

Here Demosthenes has shown himself to be not only free from any personal φιλονικία but also committed to rooting it out in the polis. And again, the petty competitiveness that he is talking about is not the kind that takes place between citizens, but the kind that motivates a whole polis in its relations with other poleis. What may appear at first sight to be a criticism of democracy in particular (since we are used to seeing the flaws that Demosthenes mentions as particularly associated with democracy) turns out to be rather the opposite. These flaws are by no means particular to Athens, but are present in *all* poleis. The good fortune of Athens, as competitor on the international stage, is that it has the kind of contest system in place that allows a man who is capable of steering the state toward harmony and friendship – a man like Demosthenes – to emerge as victor.

In all five of these speeches, we see a kind of theorizing (albeit of a decidedly self-interested, strategic variety) about the rhetorical contest system in which Athenian politicians were engaged. Each litigant maligns the speaking style of his opponent and seeks to demonstrate his own rhetorical superiority, in an attempt both to define the rules of the contest and to offer the jury a more compelling account of how a patriotic competitor should behave. The boundaries between forensic rhetoric and the other genres are either exaggerated or intentionally blurred, according to the advantage each litigant feels he can secure. And each man acknowledges more or less openly the importance of 'display,' *epideixis*, to the contest, even as part of his own display will be to mock his opponent for being overly interested in display. Some of these features appear in more subtle forms in the speeches of the other orators, but the speeches between Demosthenes and Aeschines are of particular importance for our understanding of Greek attitudes about rhetorical competition and character.

## Chapter 4: Private Competition and Public Interest in Thucydides

### I. Introduction

As we saw in the last chapter, one of Demosthenes' strategies in his speech *On the Crown* was to minimize the importance of the interpersonal competition between himself and Aeschines and to focus the jury's attention rather on Athens' competition with other states. In so doing, he was in some sense blending all three genres of rhetoric: not only forensic and epideictic, but also deliberative.<sup>253</sup> While there is nothing preventing litigants from discussing public interests (and of course they often do), it is immediately apparent in the very nature of a trial that both litigants have a strong private interest in the outcome. Furthermore, almost every element of the procedure of an Athenian trial emphasizes the contest as a confrontation between two individuals, each with his own personal interests at stake. In a deliberative contest, on the other hand, any number of viewpoints might be expressed, and it is the collective interests of all the citizens that are at stake. Thus, there is a sense in which deliberative agons should be less competitive than other agons; or rather, the speaker's competitive efforts should primarily be directed at the external enemies of the polis, not at his fellow citizens. In reality, however, the interpersonal competition in the assembly is often as fierce as anywhere. Before discussing the kind of deliberative competition (or competitiveness) that we find in Thucydides' *History*, it will be helpful to examine the somewhat peculiar ethical status of deliberative rhetoric by looking at Aristotle's comments on the differences between deliberative and forensic rhetoric.

One distinguishing feature of deliberative rhetoric (τὸ συμβουλευτικόν) that Aristotle mentions is that it is concerned with future events (*Rhet.* 1358b). While the judges of a court case must decide what happened in the past, the judges in an assembly must decide what should be done in the future. But earlier in the work, when he is criticizing the writers of rhetorical manuals for focusing exclusively on forensic rhetoric, he says more about the differences between the two genres. First he suggests that the judgment of the lawgiver is more secure than the judgment of either juries or assemblies, since the lawgiver considers matters in general, while the judge and the assemblyman consider particulars; thus concern for their own private advantage often prevents them from seeing the truth, and their judgment is clouded by considerations of their own pleasure and pain (...πρὸς οὓς καὶ τὸ φιλεῖν ἤδη καὶ τὸ μισεῖν καὶ τὸ ἴδιον συμφέρον συνήρτηται πολλάκις, ὥστε μηκέτι δύνασθαι θεωρεῖν ἰκανῶς τὸ ἀληθές, ἀλλ' ἐπισκοτεῖν τῇ κρίσει τὸ ἴδιον ἢ δὴ ἢ λυπηρόν, 1354b). This concern with one's *own* advantage, however, turns out to be of some benefit in deliberative rhetoric because, in the assembly, it is explicitly understood that the judges will be making a decision on the basis of their own interests (περὶ οἰκείων), while in forensic contexts they are supposed to be deciding about the interests of others, which is a much more difficult task. Thus, theoretically, a speaker in the assembly need not try to captivate or mislead his audience members, but need only demonstrate that what he says is true, provided that it can be shown to be attractive to their interests.. A litigant, on the other hand, should properly discuss only the facts of the case, but he will always want to improve his chances by inappropriately appealing to the sympathies and personal interests of the jury members. Aristotle sums up by saying that deliberative is less harmful than forensic because it is more shared (κοινότερον). The implication is that the shared nature

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<sup>253</sup> Although the two speeches are largely concerned with public policy and public interest, they are of course essentially forensic in their focus on the past rather than the future.

of the task, i.e. the fact that the interests of the entire group, including those who will pronounce judgment, are at stake will result in a more honest and transparent discussion.

But even if the explicit understanding that the assemblymen will be considering their own interests encourages speeches to be more transparent and relevant to the case, nonetheless surely their judgment might still be clouded by τὸ ἴδιον συμφέρον. Aristotle's use of the word κοινότερον, however, gives some indication of how this problem might be resolved. We may recall that he says that judgments are often clouded by consideration of specifically *private* pleasure and pain (τὸ ἴδιον ἡδὺ ἢ λυπηρόν). But in the best versions of deliberative rhetoric, not only will the fact that the judges are *expected* to be concerned with their own interests (οἰκεῖα) serve as a guard against deceptive digressions, but also the fact that these interests are *not* private, but are shared, *public* interests will minimize the clouding of their judgment. So on the one hand, not only does the assemblyman's explicit concern with his own interests help to make deliberative rhetoric a more honest art, but the communal nature of those interests also make it more noble, more political (καὶ καλλίονος καὶ πολιτικωτέρας) and less harmful (κακοῦργον) than forensic (1354b). But on the other hand, Aristotle says that the assemblyman is in the same boat as the juror in that, unlike the lawmaker, his judgment *does* get clouded by private interest – and we might suspect that his judgment would be even more clouded than that of the juror, to the extent that the line between public and private interests, both of which are one's own (οἰκεῖα), would be even more difficult to draw than the line between one's own, private interests and the private interests of another. And indeed, as we will see from the debates in Thucydides, this ideal that the attitude and demeanor of the speakers in the assembly should reflect a fundamental agreement with their fellow citizens (since, despite whatever disagreements they have, their concern is as much with the interests of one another as it is with their own) is not often realized.

A further complication with deliberative rhetoric emerges from Aristotle's comment that, in connection with deliberative rhetoric's concern with future events rather than past events, it aims to persuade of the advantage or harm of a position *rather than* of its justice or injustice. It may seem at first that Aristotle only intends here to make the uncontroversial observation that assembly speeches are concerned with policies, which might be either beneficial or harmful, whereas trial speeches are concerned with crimes, and thus with justice and injustice. But he makes it explicit that, when questions about the just and the unjust (the proper objects of forensic) or the noble and the shameful (the proper objects of epideictic) are brought into deliberative rhetoric, they are relevant only in so far as they relate to the advantageous or disadvantageous (τὰ δ' ἄλλα πρὸς τοῦτο συμπαραλαμβάνει, ἢ δίκαιον ἢ ἄδικον, ἢ καλὸν ἢ αἰσχρόν, 1358b). The broader implication of his statement is that deliberative rhetoric has a different ethical status from forensic, in that it is explicitly focused only on interests and advantages and has no *essential* regard for justice. Indeed, in the *EN*, after noting that justice can be used in two different senses – either in the broader, general sense of 'perfect virtue in relation to others'<sup>254</sup> or in the narrower, specific sense of 'only taking one's share'<sup>255</sup> – Aristotle equates the general meaning of justice with 'political justice' and suggests that justice of that sort can only properly be realized between 'free and equal persons who share their lives in the interest of self-sufficiency'.<sup>256</sup> This qualification would seem to limit the general kind of justice to interactions among fellow-citizens and to create some difficulties for the performance of justice among different poleis.

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<sup>254</sup> *EN* 1129b, αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἡ δικαιοσύνη ἀρετὴ μὲν ἐστὶ τελεία, ἀλλ' οὐχ ἀπλῶς ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἕτερον.

<sup>255</sup> 1130a-b. Particular justice is further divided into 'distributive' and 'corrective'.

<sup>256</sup> 1134a. τοῦτο δὲ ἐστὶν [ἐπὶ] κοινωνῶν βίου πρὸς τὸ εἶναι αὐτάρκειαν, ἐλευθέρων καὶ ἴσων.



Once Aristotle begins his section on deliberative rhetoric, however, he changes his terminology in such a way as to blur the lines between advantage/disadvantage and justice/injustice. Now he uses the more general, more ambiguous terms 'good' and 'bad' (ἀγαθὰ ἢ κακὰ) to describe the objects of deliberative rhetoric. And ethics are brought back into deliberative rhetoric in a more fundamental way when he explains that the ultimate goal that everyone seeks, the ultimate 'advantage,' is happiness, the essential component of which is virtue.<sup>257</sup> Now we seem to be on the same footing as the *EN*, where deliberation is described as the function of practical reason. Furthermore, if deliberative rhetoric is the most political of the rhetorical genres, then Aristotle's *Politics* might give us the impression that it also must be the *most* ethical. What makes humans political animals, and sets us apart from the rest of the animals, is our ability to speak. More specifically, while other animals have the ability to express pleasure and pain with their voices, human speech (ὁ λόγος) alone can express 'the beneficial and the harmful, and *thus* the just and the unjust' (τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ βλαβερὸν, ὥστε καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον, *Pol.* 1253a). Here it seems that questions of advantage and questions of justice are very closely related; and in fact we might say that our *first* ethical observations are concerned with advantage and harm, and it is only from those observations that we are led to considerations of justice and injustice. At any rate, if it is precisely our ability to make ethical judgments and statements that makes us political animals, then one would surely expect our political discourse to be a fundamentally ethical discourse. But the problem remains that, by 'political animals', Aristotle is only referring to our associations *within* the polis, with our fellow-citizens, not with our behavior toward those from other poleis. Indeed, questions about international virtue and international justice are still left open.<sup>258</sup>

In the debates that Thucydides depicts, we often see these ethical ambiguities explored. The tension between τὸ συμφέρον, the 'expedient' or 'advantageous,' and τὸ δίκαιον, 'the just,' is a theme in several of the debates, as we will see, and exactly as Aristotle suggests, there is often a reluctance directly to consider questions of justice in deliberative contexts. When questions of moral responsibility are brought up, the speaker often insists that they are not the real substance of the argument, but only a sort of afterthought to the much more important considerations of advantage and disadvantage. Of course the two kinds of consideration most famously come to a head in the Melian dialogue. But Thucydides offers us a much more elaborate problematization than Aristotle does of the *sense* in which deliberative rhetoric is concerned with advantage and forensic rhetoric with justice, and of how that distinction relates to the distinction between private and public interests. Thucydides does not locate the problem with deliberation so much in a misunderstanding about the true nature of human happiness (as we might expect Aristotle to do) as in the unhealthy competitive ethos that motivates the speakers and the judges alike. This competitiveness is part of the 'human thing' (1.22) that will always have to be reckoned with. Indeed, the politicians often address the problems associated with excessive competition in the assembly, or in society generally, and they sometimes even offer

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<sup>257</sup> *Rhet.* 1360b. It is perhaps telling that, as components of happiness, Aristotle lists both 'the bodily virtues' (one of which is δύναμις ἀγωνιστική, 'competitive power') and 'virtue' *tout court*, but seems not to have listed examples of the latter (the list that we have in many of the manuscripts appears to be a gloss from *EN*). Indeed, he suggests that it is more appropriate to treat virtue in his discussion of praise, i.e. in the section concerning epideictic rhetoric (1362a.13). Thus, it would appear that virtue (which, of course, includes justice) is in fact fundamental to deliberative rhetoric, in so far as it is fundamental to the notion of 'advantage,' and yet it is more appropriately kept under the surface, as it were.

<sup>258</sup> However, in the *Politics* (1271b), Aristotle does criticize the Spartan constitution for being overly productive of war and conquest and less encouraging of peace. But the main points of his criticism are (a) that the Spartans mistakenly consider the goods that they win through ἀρετή better even than ἀρετή itself, and (b) that they only thrive during times of war because they have no knowledge of how to live peacefully.

solutions. But it is always clear that these theoretical critiques are little more than elements of a competitive rhetorical strategy (even if they do contain some truth) and should thus be viewed with suspicion by Thucydides' readers.

Heath (1990) argues, on the one hand, that Thucydides characterizes only the Athenians with the tendency to dismiss justice as a consideration, while non-Athenian speakers consistently do consider questions of justice, and on the other hand, that such a tendency does not reflect the actual practice of 5th century Athenian assembly speeches. While he may be right that the Athenians are *particularly* associated with such a tendency, he is compelled to minimize several Athenian appeals to justice and several non-Athenian appeals to expediency in order to make the distinction a clean one.<sup>259</sup> And I think the evidence is too sparse to be conclusive about whether or not this tendency is historically accurate.<sup>260</sup> After all, given the characterization of Cleon in both Thucydides and Aristophanes, it is possible that this tendency was thought to be particularly associated with him, and perhaps it was particularly common in deliberative speeches during the period when he was most influential. As for an explanation of why Thucydides chose to characterize the Athenians this way, Heath expresses his own uncertainty, offering only the possibility that Thucydides may have wanted to represent what the speakers thought rather than what they actually said (and thus conveying their *γνώμη*, as he promises to do at 1.22). I think there is probably some truth to that suggestion. But it also seems clear that Thucydides uses his speeches to explore various ideas and themes. He is a theorist as well as an historian, and if he is able to develop certain themes without straying from the rather vague notions of *γνώμη* or *τὰ δέοντα*, then he will do so.<sup>261</sup>

If Thucydides is a theorist, it seems equally clear that he is, at least in some sense, also a moralist. The question about the extent to which Thucydides has any interest at all in morality – whether he is a full-fledged realist or merely presents the realist position in order to refute it – is a much vexed one to say the least.<sup>262</sup> But if he has inspired such varied interpretations about his thoughts on the place of morality or justice in deliberations on international relations, then surely one of the points that he is trying to get across is that it holds a decidedly problematic and unstable place. Garst suggests that "if Thucydides' history has a unifying thread, it is the contingent and problematic nature of the political institutions and environment sustaining Athenian political power and hegemony."<sup>263</sup> I would add that Thucydides seems to insist, by constantly returning to the themes of justice and expediency in his representations of deliberative debate, that the 'problematic nature' of those political institutions has to do particularly with problems of morality. And he makes it

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<sup>259</sup> For example, he takes Diodotus' speech to be limited to arguments from expediency (as many do), but Orwin 1984 demonstrates that justice is just as important a consideration, even if (as Orwin argues) it is only introduced with some degree of stealth.

<sup>260</sup> For example, Heath 1990: 396 uses *Gorgias* 454b5-7 as evidence that justice was the primary topic of deliberative rhetoric, but as Dodds 1959 *ad loc.* points out, Socrates is setting a trap here, and he is more accurate at *Phdr.* 261c-d.

<sup>261</sup> De Romilly 1963 (1st ed. 1947) notably redirected the current trend of Thucydidean scholarship, which was primarily concerned with problems of composition, and explored the theme of imperialism, arguing that Thucydides' conception of imperialism developed throughout the process of composition. Ober 2001 offers a good interpretation of Thucydides as political theorist.

<sup>262</sup> Williams 1998 is a monograph devoted to ethics in Thucydides, and she briefly summarizes the positions of past scholars on pp. 3-6. For the idea of Thucydides as a 'realist' (which suggests amorality), see Doyle 1990 and Ober 2001 (who explains that realist models "take states as quasi-individuals, as primary actors in the international arena that tend to mimic the behavior of rationally self-interested, profit-maximizing, risk-managing individuals in the marketplace -- that is, in crude terms, as individuals as they are understood by modern market-centered economic theories").

<sup>263</sup> Garst 1989:18.

equally clear that the highly competitive rhetorical context of these deliberations has a complicated but undeniable effect on the way morality figures in the debates.

There are several points where Thucydides offers his own opinions about the ethics of competition, and though his comments are for the most part critical, there is no doubt that he also recognizes the importance, even the indispensability, of at least some kinds of competition. Near the end of the preface, he famously writes that he has composed the work as a possession for all time rather than as a competition piece to listen to for the moment: κτήμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται (1.22).<sup>264</sup> Thus competition is particularly associated with the immediacy and the transitoriness of listening, while the materiality of Thucydides' book, which will allow it to be possessed by generation after generation through all time, distinguishes it at least from the more familiar kinds of verbal competition. Of course, even as he denies that his book is an ἀγώνισμα, he is claiming for it a kind of superiority over other pieces of writing, which will be forgotten as soon as they are heard. So Thucydides' own disavowal of competition here may itself be seen as a competitive stance. The effect of his use of ἀγώνισμα here is to suggest that his own work is being offered as an alternative to useless (or indeed, destructive) competitive speech (or writing). Just as the contestants in the agons that he will depict strive to define the parameters of good *eris* and differentiate it from the bad *eris* of their opponents, Thucydides, even if he cannot provide an explicit definition of good and bad competition, offers his own work as a demonstration of the good kind.<sup>265</sup>

Again Thucydides criticizes competition (or at least 'bad' competition) in his assessment of Pericles' superiority to the politicians who came to prominence after his death. Pericles held the people in check 'freely' (κατεῖχε τὸ πλῆθος ἐλευθέρως),<sup>266</sup> and he led them rather than being led by them (οὐκ ἤγετο μᾶλλον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἢ αὐτὸς ἤγε), since he did not cater to the people's pleasure in his speeches in an attempt to acquire power illegitimately, but, holding power honorably, he contradicted them even somewhat angrily:<sup>267</sup> διὰ τὸ μὴ κτώμενος ἐξ οὐ προσηκόντων τὴν δύναμιν πρὸς ἡδονὴν τι λέγειν, ἀλλ' ἔχων ἐπ' ἀξιώσει καὶ πρὸς ὀργὴν τι ἀντειπεῖν, 2.65.8). When he saw them over-reaching with hybriistic confidence, he struck fear into them (κατέπλησεν ἐπὶ τὸ

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<sup>264</sup> Sifakis 1998 compares ἀγώνισμα here with Ar. *Poet.* 1451b-35-38. He argues that ἀγών, ἀγωνίζεσθαι, ἀγωνίστικος, etc. often just have to do with performance, especially theatrical performance, and do not always convey any sense specifically of *competing*. Thus he translates ἀγώνισμα here as "a piece for public performance" (p. 27). I would be inclined, however, to reason in the other direction. If this word group can refer to any kind of public performance, theatrical or otherwise, then instead of assuming that the notion of 'contest' must be absent, we might rather see this fact as an indication that it was taken for granted that public performance always *implied* competition. Lateiner 2007 examines all of Thucydides' uses of ἀγών and related words and sees innovation in his extension of the original meaning of the word ("regulated peaceful contest", 341) to include the "destructive and publicly profitless competitions of civil strife and factional politics" (340). He sees a direct reference to such profitless contests here in Thucydides' preface: "Such a word and the image then describe the literary opposite of Thucydides' enterprise, namely a 'rehearsal for a prize' or glitzy declamation for a moment's listening, not his intended (and proven) permanent intellectual contribution to the study of human affairs." See also Barker 2009: 262. Many scholars have seen in this passage a veiled attack on Herodotus (cf. Hornblower *ad loc.*).

<sup>265</sup> There is a parallel here with Euripides, who likewise demonstrates his own ability to stay above the fray and appreciate the arguments from both sides, while simultaneously placing the tricks and strategems of rhetorical debate in a critical light.

<sup>266</sup> 2.65.8. For ἐλευθέρως, Hornblower offers "like free men".

<sup>267</sup> πρὸς ὀργὴν τι is often taken to mean 'so as to provoke their anger', which would make it exactly parallel to πρὸς ἡδονὴν τι, but it does not give the right sense (since even corrupt politicians could speak frankly if they were willing to incur the wrath of the *demos*). Connor 1984: 60, n. 25 suggests 'in response to their passion,' which would make good sense, but that is not the way πρὸς ὀργὴν is used elsewhere, either in Thucydides or in any other Greek text (as far as I can tell). Thucydides uses the phrase twice elsewhere (3.43.5 and 8.27.6), and in both passages it means 'angrily.' Here the adverbial τι softens the force a bit.

φοβεῖσθαι), and when they were unreasonably frightened, he emboldened them. His authority and influence, in fact, were so dominant that Thucydides says that Athens was only a democracy in name, but more accurately was 'rule by the first man' (2.65.9). In comparison, the statesmen who followed Pericles acted in accordance with 'private ambitions and private profits' (κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας φιλοτιμίας καὶ ἴδια κέρδη). All were equal and were eager to fill the vacancy that Pericles had left and to become the 'first man,' and thus they began to concede matters (of state) to the people, in accordance with their pleasure: οἱ δὲ ὕστερον ἴσοι μᾶλλον αὐτοὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὄντες καὶ ὀρεγόμενοι τοῦ πρῶτος ἕκαστος γίγνεσθαι ἐτράποντο καθ' ἡδονὰς τῷ δήμῳ καὶ τὰ πράγματα ἐνδιδόναι (2.65.10). Not only is competition here critiqued, but likewise the very equality that is the hallmark of democracy and is the condition of democratic competition is also put in question. Further, Thucydides makes a distinction between the competition between politicians, the challenge of which seems to be to flatter the *demos* more effectively than one's opponent, and the competition between statesman and *demos*, since Pericles' rhetorical opponent, against whom he made his arguments (ἀντειπεῖν), was the *demos* itself.

In his description of the Corcyrean revolution, Thucydides' agonistic language suggests that there is often a fine line between competition and *stasis*. In the midst of this upheaval, in which words no longer held their usual meanings, people found it more pleasurable (ἡδίων) to punish their enemies by first winning their trust, in part because they considered a defeat through deception to be a competitive display of cleverness (ξυνέσεως ἀγώνισμα, 3.82.7). Note that the word for 'competitive display' here, ἀγώνισμα, is the same word he used to describe the writings of his predecessors. The cause of all of these horrible things, Thucydides tells us, was 'rule through over-reaching and ambition' (πάντων δ' αὐτῶν αἴτιον ἀρχὴ ἢ διὰ πλεονεξίαν καὶ φιλοτιμίαν, 3.82.8). And from these things came the zeal of the men who had been put in a state of excessive competitiveness (ἐκ δ' αὐτῶν καὶ ἐς τὸ φιλονικεῖν καθισταμένων τὸ πρόθυμον).<sup>268</sup> Language was the primary locus of this hypercompetitive ethos, not only in respect to the aforementioned reinterpretation of ethical terms, but also in the cynicism with which both democrats and oligarchs alike used 'pretty' language in order to win their prizes:

οἱ γὰρ ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι προστάντες μετὰ ὀνόματος ἐκάτεροι  
εὐπρεποῦς, πλήθους τε ἰσονομίας πολιτικῆς καὶ ἀριστοκρατίας  
σώφρονος προτιμήσει, τὰ μὲν κοινὰ λόγῳ θεραπεύοντες ἄθλα  
ἐποιοῦντο, παντὶ δὲ τρόπῳ ἀγωνιζόμενοι ἀλλήλων περιγίγνεσθαι...

For in the cities, the men of prominence on both sides used pretty language, arguing for the superiority either of the political equality of the masses or of the moderation of the aristocracy, to win the prizes, caring for the common good only in word but in every way competing to defeat one another... (3.82.8)

Note in particular the hypocrisy of exploiting the concepts of 'equality' and 'temperance' for unfair and intemperate purposes (and as we will see, these are rhetorical strategies that speakers in other, less explicitly factional debates employ as well). These men were always

<sup>268</sup> Note the close relationship here between the love of honor (φιλοτιμία), or 'ambition,' the desire to have more than one's share (πλεονεξία), or 'greed', and the love of victory (φιλονικία), or 'competitiveness.' The three terms could each be translated appropriately as 'competition' or 'competitiveness,' but each picks out a different aspect of it. On πλεονεξία, see Williams 1980, who argues that Aristotle does not quite get it right. For φιλοτιμία, see Whitehead 1983 and Viano 2003.

ready to fulfill their immediate desire for victory (έτοιμοι ἦσαν τὴν αὐτίκα φιλονικίαν ἐκπιμπλάναι); and in general, they had no concern with piety, but were much more interested in harming their opponents with the attractive artifice of language (εὐπρεπεῖα λόγου). Again, we see competition associated with immediacy (τὴν αὐτίκα φιλονικίαν), rather than long-term reasoning, as well as with the manipulation of language.

In the three verbal contests that we will examine, Thucydides represents the speakers as (more or less directly) addressing the problems of competition in deliberative discourse and either offering solutions to these problems or defending their own competitive endeavors (as e.g. Alcibiades does). Further, each debate presents a different profile of a particular kind of hyper-competitive speaker: Cleon, the vengeance-minded bully; Alcibiades, the glory-obsessed athlete; and Athenagoras, the rabble-rousing dissident. Finally, in each debate, different aspects of competition are confronted, and in fact, there is a kind of thematic progression, and escalation, spanning these three debates: the first, between Cleon and Diodotus, deals with competition largely in terms of rhetorical genre; the next, between Nicias and Alcibiades, explores the parallels between verbal and athletic (as well as military) competition; and the last one, between Hermocrates and Athenagoras, raises the stakes by returning to the theme of the relation between verbal competition and political *stasis*. Throughout, the concrete, physical effects of such competitive discourse are highlighted by Thucydides through his creative manipulation of the *logos* and *ergon* dichotomy, but the exact parameters of good competition and the means of distinguishing it from bad competition are left blurry.<sup>269</sup>

## 2. Cleon vs. Diodotus: competition and rhetorical genre

Thucydides' preoccupation with questions about competition in discourse is revealed not only in the contents of many of the speeches in his *History*, but also by the manner in which he presents them. As scholars have noted, Pericles' speeches always stand alone, without any opposing speech to challenge them.<sup>270</sup> And indeed, Thucydides' statement that Pericles was able to lead the δῆμος suggests that whatever opposition his proposals met with, it was not formidable enough to present any real obstacle.<sup>271</sup> The politicians who came to prominence after Pericles' death, on the other hand, were, in Thucydides' view, 'led by the δῆμος' and were always competing with one another for the prominent position of authority in the polis; accordingly their debates are represented by pairs of opposing speeches. Thus Pericles' true leadership is represented by univocal, uncontested persuasion, and the fickle leadership of the δῆμος is represented by the sort of heated argumentation that we see, e.g., in the debate between Cleon and Diodotus. Thucydides' description of the post-Periclean political climate appears to be similar to some of Plato's criticisms of rhetoric generally, e.g. from the *Gorgias*. When public speakers are forced to compete for the approval of the δῆμος, they end up engaging in flattery and become followers rather than leaders. Socrates suggests that the politician who best appeals to the desires of the citizens, rather than to their real advantage, will inevitably win, and he

<sup>269</sup> See Parry 1981 for a detailed analysis of the *logos/ ergon* theme in Thucydides.

<sup>270</sup> See e.g. Shanske 2007: 43-44, who notes that it is very unlikely that there was in fact no vocal opposition to Pericles' speeches. Thucydides does, however, present speeches that are complementary (i.e. on the same topic) to Pericles': e.g. his first speech (1.140-44) 'answers' the Corinthians' speech to the Peloponnesians (1.120-24).

<sup>271</sup> However, as other ancient sources, especially Plutarch, make clear, Pericles actually was embroiled in the same kinds of debates and rivalries (particularly with Cimon) that Thucydides attributes to the later politicians. See Podlecki 1998: 35-45.

says of his own fate, κρινοῦμαι γὰρ ὡς ἐν παιδίοις ἰατρός ἂν κρίνοιτο κατηγοροῦντος ὀψοποιοῦ ('for I will be judged as a doctor would be judged among children with a cook as prosecutor,' 521e). Thucydides also suggests that this kind of flattery is connected with the excessive ambition and competitiveness of the speakers: they wish to win above all else, and their best chance of winning is to ignore the truth and appeal to the pleasure of the audience (πρὸς ἡδονήν, 2.65).

Thucydides, after making this contrast between the political climate during Pericles' time and the political climate after his death, goes on to describe Cleon as by far the most persuasive man to the people at that time (τῷ τε δήμῳ παρά πολὺ ἐν τῷ τότε πιθανώτατος, 3.36.6). But instead of the servile, flattering speech that we might expect from the politicians of this period, Cleon is described as also the 'most violent of all the citizens' (βιαιότατος τῶν πολιτῶν), and indeed, his speech seems to be quite the opposite of flattery. Furthermore, if Cleon's conduct as a politician is meant to serve as a contrast to that of Pericles, then why are there so many verbal parallels between the speeches of the two men?<sup>272</sup> Perhaps Cleon's reminiscences of Pericles are meant to suggest that Cleon, in some sense, wanted to be a Pericles, that he wanted to make such an impression on the people that they would be immediately persuaded and would see no need to consider any competing viewpoint, just as Pericles had been able to do. At any rate, if we want to examine the 'paired' or 'opposing' speeches in Thucydides, we will have to recognize that there are sometimes multiple levels of pairings and oppositions: while Cleon's speech is most directly opposed to Diodotus', it is also meant to be contrasted with the speeches of Pericles.

Furthermore, there are a number of reasons to think that Thucydides is inviting his readers to consider the contrast between the two politicians and the two types of political climate that they each exemplify specifically in terms of the problems associated with competitiveness in political discourse. Pericles has no real competitors to speak of, as is apparent from the fact that, even when Thucydides mentions that opposing viewpoints were indeed expressed, he sees no need to offer them to his readers for a hearing. This is not to say that there was no freedom of speech during Pericles' time, or that he was somehow tyrannical (hints of which some scholars have seen),<sup>273</sup> but only that there was no other citizen at the time who could offer Pericles a real challenge. As we noted, the competition during that period was rather between Pericles and the δῆμος; and despite the people's attempt to assert its authority by fining Pericles, Thucydides is decisive in pronouncing Pericles the ultimate victor. The hyper-competitiveness, on the other hand, of the political climate characterized by the speeches of Cleon and Diodotus is emphasized not only by the tone and format of their speeches but also by the content. The entire first half of Cleon's speech, in fact, amounts implicitly to a powerful (and extremely competitive) critique of competitive discourse.

There are a number of parallels between the speeches of Cleon and Diodotus. Both speakers make arguments about the importance of conducting assembly debates in a less competitive and more prudent manner. And both offer suggestions for how to reduce that competitiveness by describing the way deliberation ought to be conducted. Finally, both diagnose the problem of competitiveness by way of contrast with the other rhetorical

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<sup>272</sup> Connor 1984: 79, n. 1 lists all of the parallels, as well as the scholarship on the issue. Most notably, both Cleon and Pericles refer to Athens as a tyranny (3.37.2 and 2.63.2), and both claim to be unchanging in their opinions (3.38.1 and 2.61.2). Connor suggests that the "immediate effect is surely to establish a contrast between Cleon's superficial resemblance to Pericles and his advocacy of a policy whose *orgē* (passion) (N.B. 3.38.1) contrasts sharply with the *gnōmē* of Pericles." See also Connor 1971: 119-133.

<sup>273</sup> For a recent argument that Thucydides paints Pericles in a negative light, as overly enamored of power, see Foster 2010.

genres. But whereas Cleon suggests that deliberative rhetoric is currently too much like epideictic, Diodotus suggests that it is too much like forensic. Thus, each offers a different solution to the problem: Cleon argues that the epideictic element must be reduced, and Diodotus argues that the forensic element must be reduced.<sup>274</sup>

We can identify three main strands of argument in Cleon's attempt to persuade the Athenians to stand by their decision from the previous day's assembly to put to death the entire male population of Mytilene (though these strands are not presented discretely in this order). First, he argues that the whole population is guilty of committing injustice against Athens, and therefore justice demands that they be punished (3.39.1-2). Second, he argues that such punishment is in the interest of the Athenian empire, specifically as a deterrent to other allies who might be considering revolt (3.39.3-4). And finally, he offers a rather complicated critical analysis of the way that assembly debates are conducted, suggesting that, if the Athenians follow through with their change of heart and decide not to punish all of the Mytileneans, then that decision will have resulted from various flaws in the deliberating process (3.37-38).

The first two points are explicitly connected in his argument. Indeed, he claims that punishment is the only way that both advantage and justice can be combined. But also, his model for the quarrel between the two poleis is clearly that of a court trial. And just as in a court trial one party must win and one party must lose (zero-sum), Cleon argues that, if the Athenians fail to pronounce the Mytileneans guilty and to punish them as they deserve, then they will be condemning themselves:

πειθόμενοι μὲν ἐμοὶ τὰ τε δίκαια ἐς Μυτιληναίους καὶ τὰ ξύμφορα ἅμα ποιήσετε, ἄλλως δὲ γνόντες τοῖς μὲν οὐ χαριεῖσθε, ὑμᾶς δὲ αὐτοὺς μάλλον δικαιώσεσθε.

If you are persuaded by me, you will do in respect to the Mytileneans both what is just and what is advantageous at the same time, but if you decide otherwise, you will not be doing them a favor but will rather be condemning yourselves. (3.40.4)

So alongside his argument for the expediency of punishment as a deterrent, he appears to make the assumption that, in this situation, just as in a court trial, there must be a winner and loser, and that thus the Athenians must decide which they would prefer to be. Ultimately, he subordinates justice to advantage, arguing that, even if punishment is not (morally) right, the advantage that it brings nonetheless justifies it.<sup>275</sup> Otherwise, the Athenians should just give up the empire and 'act the gentleman' without any danger: εἰ παύεσθαι τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀκινδύνου ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι (3.40.4). This mocking use of the verb ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι is clearly an agonistic taunt; it is an attempt to play on the class prejudices as well as the competitive impulses of the δῆμος. His intent seems to be to

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<sup>274</sup> See MacLeod 1978 for the forensic tone of Cleon's speech. He analyzes this debate as an example of symbuleutic oratory and suggests of Cleon and Diodotus that "the rhetoric which they employ to convince their hearers is for the historian a way of discovering to his readers the limits, or the failures, as well as the powers, of reasoning (p. 64)."

<sup>275</sup> 3.40.4. εἰ δὲ δὴ καὶ οὐ προσήκον ὅμως ἀξιοῦτε τοῦτο δρᾶν, παρὰ τὸ εἰκὸς τοι καὶ τούσδε ξυμφόρως δεῖ κολάζεσθαι ('but even if it is not appropriate, nevertheless deem it right to do this, indeed outside of decency we still must punish these men for our advantage'). Cleon has just identified δίκαια and ξύμφορα as the two positive features of his proposal, and now he says that, even if punishment is not προσήκον, and is not consistent with τὸ εἰκὸς, it still must be carried out ξυμφόρως. Thus προσήκον and τὸ εἰκὸς clearly refer back to δίκαια, but they take it beyond the strictly forensic sense that Cleon reserves for it. And it is this broader kind of justice, associated with general 'decency,' that Cleon will go on to mock.

make the δῆμος think of virtues like moderation and decency in this situation as nothing more than the weakness and cowardice of the aristocrats.<sup>276</sup>

As commentators have pointed out, Cleon's conception of justice (or the conception that he would like his audience to have) is the sort of retributive, 'eye for an eye' conception that appears in Greek tragedy. The Mytileneans must be punished ἀξίως τῆς ἀδικίας ('in a manner worthy of the injustice,' 3.39.6). And as Winnington-Ingram argues, Cleon also invokes the definition of justice offered by Polemarchus in the first book of the *Republic*, namely 'helping friends and harming enemies.'<sup>277</sup> This is the ethical principle on which Cleon relies when he expresses his astonishment that anyone could possibly oppose punishment by arguing that 'the injustices of the Mytileneans are beneficial to us, and our sufferings are harmful to the allies' (τὰς μὲν Μυτιληναίων ἀδικίας ἡμῖν ὠφελίμους οὔσας, τὰς δ' ἡμετέρας ξυμφορὰς τοῖς ξυμμάχοις βλάβας καθισταμένας, 3.38.1). However, in addition to the fact that this statement is not offered explicitly as an instance of justice, it is also a bit more complicated than the principle of helping friends and harming enemies. There is no doubt that Cleon is continuing to appeal to a retributive ethics here. No opponent will be able to prove that we have not been harmed by the Mytileneans, and therefore it goes without saying that we should harm them in return. But where we would expect Cleon to suggest that the Athenians ought to harm their 'enemies' (ἐχθροῖς), he instead uses the word 'allies' (ξυμμάχοις). Strictly speaking, the Mytileneans are no longer allies of Athens, so he appears to be implying that it would be a good idea for the Athenians to harm, not only the Mytileneans, but the rest of their (actual) allies as well. Indeed, one would think that the word σύμμαχος would much more readily be assimilated to 'friend' than to 'enemy.'<sup>278</sup> But Cleon's statement reminds us that, for him, the 'allies' of an empire are always enemies, or at least potential enemies. So I would suggest that, rather than simply invoking Polemarchus' definition of justice here, Cleon is so carried away with his retributive sense of justice, he is so fixated on the importance of retaliation, that he has twisted the principle by blurring the categories of 'friend' and 'enemy' and thus widening the field of those for whom punishment is deemed appropriate.

Of course it would be wrong to say (as some commentators have) that Cleon's retributive sense of justice is opposed to 'what is morally right.'<sup>279</sup> Rather, it amounts to one particular, very narrow conception of moral correctness. He does claim that advantage should trump justice (as does Diodotus), so that, even if it is wrong to punish the Mytileneans, the Athenians should do so nonetheless. But his insistence that punishment is the only just (as well as advantageous) course of action makes it clear that he intends such a conditional statement to be taken primarily as counterfactual ('even if it were unjust, we should still punish them'). Aristotle can be useful here as well. As we saw, in the *EN* (1130a-b), he distinguishes between two types of justice. Justice in the broad sense incorporates all of the virtues and merely regards them from a particular point of view, namely the point of view of the other people who are affected by one's actions. But there is also a narrowly defined justice, which has to do with retribution and the distribution of goods. And it is this narrow justice – in particular its retributive element, which is the particular purview of the

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<sup>276</sup> Note that Pericles uses the same verb in a similar way at 2.63.2. See Adkins 1960: 234 for the "violent change of usage" of this verb (along with *agathos* and *aretē*) as it began to refer more often to the 'quiet' virtues.

<sup>277</sup> Winnington-Ingram 1965: 72-73. He connects Cleon's conception of justice to both tragedy and Plato.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. e.g. Plato's (*Phil.* 14b7) use of *συμμάχειν* as a key word in his attempt to redirect competitive energies toward the cooperative pursuit of truth: *νῦν γὰρ οὐ δήπου πρὸς γε αὐτὸ τοῦτο φιλονικούμεν, ὅπως ἀγῶ τίθεμαι, ταῦτ' ἔσται τὰ νικῶντα, ἢ ταῦθ' ἂ σύ, τῶ δ' ἀληθεστάτῳ δεῖ που συμμαχεῖν ἡμᾶς ἄμφω.*

<sup>279</sup> See Hornblower *ad loc.*



law courts – that Cleon invokes. Thus, we might say that he operates with a decidedly forensic notion of justice.<sup>280</sup>

Now we come to the third strand of Cleon's argument, which I believe is more closely connected with the first two than has usually been noticed. Alongside these indications that Cleon favors a more forensic notion of justice, we are treated to his diatribe against the epideictic elements that have infiltrated deliberative debate. Cleon views the assembly as a place where both speakers and listeners are engaged in a contest of cleverness and are more concerned with winning than with arriving at the most advantageous policy.<sup>281</sup> From contests of this kind the city gives the prizes to others and takes the dangers for itself (ἡ δὲ πόλις ἐκ τῶν τοιῶνδε ἀγώνων τὰ μὲν ἄθλα ἑτέροις δίδωσιν, αὐτὴ δὲ τοὺς κινδύνους ἀναφέρει, 3.38.3). The assembly members, who are bad 'contest organizers,' are to blame, as they have become accustomed to being spectators of words and hearers of deeds (αἴτιοι δ' ὑμεῖς κακῶς ἀγωνοθετοῦντες, οἵτινες εἰώθατε θεαταὶ μὲν τῶν λόγων γίγνεσθαι, ἀκροαταὶ δὲ τῶν ἔργων, 3.38.4). Not only does this criticism suggest a reversal of the proper, natural way to deliberate, but the language clearly suggests that the assembly has become too much like a dramatic competition. And alongside this reference to the epideixis of the theater, Cleon also invokes the epideixis of the sophists (3.38.7).

Further, the audience of these epideictic contests is not merely there to pronounce judgment, but is actively engaged in the competition itself:

οἱ δ' ἀπιστοῦντες τῇ ἐξ αὐτῶν ξυνέσει ἀμαθέστεροι μὲν τῶν νόμων ἀξιούσιν εἶναι, ἀδυνατώτεροι δὲ τοῦ καλῶς εἰπόντος μέμψασθαι λόγον, κριταὶ δὲ ὄντες ἀπὸ τοῦ ἴσου μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγωνισταὶ ὀρθοῦνται τὰ πλείω.

But those who are untrusting of their own cleverness consider themselves to be less learned than the laws and less able to find fault with the speech of someone who has spoken well/nobly, and as judges from a position of equality rather than competitors, they manage more things rightly. (3.37.4)

Thus, Cleon's solution is that the common people should stop learning about the art of rhetoric so that they will only be judges (κριταὶ) and not competitors (ἀγωνισταὶ). One might imagine that Cleon has in mind the sort of agons that we examined from the plays of Euripides, which would lend themselves to fostering some degree of rhetorical expertise in the audience members, who would then consider themselves capable of critiquing the speeches and thus, in a sense, competing with them.<sup>282</sup> He also suggests that the politicians should behave the same way, though he does not elaborate at all on how that might be accomplished (the assumption seems to be that they will take their lead from the *demos*, once it has renounced its competitiveness): ὥς οὖν χρή καὶ ἡμᾶς ποιοῦντας μὴ δεινότητι καὶ ξυνέσεως ἀγῶνι ἐπαιρομένους παρὰ δόξαν τῶ ὑμετέρῳ πλήθει παραινεῖν ('thus we also ought to do the same and not give advice to you, the masses, contrary to our beliefs, carried away by cleverness and the contest of wits,' 3.37.5).

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<sup>280</sup> For Cleon's sense of justice, one might think of Pindar's (*P.* 10.44) use of ὑπέρδικον, 'exceedingly just,' to describe Nemesis.

<sup>281</sup> Those who suggest (e.g. Saxonhouse 2006) that Cleon is opposed to free speech *per se* go too far, though he is of course opposed to revisiting decisions once they have been made.

<sup>282</sup> See Ober 1989: 154 for the idea that the theater served as a kind of training ground for the audiences of lawcourts and assemblies.

In a seemingly paradoxical turn, in addition to reproaching the people for their rhetorical competitiveness, Cleon also characterizes them as slavish: δούλοι ὄντες τῶν αἰεὶ ἀτόπων ('being slaves to whatever is different,' 3.38.5); ἀπλῶς τε ἀκοῆς ἡδονῇ ἠσώμενοι καὶ σοφιστῶν θεαταῖς εἰκότεες καθημένοις μᾶλλον ἢ περὶ πόλεως βουλευομένοις ('and, put simply, defeated by the pleasure of listening and sitting there more like viewers of sophists than men deliberating about the *polis*,' 3.38.7). Thus, the apparent inconsistency between the servile, flattering sort of speech that Thucydides has led us to expect from Cleon and the violently competitive speech that he delivers is mirrored in Cleon's criticisms of the δῆμος: on the one hand, they are consumed with φιλονικία and seek at all times to show their superiority to anyone who voices an opinion, but on the other hand, they are slavish and resemble those who sit passively listening to sophists. This kind of competitiveness, Thucydides seems to suggest, which is not only described by Cleon as characteristic of the δῆμος but is also exemplified by him, cannot really achieve any kind of victory; it is not real leadership, and despite its outward manifestation, it actually reflects a kind of passiveness (being led by the people) and is ultimately intended to appeal to their pleasure. Accordingly, Cleon links the audience members' φιλονικία with their perpetual defeat: their desire for *victory* is closely connected to the fact that they have already been *defeated* by the pleasure of listening. From the point of view of rhetorical strategy, we might say that Cleon is appealing to the audience members' competitiveness, to their powerful aversion to any sort of defeat, in order to convince them to renounce that very competitiveness ("if you do not want to be a loser, then stop trying to win").

Finally, we should note that the contrast between the behavior that he demands of the Athenians toward one another and the behavior that he demands that Athens display toward other states is fairly stark. Instead of always seeking their own advantage, the citizens should give up trying to be experts in public speaking so that they can judge ἀπὸ τοῦ ἴσου. Gomme notes that ἀπὸ τοῦ ἴσου could mean either 'impartial' or 'on level terms' with the politicians (or with one another). Perhaps the ambiguity of the phrase serves to conceal the inequality that Cleon is actually recommending, since he suggests that the audience, in order to refrain from themselves becoming competitors (ἀγωνισταί), should not learn the kind of rhetorical skills that will enable them to criticize the speeches of the politicians (who presumably will retain such rhetorical skills). That is to say, his recommendations may result in assemblies that are 'impartial,' but they will certainly not be 'on level terms.' At any rate, as we have seen in the *Phoenician Women*, τὸ ἴσον has connotations of fairness and justice: it suggests the refraining from πλεονεξία. Further, the quality that he demands of his fellow citizens is σωφροσύνη (which he interprets, rather narrowly, as 'obeying the laws'); but when it comes to dealing with the allies, he only has derision for notions of 'decency' and the like.

Diodotus is equally concerned about the competitive nature of assembly debates, but his analysis is different from, and complementary to, Cleon's, and accordingly he suggests a different solution. Cleon had claimed that both the audience and speakers were too caught up in contests of rhetorical display, but Diodotus, near the beginning of his speech, locates the problem in the honors and dishonors that are awarded to the winners and losers of debates. Since everyone wants to gain the honors and avoid the dishonors, each tells the audience what they want to hear rather than what is really to their advantage. His suggestion is akin to Aeschines' complaint about material honors like crowns and inscriptions. Thus, both Cleon and Diodotus agree that in the current climate politicians say whatever they have to in order to win, but Cleon identifies the cause of the problem in an overabundance of training in, and enjoyment of, competitive rhetorical skills, while Diodotus identifies the problem in the incentives and disincentives that are offered for winning and losing. Picking up on Cleon's language, Diodotus argues that, instead of

employing such underhand strategies as trying to frighten the audience, a speaker should persuade the assembly ἀπὸ τοῦ ἴσου that he speaks better/ gives the better advice (ἄμεινον λέγοντα, 3.42.5). In order to effect such a change, the honors and dishonors, which spur the speakers to consider their private interests above those of the polis, should be dispensed with, and everyone, both persuader and followers, should be held responsible (ὑπεύθυνον, 3.43.4). Then everyone would be in it together, as it were, and the assembly would judge σωφρονέστερον (3.43.5).

He goes even further than Cleon in arguing that the deliberators should not be concerned with justice, but only with advantage. In fact, it seems that one important part of the deliberative contest is to see who is better able to convince the people that he is more capable of resisting the dictates of decency, charity, and justice and focusing exclusively on advantage; and in this respect, Diodotus is the winner. As Gomme notes, Diodotus criticizes Cleon's brand of *realpolitik* for not being so objective as it might seem; and in so far as Cleon's proposal is motivated by anger and a desire for vengeance, it is, in a sense, more concerned with justice than with advantage, even if it is only the narrow, forensic sense of justice that is a motivating force. Diodotus is clearly referring to justice in a wider sense when he says that, by killing the Mytilenean δῆμος, the Athenians will be treating their own benefactors unjustly (ἀδικήσετε τοὺς εὐεργέτας κτείνοντες, 3.47.3). But his understanding of justice is more ambiguous when he asserts the principle that it is much more advantageous (ξυμφορώτερον) 'for us willingly to be treated unjustly than unjustly to destroy those whom we should not' (ἐκόντας ἡμᾶς ἀδικηθῆναι ἢ δικαίως οὐς μὴ δεῖ διαφθεῖραι, 3.47.5). Gomme suggests that his use of ἀδικηθῆναι and δικαίως here "refer to Cleon's argument for justice, not moral right and wrong." But, of the former passage, he says that Diodotus "cannot after all keep justice, the moral question, altogether out of the argument." Thus, according to Gomme's interpretation, Diodotus equivocates by using justice both in Cleon's narrow, forensic sense, and in the broader ethical sense; and consequently both speakers will have failed to keep justice out of their considerations, and both will have made valid criticisms against the other's being motivated by justice, albeit each by a different kind of justice.

Strauss (followed by Shanske 2007) goes even further and argues that Diodotus, "with an unheard of frankness," is engaging in the very kind of deception that, as he explained at the beginning of his speech, is required from any politician who wants to successfully persuade the people. His deception lies in the fact that he tricks the people into voting for the just course of action, all the while pretending that he is not concerned with justice.<sup>283</sup> Orwin (1984) is perhaps a bit more subtle than Strauss in his analysis of Diodotus' stealthy insertion of moral arguments into his speech. But I do not believe that these charges of equivocation and deception are entirely warranted.<sup>284</sup> It seems to me that, when Diodotus equivocates between justice in a broader sense and justice in Cleon's narrower sense, it is entirely pointed and overt. Rather than saying that Diodotus is unable to keep justice out of the argument, we should say that he expands the meaning of justice, thereby revealing the narrow oversimplification of Cleon's use of the word. Cleon had warned against being motivated by pity and fair-mindedness, in short, by considerations of 'moral right and wrong,' but had explicitly encouraged the Athenians to treat the Mytileneans justly in accordance with his own narrow, retributive sense of the word. The kind of justice, on the other hand, that one might associate with appropriateness, προσῆκον, or decency, τὸ εἰκός, or 'acting the gentleman,' ἀνδραγαθίζεσθαι, he pronounced decidedly disadvantageous and wanted nothing to do with. So he is guilty of chopping up the meaning

<sup>283</sup> Strauss 1964: 233.

<sup>284</sup> Rather than signaling deception in his own argument, I think Diodotus' complaint about the pressure to be dishonest in political debates may rather point forward to Nicias' second speech in his debate with Alcibiades.

of the word to suit his purposes. Diodotus, on the other hand, with his broader conception of justice as 'fair treatment', can acknowledge that it would indeed be just to punish the Mytileneans who led the revolt but can also insist that it would be unjust to punish the innocent *demos*. Cleon may have argued that the *demos* was not in fact innocent, but if he really believed that, then why did he feel the need to insist on a kind of justice that has no room for appropriateness or decency? So by the end of his speech we see that, when Diodotus says that one cannot have both expediency and justice, he is making a direct attack on Cleon's argument, and he intends 'justice' to refer to Cleon's narrow definition. When he later shows that it is his policy that is not only more expedient but also more just, he is being subtle, no doubt, but not exactly deceptive.

Diodotus' charge, however, that Cleon has used justice only in a very narrow sense is part of a much broader strategy of locating the problems of deliberative rhetoric – the competitiveness, the deception, and the bad decisions – in a different kind of generic mixing than the one in which Cleon located them. The problem is not that deliberative has become too epideictic, but that it has become too forensic. Even at the beginning of his argument, one can see hints of this strategy of replacing Cleon's complaint about the conflation of deliberative and epideictic with his own complaint about the conflation of deliberative and forensic. As we saw above, Diodotus argues that the problem of competitiveness in the assembly is not so much due to the enjoyment and over-valuation of clever speaking, but to the rewards and punishments that the winners and losers receive. There is a hint here that assembly debates have become too much like court room trials, where rewards and penalties await the winners and losers, and the personal stakes between the litigants are extremely high. Thus all of the extraneous, deceptive strategies associated with sycophancy and the like are imported into the assembly.

Diodotus proceeds to make his concern much more explicit: οὐ γὰρ περὶ τῆς ἐκείνων ἀδικίας ἡμῖν ὁ ἀγών, εἰ σωφρονοῦμεν, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας εὐβουλίας ('for the contest for us is not about the injustice of those men, if we are temperate, but about our own good counsel,' 3.44.1). Just as Cleon described the contest as overly epideictic and overly concerned with rhetorical skill, Diodotus complains that it is overly concerned with injustice, i.e. that it is overly forensic, when it should be deliberative. And, precisely in accordance with Aristotle's discussion of deliberative rhetoric, he goes on to say that considerations of justice are not at issue: ἦν τε γὰρ ἀποφήνω πάνυ ἀδικοῦντας αὐτούς, οὐ διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἀποκτεῖναι κελεύσω, εἰ μὴ συμφέρον ('for if I show that they altogether are committing injustice, not for that reason will I demand that we kill them, if it is not advantageous,' 3.44.2). And, again in accordance with Aristotle, he reminds the assembly that deliberation is concerned with the future rather than the present (νομίζω δὲ περὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος ἡμᾶς μᾶλλον βουλευέσθαι ἢ τοῦ παρόντος).

Diodotus continues with his strategy of condemning the elements of forensic rhetoric that have infiltrated the assembly, and he even associates those elements with the 'attractive artifice' of Cleon's speech:

καὶ οὐκ ἀξιώ ὑμᾶς τῷ εὐπρεπεῖ τοῦ ἐκείνου λόγου τὸ χρήσιμον τοῦ ἐμοῦ ἀπώσασθαι. δικαιότερος γὰρ ὢν αὐτοῦ ὁ λόγος πρὸς τὴν νῦν ὑμετέραν ὀργὴν ἐς Μυτιληναίους τάχ' ἂν ἐπισπάσαιτο· ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ δικαζόμεθα πρὸς αὐτούς, ὥστε τῶν δικαίων δεῖν, ἀλλὰ βουλευόμεθα περὶ αὐτῶν, ὅπως χρησίμως ἔξουσιν.

And I do not think it right for you to push away the usefulness of my speech for the attractive artifice of his. For because his speech is more just with respect to your present anger at the Mytileneans it may perhaps pull you in;

but we are not pronouncing judgment on them in a law court, such that we require considerations of justice, but we are deliberating about them, to figure out how they will be useful. (3.44.4)

The attractiveness (τὸ εὐπρεπές) of Cleon's speech does not have so much to do with rhetorical sophistication or cleverness as it does with its appeal to the anger of the Athenians. Diodotus even goes so far as to say that it is more just (δικαιότερος) than his own, by which he surely wants to suggest that it is ultimately more concerned with strict justice than with advantage, that it is more of a forensic speech. Finally, later in the speech he again reminds the assembly that they should not behave like jurymen (δικαστάς, 3.46.4), and we might even see here a response to Cleon's argument that the assembly members should refrain from learning rhetorical techniques and should be judges (κριταί) instead of competitors (ἀγωνισταί). Diodotus interprets Cleon's language to imply that the assembly should be made up of one particular kind of κριταί, namely δικασταί.

Thucydides' apparent identification with the views expressed by Diodotus (evidence for which many commentators have noted) suggests that there may be lessons to be learned from Diodotus' claims about the role of justice in deliberation. As we noted above, he is in agreement with Aristotle that justice and injustice should only be considered instrumentally. But, importantly, this separation does not seem to demand that deliberative rhetoric necessarily always be so ethically problematic as one might expect. Rather, it is Cleon, the one who is quite fixated on questions of justice and injustice, who argues for the morally indefensible course of action. Diodotus, on the other hand, by focusing only on advantage, arrives at the conclusion that the morally just course of action also happens to be the more expedient. So not only is there here a suggestion that 'justice pays,' but also a suggestion that the more practical advantages of justice can only be recognized if one attempts to consider matters at some distance from the overly competitive, overly litigious ethos of Athenian society, in which all actions are considered in terms of honor and dishonor, recompense and punishment.

In addition to their different uses of the word δίκαιος, and related words, there is also a somewhat similar distinction in their different uses of words related to σωφροσύνη. Just as Cleon had an entirely forensic notion of justice, while Diodotus understood it as a much broader ethical term, Cleon likewise defines σωφροσύνη as little more than 'obeying the laws,' while Diodotus uses it in the broader sense of 'behaving moderately' or, as Rademaker interprets it, "attending to good advice."<sup>285</sup> I agree with Rademaker that these are the basic senses of the term as each uses it, but I would add that there is often an agonistic connotation to σωφροσύνη, and when it is invoked in this debate by each speaker, it is meant to serve as a kind of correction to the hyper-competitiveness of the assembly. For Cleon, the solution is obeying the laws, by which he (somewhat deceptively) means standing by any decision once it is made. And for Diodotus, as we saw, the solution is to make the contest about careful deliberation rather than about justice and injustice.

### 3. Nicias and Alcibiades: athletic persuasion

In the last section, we saw how Thucydides represented an ethical dilemma concerning Athens' policies toward other states through an interpersonal rhetorical competition between two statesmen. The position that Thucydides presented as both the

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<sup>285</sup> Rademaker 2005: 208.

more just and the more advantageous narrowly won out. Later, in the most pivotal moment of the entire war, when the Athenians are on the verge of sealing their fate by embarking on a catastrophic expedition to Sicily, Thucydides once again represents their deliberation through another rhetorical contest between two statesmen.<sup>286</sup> And once again, not only is the decision made through this contest, but the competitors themselves make competition and its problematic influence on politics a particular point of contention. But this time, different aspects of competition are explored. The debate is waged not so much over the issues of rhetorical genre and the undue influence of epideictic and forensic, as we saw in the Mytilenean debate, as it is over the relationship between verbal and athletic competition, and the unstable balance that each kind of competition seeks between private and collective interests.

In this debate, three kinds of competition – athletic, military, and rhetorical – are presented as interrelated. The debate is about the decision to engage in a military contest (and Alcibiades does indeed characterize the war as a contest). It is conducted, of course, within the context of a rhetorical contest. And Alcibiades' passion for athletic competition (horse-racing) becomes an important topic of the debate. While his engagement in this kind of athletic competition cannot help but serve as an analogue for his engagement in the rhetorical and military competitions, it is also related to them in a more direct way. One of the main points of contention in this debate is whether Alcibiades' private competition disqualifies him from serving as a commander of the expedition, on the grounds that it harms the public interest: he, of course, maintains rather that it gives him a powerful claim to the position. Thus the broader, elitist competitive ethos of 5th century Athens seems to be under scrutiny here, and the outcome, i.e. the decision to invade Sicily, does not give the reader a terribly favorable impression.

When Nicias stands up to speak against the expedition, he is in the unenviable position of trying to change the minds of his fellow Athenians, who have been taken in by the seductive and deceptive speech of the Egesteans (ἐπαγωγὰ οὐκ ἀληθῆ, 6.8.2). Right from the beginning of his speech, he sets forth the reason for his opposition to the expedition in language that is at once practical and normative, arguing that the Athenians should not, with hasty deliberation, embark on a war that is οὐ προσήκοντα (6.9.1), a word which, as Hornblower notes, suggests both the mere fact that it does not involve the Athenians and the ethical implication that to become embroiled in it would amount to a kind of improper over-reaching (or πλεονεξία). What is more, just as we saw in the Mytilenean debate, Nicias likewise immediately implicates flaws in the deliberative process. The Athenians are making a hasty decision not on the basis of well-reasoned arguments but because they have been persuaded by foreigners. Thus rhetoric has immediately been made a problem. Later (6.12.1) Nicias will explicitly argue that these foreigners are lying (as Thucydides has just told us) and exaggerating their resources, but so far the complaint only amounts to an insistence that the Athenians should persuade *themselves* about matters of such consequence – their reasons should be their own. But if persuasion has already been introduced as a problem, and the warning has been subtly made that those who do the persuading will often be motivated by their own interests rather than by those of the audience, then Nicias will need to address his own motivation for speaking as well.

The argument that he makes to show that his motivations are pure is perhaps honest and honorable, though it is also somewhat convoluted and thus lacking in persuasive force.<sup>287</sup> The contrast he makes is between private honor and public welfare, which is a

<sup>286</sup> Connor 1984: 162 n.111 notes that both this debate and the Mytilenean debate are actually re-deliberations of an original debate that Thucydides has left out (but only in the former debate did cooler heads prevail).

<sup>287</sup> See Tompkins 1972 for Nicias' style, which he notes is full of 'concessions and reversals.' Further, his sentences are more complex than Alcibiades' 'paratactic style.'

theme that will continue to be explored throughout both his speech and Alcibiades' particularly 'athletic' speech:

καίτοι ἔγωγε καὶ τιμῶμαι ἐκ τοῦ τοιούτου καὶ ἦσσον ἐτέρων περὶ τῶ  
ἔμαυτοῦ σώματι ὀρρωδῶ, νομίζων ὁμοίως ἀγαθὸν πολίτην εἶναι ὃς  
ἂν καὶ τοῦ σώματός τι καὶ τῆς οὐσίας προνοῆται· μάλιστα γὰρ ἂν ὁ  
τοιούτος καὶ τὰ τῆς πόλεως δι' ἑαυτὸν βούλοιοτο ὀρθοῦσθαι.

And yet I myself both gain honor from this sort of thing and fear for my own body less than others, though I nevertheless believe that whoever takes some forethought for his body and his property is a good citizen; for such a man in particular would, on account of his concern for himself, wish for the affairs of the polis to go well. (6.9.2)

In characteristically condensed fashion, Thucydides has Nicias address two kinds of personal interest recognized to be of particular importance in politics: honor and survival. Nicias is motivated by neither. He is arguing for the policy that brings him less honor, so that certainly cannot be a motivation. And even if his policy does serve the interest of his own personal safety, it will only do so incidentally, since he is exceptionally unconcerned about his own life. He then goes on to offer a brief defense of the 'personal safety' motivation, this time expanding it to include the safety, not only of person, but of property as well. He suggests, quite reasonably, that the interest of the citizen's individual preservation coincides with the interest of the state's preservation. Commentators have suggested that Nicias is here trying to appease certain members of the assembly, and they note that Nicias' own membership in the propertied class compels him to try to forestall the accusation of cowardice in this way.<sup>288</sup> But perhaps the more important point here is that, while he excuses those who (unlike him) are motivated by self preservation, he does not excuse those who are motivated by personal honor – which of course points to Alcibiades.<sup>289</sup> He goes on to say that he has never spoken contrary to his opinion (παρὰ γνώμην) for the sake of being honored above others (προτιμᾶσθαι), and accordingly he will now say what he thinks best (βέλτιστα). We should note that the prefix προ- in προτιμᾶσθαι indicates that he pictures a speaker who is interested not only in gaining honor, but specifically in gaining *more* honor than others; thus he seems to refuse to accept the view of deliberative debate as a competition in honor.<sup>290</sup>

In just a few lines, then, Nicias has presented a list of possible private and public motivations for those who engage in political deliberation. If a man is motivated either by safety or the preservation of his property, then his motivations are essentially private, but they are nonetheless justifiable because they happen to be private interests that also align with public interests. Honor, on the other hand, is presumably a strictly private motivation in Nicias' estimation and is thus less justifiable.<sup>291</sup> But best by far is the man who, qua citizen

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<sup>288</sup> See e.g. Kohl 1977: 11-12, who also notes: "Wie Alkibiades zu Beginn seiner Rede 6, 16 bei dem ihm besonders am Herzen liegenden Thema (δόξα) rechtfertigend verweilt, so hier entsprechend Nicias bei der Frage seiner Tapferkeit und seiner οὐσία."

<sup>289</sup> The idea that it is reasonable, and even admirable, to take the safe course by avoiding risk and bloodshed but is inexcusable to risk everything for the sake of honor is the exact opposite evaluation from that expressed, e.g., in Tyrtaeos 12. Indeed, Nicias comes across as decidedly unheroic (even if his position on the issue of the expedition is the correct one).

<sup>290</sup> We might also note that he uses the less agonistic word βέλτιστα instead of κράτιστα, which we saw Demosthenes use.

<sup>291</sup> Though we might imagine that honor should be equally aligned with public interest, since it is bestowed by fellow citizens and thus indicates the city's approval of private achievements.

or statesman, is susceptible to none of these motivations but cares only for what is best. And what is best, τὰ βέλτιστα, is not qualified in terms of either honor or safety, private or public; it is just 'what is best,' pure and simple.<sup>292</sup>

Nicias ends his exordium with a return to the theme of πλεονεξία, as he laments that his speech would be too weak to convince the Athenians if he were to try to persuade them to preserve what they already have. By characterizing his own speech as hypothetically weak (ἀσθενής), Nicias is, in a sense, refusing to engage fully in the rhetorical contest. But at the same time, by characterizing his fellow citizens as over-reaching and not content to preserve τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, he further refines the list of motivations that he laid out earlier. Preservation of self and property was offered as the second best kind of motivation in political deliberation, and now it becomes clear that the national character of the Athenians is such that they are incapable of limiting themselves to that consideration – they always want more. In fact, we should probably understand τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, those things that the Athenians refuse to be content with preserving but desire constantly to increase, as including honor in addition to wealth. Thus Nicias figures Alcibiades as, at least in part, a product of the Athenian character, although he remains extreme in his obsession with private honor and total disregard for the public good.<sup>293</sup>

In the central argument of his speech, Nicias expands on his claim that the expedition would involve over-reaching and would endanger the possessions that the Athenians already have. And he also further develops his investigation of national character that was prompted by his complaint about the τρόποι of his fellow Athenians. In contrast, he describes the Spartans as honor-motivated, but only to the extent that they wish to preserve the honor that they already have, or to regain the honor that they have recently lost. Nicias concludes this main section of his speech by expressing his advice in the same agonistic terms that we saw Diodotus use:

ὥστε οὐ περὶ τῶν ἐν Σικελίᾳ Ἐγεσταίων ἡμῖν, ἀνδρῶν βαρβάρων, ὁ ἀγῶν, εἰ σωφρονοῦμεν, ἀλλ' ὅπως πόλιν δι' ὀλιγαρχίας ἐπιβουλεύουσιν ὀξέως φυλαξόμεθα.

Thus the contest for us is not about the Eggesteans in Sicily, foreign men, if we are temperate, but is about how we will guard against a polis that, through its oligarchical government, is fiercely plotting against us. (6.11.7)

Here σωφρονοῦμεν does not simply mean 'wise' or 'prudent.' Rather it is the opposite of πλεονεξία. If we are temperate, then we will fight the contest over our own state; otherwise the contest will be about the barbarians.<sup>294</sup>

We might want to say that Nicias' reference to the 'contest' serves as a kind of segue into the next section (6.12.2), in which he critiques the 'athletic' motivations of Alcibiades and men like him. Once again, the critique is quite condensed, packing a number of points into a single sentence. But the main points of his criticism seem to be the following: (1) Alcibiades is concerned only with himself (τὸ ἑαυτοῦ μόνον σκοπῶν); (2) he wants to be

<sup>292</sup> A category that is fairly useless if not further defined. Clearly the implication is that one should have no personal motivation whatsoever, so τὰ βέλτιστα may involve any kind of advantage, honor, wealth, good moral feeling, etc., so long as it applies only to the city and not to the individual.

<sup>293</sup> The notion that honor, or concern for the high opinion of others, is an inherently bad motivation would surely have struck an ancient Greek audience as an extreme position to take. Thucydides presents his readers with the two extreme poles in this debate and lets them try to determine the proper middle ground.

<sup>294</sup> Thucydides pairs *agon* and *sophrosune* in a similar way at 3.44.1 and 5.101 (cited by Kohl 1977: 53 as similar uses of *agon*, though he does not comment on the link with *sophrosune* in all three). Hornblower 1991 *ad loc.* points out that, given the themes of this debate, *agon* here does not simply mean 'the issue before us'.



marveled at (θαυμασθῆ, ἐλλαμπρύνεσθαι); (3) he wants to get money from the war; (4) he is profligate in his personal life (τὰ δὲ ἴδια ἀναλοῦν); and (5) he is too young either to lead or to deliberate (νεώτερος, νεωτέρω). To stress Alcibiades' selfish interests, Nicias makes two contrasts between public and private in chiasmic order. Alcibiades wants *privately* to shine at the peril of the *state*; such men treat *the people's things* unjustly and waste *their own things*. The chiasmus emphasizes the connection between Alcibiades' concern with personal honor ('shining') and his inability (or lack of desire) to preserve his own wealth; and this connection recalls both Nicias' list of motivations and his complaint about the national character of the Athenians. As we noted above, Alcibiades is characteristic of his polis in respect to his restless refusal to be content with preserving himself and his property – he always needs more.<sup>295</sup> But for Alcibiades, this πλεονεξία is a direct consequence of his desire for personal honor, which requires a great deal of wasteful expenditure, in particular on horse-racing. So here we have a further explanation for why the personal honor motivation is worse than that of personal preservation: while the latter at least coincides with public interests, the former can even undermine it.

Aside from the fact that persuasion was raised as a problem right at the outset of Nicias' speech, so far the theme of competition has been largely limited to military and athletic arenas, and thus it has been left to the reader to make a connection between these kinds of competition and the kind that is currently being exemplified by the debate, i.e. the competition of public discourse. But now Nicias draws attention to the present rhetorical contest by directly addressing his own partisans (or at least those he hopes will be his partisans). He thus characterizes the present debate as not simply an intellectual exercise or an objective weighing of options, but very much an interpersonal, adversarial event; and one not only between the two statesmen but between the two groups that they represent, in this case, the young and the old. In this context, he reintroduces the problem of persuasion and ties it to the problem of honor as a motivation:

οὓς ἐγὼ ὁρῶν νῦν ἐνθάδε τῷ αὐτῷ ἀνδρὶ παρακελευστοὺς  
καθημένους φοβοῦμαι, καὶ τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις ἀντιπαρακελεύομαι μὴ  
καταισχυνθῆναι, εἴ τῷ τις παρακάθηται τῶνδε, ὅπως μὴ δόξει, ἐὰν μὴ  
ψηφίζεται πολεμεῖν, μαλακὸς εἶναι...

I am afraid as I see those men [i.e. young men] now sitting here summoned by the same man [i.e. Alcibiades], and, in opposition, I summon the older men not to be ashamed, if one of these men is sitting next to him, lest he appear to be soft if he does not vote for war... (6.13.1)

Against the exceedingly competitive national character of the Athenians, who always yearn for more, exemplified in its worst form by Alcibiades, who always needs more money to waste it on seeking more honor, Nicias hopes to rally the older generation. Alcibiades, he argues, is too young, not only for the command of the expedition, but even for deliberating about it!<sup>296</sup> At the same time, he recognizes that the men of the older generation may incur shame if they express their support for the safer course. As Nicias knows very well, this kind of shame, itself a major component of the φιλοτιμία that holds such sway over men's decisions, is easily exploited by those who have personal, selfish reasons to go to war.

<sup>295</sup> This of course matches the Corinthians' description of the Athenians in the Spartan assembly (1.70), but the Corinthians describe the Athenians' rapacity as entirely selfless; indeed they say that the Athenians sacrifice their own bodies as if they were not at all their own: ἐτι δὲ τοῖς μὲν σώμασιν ἀλλοτριωτάτοις ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως χρῶνται (1.70.6).

<sup>296</sup> 6.12.2: καὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα μέγα εἶναι καὶ μὴ οἶον νεωτέρω βουλευσασθαί τε καὶ ὀξέως μεταχειρίσαι.

So in this first speech, Nicias has brought together several different aspects of competition and has made distinctions between personal and international competition, between different potential objects of competition, namely possessions and honor, and between moderate preservation and over-reaching; and he has connected these competitive motivations to military, athletic, and rhetorical contexts. As Hornblower points out, it is not accurate to say (as some have) that Nicias favors total inaction or pacifism.<sup>297</sup> Likewise, he does not entirely reject competition; rather, he puts into question the motivations that drive his fellow citizens in their competitions, whether athletic, rhetorical, or military.

Alcibiades' speech, on the other hand, is perhaps the most sustained defense of competitiveness, in all of its contexts, that we have in Greek literature. He offers several arguments for the public benefits that competition (both athletic and military) provides; he argues for the distinctions, the privileges, and even the feelings of superiority enjoyed by victors; and he even seems to suggest that, when it comes to competition, there is a near complete coincidence of private and public interests.<sup>298</sup>

Alcibiades begins his speech with a *διαβολῆς λύσις*, immediately drawing attention to the antagonistic nature of the debate. He has been attacked for his personal competitiveness and must now defend it, fittingly, in this rhetorical competition. Rather than arguing that Nicias is mistaken in any way about his motivations, Alcibiades sets out to show that his personal ambitions are in fact beneficial to the state. But at the same time, he also seeks to reinforce the impression that he is superior to others. Right from the beginning (6.16.1), he argues that it is more 'fitting' for him to 'rule' (or hold the command) than it is for others. On the one hand, the word *προσῆκει* is meant to offer a kind of refutation to the charge of over-reaching; but on the other hand, *μᾶλλον ἐτέρων* suggests that it is precisely his superiority that prevents his actions from being properly characterized as over-reaching. Thus a major part of his defense, it seems, will be to try to impress the audience with his greatness. By beginning his speech with an extended boast about his Olympic victories, he in a sense proves Nicias' point about the connection between his athletic passion and his political interests. His speech immediately appears as a sort of rhetorical chariot race, another opportunity to be marveled at and to shine, and thereby to score another victory. Furthermore, his own language makes a clear connection between his worthiness to lead the expedition (*ἄξιος*, 6.16.1) and the worthiness of his athletic pursuits (*ἀξίως τῆς νίκης*, 6.16.2). Indeed, one gets the impression that Alcibiades wants implicitly to make the argument that victory is self-justifying, whether in a military, an athletic, or a rhetorical context, and since he has shown himself to be a winner in one arena, likewise he ought to win this debate and be given command.

Alcibiades does however also respond directly to Nicias' criticisms regarding personal honor as a motivation in his private exploits, and by extension, in his public policy. He claims that the activities for which he is maligned bring both *δόξα* to him and his family and advantage (*ὠφελία*) to the state. In particular, his victories make Athens appear more powerful to the rest of the Greeks, indeed even more powerful than it actually is: *οἱ γὰρ Ἕλληνες καὶ ὑπὲρ δύναμιν μείζω ἡμῶν τὴν πόλιν ἐνόμισαν τῶ ἐμῶ διαπρεπεῖ τῆς Ὀλυμπιάζε θεωρίας* ('for the Greeks considered our city greater, even beyond its power, because of my magnificence in the festival at Olympia,' 6.16.2).<sup>299</sup> He goes on to boast that

<sup>297</sup> See his note for 6.18.6.

<sup>298</sup> We might compare this aspect of his argument with Demosthenes *On the Crown*. Forde 1989: 79-80: "Honor traditionally links the self-interest of the statesman with the public good of the community, allowing their interests to coincide: the statesman reaps honor for actions that benefit the city. Alcibiades seems to be the first to take this uncompromisingly into the realm of private life, making his private life part of his public project and his quest for honor."

<sup>299</sup> See Immerwahr 1973 for *dunamis* as the unifying theme of the whole work.

he entered seven chariots in the races, which no private citizen (ιδιώτης) had ever done, and came in first, second, and fourth. His summary explanation of how such an impressive achievement is not *really* motivated by private honor is sophistic in the extreme. Only by convention are such things equated with honor: from the actual deed, power too is imagined (νόμῳ μὲν γὰρ τιμὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ δρωμένου καὶ δύναμις ἅμα ὑπονοεῖται, 6.16.2). Here νόμῳ is contrasted with τοῦ δρωμένου (which, considering Thucydides' penchant for using neuter participles as abstract substantives, should probably be taken as equivalent to ἔργον), thereby making a kind of hybrid of the νόμος/ φύσις opposition and the λόγος/ ἔργον opposition.<sup>300</sup> Thus, convention is contrasted with deed. But Alcibiades then goes on to further complicate the opposition by saying that the liturgies and other activities through which he 'shines' in Athens are by nature envied by his fellow citizens, though, again, they create the appearance of strength to foreigners (τοῖς μὲν ἄστοις φθονεῖται φύσει, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ξένους καὶ αὕτη ἰσχὺς φαίνεται, 6.16.3). Now we see that the real contrast is between the conventional honor that Alcibiades receives and the natural envy that is directed at him by the rest of the Athenians. There is thus an implication that, by winning all of these victories, he is actually making a great sacrifice on behalf of the state. The honor that he receives is not even entirely real, but is only conventional – what he *really* wins by these victories is envy. Yet he perseveres selflessly in order to increase his polis' reputation for power among would-be adversaries.<sup>301</sup>

The emphasis of Alcibiades' argument, as Kohl notes, is on the benefit to the state that his competitive displays provide, and that benefit is the *appearance* of power, δύναμις/ ἰσχύς, as opposed to *actual* power. Commentators have also noted that the 'appearance' of power that Alcibiades claims to produce matches very closely Nicias' suggestion that the Athenian fleet only make a display of their power to the Sicilians (δείξαντες τὴν δύναμιν, 6.11.4) rather than actually invade the island. But if a 'mere' appearance of power constitutes the 'real' benefit, then what kind of meaning does the λόγος/ ἔργον opposition really have? In this debate, Thucydides almost seems to be deconstructing the dichotomy and collapsing the two terms: speech and appearance are kinds of action, with very real consequences, and, as we will see, purely physical deeds contain an element of rhetoric and persuasion. In the *Apology*, Socrates compares the benefits that his fellow citizens derive from him to those that they derive from athletic victors, and he describes that difference as one of 'actual', as opposed to merely 'apparent', benefit.<sup>302</sup> Neither Nicias nor Alcibiades, on the other hand, is able to maintain such a clean division.

Alcibiades is the complete competitor, and he is making the case for the timocratic, or rather the 'philotimic' man. Naturally, such a man will strive for personal honor, but, in his defense, he will also (incidentally) be benefiting the state by making it appear more powerful; and, at any rate, he will have to put up with the envy that comes with that honor. But if such a life involves all of the dangers and stresses that come from being envied, then

<sup>300</sup> Gomme, Andrewes, Dover *ad loc.* take νόμῳ to refer only to 'thinking' rather than to 'convention' and thus do not see the kind of strong opposition with ἐκ τοῦ δρωμένου that I am suggesting. But I suggest, as we will see, that Alcibiades does indeed want to suggest here that τιμὴ, *in reality* (as opposed to convention), amounts only to the burdensome φθόνος of one's peers.

<sup>301</sup> Kohl 1977: 88-9 argues (against Heinemann 1945) that there is no real opposition between νόμῳ and φύσει here because 'honor' and 'envy' refer to the same thing from different viewpoints, and Alcibiades is arguing that 'honor' is a good thing - indeed he is trying to justify the privileges that he enjoys - thus, he must embrace 'envy' as well. But, in keeping with the notion that the advantages of honor are somehow less real, he goes on to suggest that men like him are disliked during their lifetimes (presumably because of φθόνος) and do not really enjoy the benefits of the reputation that they have earned until after their death. I am generally not convinced that we ought to expect Alcibiades' argument to be entirely logical or consistent. Kohl also cites passages from Pindar and Epicharmus to show that envy was not considered entirely bad; but those passages only show that it was considered better to be envied than to be pitied.

<sup>302</sup> Pl. *Apol.* 36d, cited by Kohl 1977: 85, n. 1, along with Xenophanes 2.

perhaps more justification is needed for why one would choose it. Alcibiades' explanation reveals a certain continuity between him and the heroes of Homeric epic. He has set himself above his fellow citizens, and he argues that, just as a man in misfortune is disdained, so he should be able to disdain others if he is flourishing: ἄλλ' ὥσπερ δυστυχοῦντες οὐ προσαγορευόμεθα, ἐν τῷ ὁμοίῳ τις ἀνεχέσθω καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν εὐπραγούντων ὑπερφρονούμενος ('but just as we are not spoken to when we are in misfortune, likewise one should put up with being looked down on by those who are successful' 6.16.4).<sup>303</sup> But while, in life, he will potentially have greater amounts of both privilege and risk, pleasure and pain, the real goal is immortality. Alcibiades explains that such men are painful to others while they are alive, but as soon as they die, everyone wants to claim them as their own relations and fellow-citizens. Thus, it seems that one of Alcibiades' primary defenses for his hyper-competitive (and profligate) lifestyle is that he aspires to some kind of hero-worship.<sup>304</sup>

Here we should consider the similarities between the athletic competition that Alcibiades is describing and the rhetorical competition in which he is currently engaged. He claims that the effect of his athletic display is that it leads the other, non-Athenian Greeks to overestimate the power of Athens; and yet he himself, along with most of his fellow citizens, appears to have an unrealistic and inflated sense of the military power of Athens, as subsequent events in Sicily will confirm. Is it perhaps the case that, along with Athens' potential enemies, he has duped the Athenians as well with all those victories? or that he has even duped himself? And now he is giving a speech that amounts to yet another competitive display. Indeed, he is once again bringing his seven chariots and his illustrious victories before the eyes of the Athenians, as it were, and once again causing them to overestimate their own power.

Another way to put this connection between athletic and rhetorical competition is to say that Alcibiades, when he seeks to persuade the assembly of the public benefit of his personal φιλοτιμία, ends up describing his athletic pursuits as a kind of persuasion. Nicias had complained that the Athenians were persuaded by the Egesteans, who had not been entirely truthful; in fact, their deception lay in the fact that they gave a false impression of their own resources, and thus of their δύναμις (6.12.1). And now we find Alcibiades describing his chariot racing as serving the same basic function as the Egesteans' deceptive speech. Likewise, his current speech is another persuasive, competitive display, only this time, the false appearance of power that it produces will manifestly prove to be to the detriment of its intended beneficiaries.<sup>305</sup> Thus Thucydides appears here to intertwine some of the problems that attend on persuasion with those that attend on competition in non-verbal contexts.

Alcibiades goes on (6.16.6) to characterize the battle at Mantinea as yet another competition, and this military 'contest' (ἀγωνίασθαι) he likewise links to verbal persuasion by suggesting that it was largely due to his rhetorical abilities that the battle was such a success.<sup>306</sup> His confidence in his own persuasive abilities leads him to the topic of the

<sup>303</sup> One might compare Sarpedon's speech at *Il.* 12.310 ff., though Sarpedon is only noting the connection between privileges and risks that characterize the life of the elite warrior – he does not include disdain for others as one of those privileges.

<sup>304</sup> Perhaps he is not imagining an actual hero cult for himself, but as Gomme, Andrewes, Dover point out (*ad loc.*), the best examples of such fabricated claims to kinship are in regard to mythological heroes (such as Andocides' claim of descent from Odysseus: Hellanikos Fr. 170). See also Grethlein 2010: 159-60, who argues that Thucydides uses the Trojan war as a foil for the Peloponnesian war.

<sup>305</sup> At the same time, Alcibiades also underestimates the power of the opposing forces in Sicily, assuming that they are likewise exaggerating their own power (6.17.5).

<sup>306</sup> Though, as Gomme, Andrewes, Dover note *ad loc.*, the Spartans won the battle and thereby consolidated their power, so it was hardly a success. Hornblower *ad loc.* notes the athletic connotations of ἀγωνίασθαι.

persuadability of the Sicilians. He presents an image of a Sicilian assembly, which surely should function in part for the reader as a reminder and a point of comparison for the present Athenian assembly. Alcibiades says that the Sicilians will easily come over to the Athenians' side if they hear anything καθ' ἡδονήν ('in accordance with pleasure,' 6.17.4), especially if they are experiencing factional discord. The idea of persuading καθ' ἡδονήν of course describes exactly the feature of public discourse that most concerned Plato (we may also recall from the last chapter that Plato likewise associates rhetoric with athletic and military skills). Further, when Alcibiades mentions the Sicilians' susceptibility to speeches delivered καθ' ἡδονήν, we will certainly want to consider the way in which this description may apply equally well to the current Athenian assembly, in which Alcibiades, by telling the Athenians what they want to hear, in accordance with their τρόποι, is surely speaking καθ' ἡδονήν. Further, when Alcibiades suggests that the factionalism in Sicily will prevent them from listening to a speech with 'united thought' (μιᾶ γνώμη), we might consider the kind of generational factionalism that Nicias sought to exploit. Of course, Alcibiades' claim that the Sicilians will be easily won over is proved false; while Nicias' warning that they rather will band together out of fear turns out to be prophetic. So, perhaps with some intentional irony on Thucydides' part, Alcibiades' comment about their persuadability is actually much more applicable to the Athenians themselves.

Alcibiades ends his speech with a flourish, in which he attempts to confront directly the generational 'factionalism' and at the same time to provide a kind of general encomium of the 'good' kind of competition, which bears most directly on the 'competition' of the proposed Sicilian expedition, but also implicitly serves as a further defense of his own personal competitive pursuits. There are really two arguments here. Alcibiades moves skillfully in a single sentence from the importance of the unity of the youth and the elderly, indeed of all classes of society, to an argument for the importance of competition for the sake of technical progress and of vitality generally: ἀγωνιζομένην δὲ αἰεὶ προσλήψεσθαί τε τὴν ἐμπειρίαν καὶ τὸ ἀμύνεσθαι οὐ λόγῳ ἀλλ' ἔργῳ μᾶλλον ξύνηθες ἔξειν ('but [the city] in competition will always acquire more experience and will be more accustomed to defending itself, not in word but in deed,' 6.18.6). Indeed, the two themes are introduced together right at the beginning of the sentence, when he tells the assembly not to be dissuaded by the ἀπραγμοσύνη καὶ διάστασις ('inaction' and 'dividing') of Nicias' arguments. The only implicit connection made between the two themes is that they both affect the strength and preservation of the polis. Alcibiades does not make the sort of connection that we might expect: namely, that internal competition prevents a society from uniting and more effectively competing against its real enemies. But perhaps that sort of argument would lack persuasive force coming from a man who was notorious for being extremely competitive with his fellow citizens. So instead, the contrast that he makes is between division, διάστασις, and competition (in this case, the ἀγών of war); and these terms are assumed to be antithetical in some sense. Alcibiades ends his speech with a sentiment that recalls Cleon's speech, arguing that the most stable course for men is to abide by the νόμοι (as well as the ἦθη, the national character) even if they are bad (6.19.7). Surely this echo of Cleon marks Alcibiades' plea for unity as disingenuous at best.

Thucydides will go on to emphasize after the debate that the Athenians were thoroughly consumed by the competitive zeal that Alcibiades recommends: the soldiers e.g. zealously competed with each other (μεγάλη σπουδῆ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀμιλληθέν 6.31.3). But it happened that, while they were engaged in competition (*eris*) among themselves according to each man's station, that competition appeared to the other Greeks more like a display (*epideixis*) of power and wealth than preparation for war (ξυνέβη δὲ πρὸς τε σφᾶς αὐτοὺς ἅμα ἔριν γενέσθαι, ὥς τις ἕκαστος προσετάχθη, καὶ ἐς τοὺς ἄλλους Ἕλληνας ἐπίδειξιν μᾶλλον εἰκασθῆναι τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐξουσίας ἢ ἐπὶ

πολεμίους παρασκευήν, 6.31.4). This comment suggests that Alcibiades' conflation of athletic and military competition is flawed and dangerous. Just as he argued that his display of power at the Olympic games qualified him for command, the Athenian army mistakes competitive display for effective military preparation.

When Nicias sees that he has lost the debate, he decides to try one more time with a slightly different strategy. He will try to give the Athenians some apprehension about their ability to conduct the expedition by describing the enormous preparations and resources that it will require. The only thing that I want to note about this final speech is that, as commentators have noted, it is not entirely honest, and thus it serves as an illustration of Diodotus' complaint about the fact that politicians are compelled to lie. In particular, in keeping with Alcibiades' conception of competition as a (mis)representation of power, it amounts to an attempt to exaggerate the δύναμις of the enemy. In this way, Thucydides presents us with a rhetorical competition which, just like an athletic competition, involves competing presentations of the appearance of δύναμις. But as the subsequent events show, Nicias' attempt to exaggerate the power of the enemy perhaps falls short even of doing it justice.

#### 4. Hermocrates and Athenagoras: competition and στάσις

The debate at Athens is soon followed by a debate at Syracuse, which, as has been noted especially by Connor, serves as a kind of foil for Athens.<sup>307</sup> Indeed, Thucydides suggests in Book 8 that one reason the Syracusans were so successful in fighting against the Athenians is because they are similar in character (μάλιστα γὰρ ὁμοιότροποι γενόμενοι ἄριστα καὶ προσεπολέμησαν, 8.96.5). And one area in which, I suggest, the comparison between the two *poleis* is invited with particular emphasis is in the area of competition, the problematization of which Thucydides continues to develop in these especially agonistic Sicilian books.<sup>308</sup> Aside from Athens, Sicily is perhaps the most appropriate setting for a representation of specifically verbal competition, given that it is the legendary birthplace of the art of rhetoric. And Thucydides explicitly notes that the Sicilian *poleis* that the Athenians encountered on their expedition were not only similar in character but also had the same kind of democratic government as Athens (δημοκρατουμέναις τε, ὥσπερ καὶ αὐτοί, 7.55.2). But even if the reader is made to understand quite clearly from this debate that Sicily, like Athens, is a very competitive place, s/he may still be perplexed, as many commentators have been, about the vehement and seemingly irrelevant content of the most competitive section of the debate, namely Athenagoras' political outburst. In the midst of a debate about whether or not the Athenians are on their way to invade Sicily and what preparations the Syracusans ought to make, a diatribe on the superiority of democracy to oligarchy seems more than a little out of place.

One explanation that has been suggested is that Thucydides composed this debate at a relatively late date and was here foreshadowing the later *stasis* in Syracuse that brought Dionysius I to power. It may very well be that Thucydides has in mind these later developments, but that does not mean that Athenagoras' diatribe is any more relevant or

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<sup>307</sup> Connor 1984: 170-6 lists the similarities between this debate and the one between Nicias and Alcibiades and, more generally, the similarities between Thucydides' characterization of Syracusan and Athenian democracy: "The view of Syracuse that is provided by this debate is like an unexpected reflection in a mirror (p. 172)." See Robinson 2000 for the historical evidence of Syracusan democracy.

<sup>308</sup> Cf. Hornblower's note for 6.11.6. He also notes the use of καλὸν ἀγώνισμα at 7.56.2 and 7.59.2 and ἀγών at 7.56.3.

appropriate in tone to the context of the debate in which he is engaged. Indeed, one gets the impression that, despite the value of many of the points that Athenagoras makes (in particular the ironic point that Athens would never be so stupid as to embark on the campaign), there is a real dishonesty in his political attack. Thus, Bloedow's suggestion that Athenagoras' speech amounts to "a fabrication of a fabrication of rumors" seems to me rather plausible.<sup>309</sup> So while it may be that Thucydides is motivated to some extent by subsequent events in Syracuse, nonetheless the point of this outburst is probably to be found precisely in its irrelevance to the discussion.

As far as subsequent events are concerned, it seems to me that Hermocrates' later exile is much more likely to be in Thucydides' mind than the rise to power of Dionysius I. Hermocrates is presented as eminently reasonable, and there is no indication whatsoever from his speech that he has any association with a particular political party. So it seems plausible that Athenagoras' attack might be Thucydides' attempt to represent the kind of trumped up charges that (in his analysis) were later responsible for getting Hermocrates exiled, nominally for 'aiming at tyranny.'<sup>310</sup> Of course Alcibiades would then serve as a parallel, since Thucydides says that he was likewise wrongly suspected of aiming at tyranny. The competitive situation in Syracuse, however, is then even worse than in Athens, since Alcibiades at least really was excessively ambitious and bold, whereas we have no indication that Hermocrates is anything other than thoughtful and cautious.

At any rate, the notion of a late date of composition is certainly not a satisfactory explanation for his inclusion of the whole debate here. Further, it has been noted that (in Euripidean fashion) the debate does not seem to have any effect on the Syracusans' preparations or on the course of events generally. After the debate, a general steps in and simply dictates what is to be done. So it seems that Thucydides wants here to represent another deliberative scene in order to further explore how politics can be done, and more specifically, to offer a kind of mirror (as Connor puts it) of the preceding debate at Athens. The Syracusan debate was, in fact, already introduced by Alcibiades, and we noted there that his description of how he imagined it would go already invited the reader to reflect on the similarities and differences between the political climates in the two *poleis*.<sup>311</sup> And when the debate arrives, what we see is a kind of development of the theme of competition, but now the contest is performed under the looming dark cloud of full-blown political *stasis*. Athenagoras presents us with yet another profile of a hyper-competitive speaker; indeed, he appears to be the least honest, most shameless and dangerous rhetorician yet.<sup>312</sup>

Hermocrates begins his speech with some familiar reflections on the problems of persuasion (6.33.1). The first word is ἄπιστα, which is cashed out by Hermocrates' acknowledgement that he may seem ἄφρων if his arguments are not believable, even though he has persuaded himself (πείθων) that he knows these matters more clearly than

<sup>309</sup> Bloedow 1996: 151.

<sup>310</sup> This would accord with Xenophon's assessment of Hermocrates' exile (*Hell.* 1.1.27 ff.). Note also that Xenophon describes Hermocrates as a kind of teacher of rhetoric (1.1.30: κάκείνους ἐδίδασκε κελεύων λέγειν τὰ μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ παραχρήμα, τὰ δὲ βουλευσαμένους).

<sup>311</sup> It should be noted that there are also similarities between the debate at Syracuse and the Mytilenean debate, since a comparison is invited especially by the similarities between Cleon and Athenagoras. Connor 1984: 171 notes that Athenagoras is introduced in a similar way to Cleon and that "his speech is the demagogue's characteristic blend of facile argument, personal invective, and self-advancement." Andrews 2009: 12 adds that "both speakers have deftly exploited fundamental principles of democratic ideology." Gomme, Andrewes, Dover *ad loc.* list further parallels.

<sup>312</sup> Forde 1989: 40, among others, notes that Athenagoras, Diodotus, and Euphemus, the three characters who deliver important speeches in Thucydides' *History* but are otherwise unknown, all have "unusually significant names." So Athenagoras, 'Athenian speaker,' could be a name invented by Thucydides. Hornblower (note for 6.35.2), though, finds epigraphic evidence that it was 'a good Syracusan name' and doubts that it would have been taken as an invention.

others. So he has begun with a competitive stance by referring to his ability to successfully persuade (in this case, himself) and his superiority to others in respect to knowledge of the situation. But his complaint (or deflection) about the likelihood of his appearing foolish looks back both to Diodotus and forward to Athenagoras. Diodotus had pointed out (at 3.42.3) that, if a speaker is charged with ἀμαθία, and is unable to persuade the listeners, then he will leave seeming unintelligent more than unjust; but if the charge of injustice is added, then he will be suspected even if he does persuade. So Hermocrates may appear somewhat naive in only anticipating the charge of folly, when Athenagoras will indeed make the far more serious charge of injustice the central theme of his attack.

Hermocrates also raises in this first sentence the important theme of fear, which likewise looks back to the Mytilenean debate as well as forward to his opponent's speech. He is not frightened and will speak out. On the one hand, perhaps he should be frightened, since the charges against him will be more serious than he anticipates, and, as we know, those charges will eventually get him exiled. But more importantly, fear will become a central theme when Hermocrates is accused by Athenagoras of being a fearmonger. We will recall that Diodotus likewise accused Cleon of being a fearmonger, but in that case there seemed to be some justification, whereas in this case, we the readers happen to know that Hermocrates has his facts right about the Athenian campaign. In fact, Hermocrates advises his fellow Syracusans *not* to be afraid (μὴ ἐκπλαγῆ 6.33.4), since, he boasts, he himself has no fear that the Athenians might succeed (οὐ γὰρ...φοβοῦμαι). On the contrary, he foresees a great prize for the Syracusans in the impending contest (κάλλιστον ἔργον, 6.33.4; ὁ ἀγών, 6.34.4) And the strategy that he advocates is rather to strike fear into the Athenians (καταπλαγέντας, 6.34.6; καταπλαγεῖεν, 6.34.8). Unfortunately for him, however, he gives Athenagoras a sort of opening to intentionally misinterpret him as a fearmonger at the very end of his speech, when he says that the best scenario would be for the Syracusans to be persuaded to take courage (i.e. to have no fear), but *if they will not do that*, then they should make their preparations with fear (μετὰ φόβου, 6.34.9) – though, even then, that fear is only intended to be a motivation for making adequate preparations, and, once the fighting is underway, it will be replaced by contempt (καταφρονεῖν).

Hermocrates' speech is certainly competitive, and, as his initial claim to know the facts better than others shows, he is aware of the fact that persuasion can only be effected by the speaker who demonstrates that his argument is superior to those of the other speakers. Yet, we might say that his speech is strikingly civil. Alone among all of the paired speeches in Thucydides, Hermocrates makes no attack on, or even any mention of, his opponent. Rather, most of his agonistic language is directed against the Athenians. And of course, this civility is one of the reasons that Athenagoras' outburst comes across as so exaggerated, and even abusive (the other reason being that Hermocrates is right about the facts, and Athenagoras is wrong).

Scholars have identified a number of parallels between Athenagoras' speech and other speeches in previous debates.<sup>313</sup> Some emphasize his pernicious demagoguery, and others emphasize the reasonableness of several of his arguments. As always in Thucydides, the 'weaker' argument contains a number of points that the reader will easily be able to agree with – otherwise, the disagreement itself that led to the debate might appear implausible. Similarly, we were predisposed to disagree with Cleon, and yet many of his criticisms of the conduct of the assembly appeared to be valid. But surely the connection between the reasonableness of much of what Athenagoras says and the virulent, over-zealous ends to which he puts it is exactly what Thucydides wants to point out. We might say that Athenagoras is the culmination of the competitive, demagogic speaker, and thus he

<sup>313</sup> Hornblower (note for 35-40.1) notes similarities with Cleon at 3.38, Pericles at 2.37, and Alcibiades at 6.18.6.



appropriates the strategies that we saw in Cleon, Diodotus, Nicias, and Alcibiades in order to argue for a position that, as we know, is completely at odds with the facts. Does he even really believe that he has the facts right? Or is he willing to risk allowing his city to meet an attack without adequate preparations in order to take advantage of a political opportunity? If it seems somewhat anachronistic for Athenagoras to imply that there is already a full-blown *stasis* in Syracuse between the oligarchs and the democrats, perhaps that is because he is in the process of trying to produce such a *stasis*.

The first sentence of Athenagoras' speech is an unveiled attack: τοὺς μὲν Ἀθηναίους ὅστις μὴ βούλεται οὕτω κακῶς φρονῆσαι καὶ ὑποχειρίους ἡμῖν γενέσθαι ἐνθάδε ἐλθόντας, ἢ δειλός ἐστιν ἢ τῇ πόλει οὐκ εὖνους ('whoever does not wish the Athenians to reason so poorly and to put themselves in our hands by coming here is either a coward or is not well-disposed to his city,' 6.36.1). We saw this topos – by which anyone who disagrees with the speaker's position is said to be necessarily motivated by one of two things – in the Mytilenean debate, where Cleon said that his opponents must be motivated by confidence in their rhetorical abilities or by bribes (3.38.1). Similarly, Diodotus argued that his opponents must either be foolish or bribed (3.42.2); and at the end of his speech, Athenagoras will use the topos again with exactly those terms (ἢ ἀμαθέστατοί ἐστε ὧν ἐγὼ οἶδα Ἑλλήνων, ἢ ἀδικώτατοι – 'you are either the most foolish of the Greeks I know, or the most unjust, 6.39.2). The charge that he makes here at the beginning of the speech, however, namely that of cowardice, is more relevant to the debate between Nicias and Alcibiades, where it nonetheless was only hinted at indirectly; in fact, the closest Alcibiades came to accusing Nicias of cowardice was his reference to Nicias' ἀπραγμοσύνη, which is a considerably more civil word than δειλία. In an agonistic context such as this debate, charges of cowardice or weakness carry an extra sort of punch, in that they are a fairly transparent means of directly dominating one's opponent. But Athenagoras then proceeds to add the charge of foolishness as well – in this case, his opponents are foolish for thinking that their cowardice is not obvious. It is clear, he argues, that they are only stirring up fear in the populace in order to cover up their own fear with the communal fear (οἱ γὰρ δεδιότες ἰδίᾳ τι βούλονται τὴν πόλιν ἐς ἔκπληξιν καθιστάναι, ὅπως τῷ κοινῷ φόβῳ τὸν σφέτερον ἐπηλυγάζωνται, 6.36.2). And he then proceeds to demonstrate his own lack of cowardice through a blustering survey of all of the advantages that the Syracusans hold over the Athenians, ending with τοσοῦτω τὴν ἡμετέραν παρασκευὴν κρείσσω νομίζω ('by that much do I believe that our preparations are better/ stronger,' 6.37.2). We should note that, like Alcibiades, he is here misrepresenting the δύναμις of his *polis* to his own fellow citizens (since, if they had decided to make no preparations at all, they would have been in trouble), and likewise that, in so doing, he is speaking καθ' ἡδονήν.

In the political diatribe that follows, it becomes clear that Athenagoras did not really intend his argument about the two possible motives of his opponents to be disjunctive; it is not that they are *either* cowardly *or* unpatriotic, but that they are both. After repeating his (ironic) assertion that the Athenians are too smart to risk everything on this campaign, he launches into a blistering attack on the motives of his opponents:

καὶ ἐνθένδε ἄνδρες οὔτε ὄντα οὔτε ἂν γενόμενα λογοποιοῦσιν, οὓς ἐγὼ οὐ νῦν πρῶτον, ἀλλ' αἰεὶ ἐπίσταμαι ἤτοι λόγοις γε τοιοῖσδε καὶ ἔτι τούτων κακουργότεροις ἢ ἔργοις βουλομένους καταπλήξαντας τὸ ὑμέτερον πλῆθος αὐτοὺς τῆς πόλεως ἄρχειν.

And here men are making up stories about things that are not and could not come about; not now for the first time, but always I have known that these

men terrify you, the masses, with speeches such as these and by even more harmful ones than these, or with deeds, because they themselves want to rule the *polis*. (6.38.2)

This explanation for his opponents' fearmongering is just as extreme and virulent as the one that he previously gave, but it is also perhaps contradictory. If they are frightening the populace so that they can move in and take control, that sounds like almost the opposite motive as that of trying to frighten the populace in order to conceal their own fear. But Athenagoras is not concerned with consistency, just as he is not concerned with the facts of the matter; his only concern is to crush his opponent with the most devastating arguments possible. He pushes Diodotus' formulation of the kinds of charges that harm the deliberative process a step further, and instead of merely accusing Hermocrates of foolishness, he comes right out and calls him a coward; and instead of suggesting that he is motivated by some sort of self-interest, he accuses him of trying to take over the entire *polis*. And he makes these two arguments with no regard for their apparent incongruity. Further, when he later says that he is 'afraid' (δέδοικα, 6.38.2) that these plotters may end up succeeding, we may see a kind of humorous hint from Thucydides of Athenagoras' hypocrisy: maybe he is actually the one who is afraid; and in his alarmist suggestion that reports about the Athenian invasion are part of a conspiracy to overthrow the government, surely he is the real fearmonger as well.

To emphasize further his hypocrisy, Athenagoras proceeds to bemoan the ἀγῶνες that Syracuse has so often taken upon itself (instead of engaging in contests with external enemies):

τοιγάρτοι δι' αὐτὰ ἡ πόλις ἡμῶν ὀλιγάκις μὲν ἡσυχάζει, στάσεις δὲ πολλὰς καὶ ἀγῶνας οὐ πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους πλέονας ἢ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἀναιρεῖται, τυραννίδας δὲ ἔστιν ὅτε καὶ δυναστείας ἀδίκους.

And thus on account of these things our city is rarely at peace, but takes on many *staseis* and contests, not more of them against the enemy than against itself, and sometimes tyrannies and unjust dynasties. (6.38.3)

It seems to me that Thucydides is surely well aware that the scene he is describing would best be referred to as a rhetorical ἀγών, and thus that when he has a speaker use the word ἀγών in the context of such a competitive speech, he must intend for the reader to reflect on the relationship between what the speakers are talking about and what they are doing. When Cleon reproached the assembly for being overly preoccupied with rhetorical agons, it was clear that he himself was exemplifying exactly the sort of thing he was criticizing. And the same can surely be said in respect to Athenagoras – although in this case, the stakes are even higher, since Athenagoras' use of the word ἀγών does not signify a mere rhetorical contest, but is directly identified with, or at least associated with, *stasis*.

He goes on to explain how he will deal with these plotters, and we should note that the very first action that he boasts of in his list of participles is that of persuasion (πείθων, κολάζων, ἐλέγχων, φυλάσσων, διδάσκων, 6.38.4). Like Cleon, perhaps the main pillar of his solution to the problem of excessive competition is to have everyone follow him (ἦν γε ὑμεῖς ἐθέλητε ἔπεισθαι, 'if, that is, you are willing to follow') and refrain from dissenting from him in any way. From these echoes of Cleon, we then move to echoes of Nicias and his intergenerational διάστασις, as Athenagoras chastens the youth for wanting positions of authority before they are old enough, and generally for wanting special privileges (6.38.5). Then immediately we see parallels with Alcibiades in his next point about the importance of

the joint participation of the three classes that he identifies: the rich, the intelligent, and the many (τοὺς πλουσίους, τοὺς ξυνετούς, τοὺς πολλούς, 6.39.1; for Alcibiades it was τὸ φαῦλον, τὸ μέσον, and τὸ πάνυ ἀκριβές, 'the lowly, the middle, and the altogether precise,' 6.18.6). As with Alcibiades, this plea for unity is not terribly convincing.

In the closing section of Athenagoras' speech, he accuses his opponents of being either stupid or unjust (ἢ ἀμαθέστατοι...ἢ ἀδικώτατοι), urges them to renounce their wicked ways, and expresses confidence that their machinations to enslave the city will be fruitless (6.40). He also reiterates his confidence in the superiority of Syracuse over Athens, and in so doing, he perhaps undermines the basis of his entire speech by allowing for the (remote) possibility that the reports about the Athenian invasion are actually true (καὶ εἰ ἔρχονται Ἀθηναῖοι, 'even if the Athenians are coming,' 6.40.2). However, he concludes with an elaborate description of how the city will react if the reports are not true (as of course he assumes they are not):

καὶ εἰ μή τι αὐτῶν ἀληθές ἐστίν, ὥσπερ οὐκ οἶομαι, οὐ πρὸς τὰς ὑμετέρας ἀγγελίας καταπλαγεῖσα καὶ ἐλομένη ὑμᾶς ἄρχοντας αὐθαίρετον δουλείαν ἐπιβαλεῖται, αὐτὴ δ' ἐφ' αὐτῆς σκοποῦσα τοὺς τε λόγους ἀφ' ὑμῶν ὡς ἔργα δυναμένους κρινεῖ καὶ τὴν ὑπάρχουσαν ἐλευθερίαν οὐχὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀκούειν ἀφαιρεθήσεται, ἐκ δὲ τοῦ ἔργῳ φυλασσομένη μὴ ἐπιτρέπειν πειράσεται σώζειν.

And if none of these things is true, just as I believe none is, [the city] will not be terrified at your reports, elect you as leaders, and impose upon itself a chosen slavery, but will itself examine things by itself and will judge the speeches from your side with the understanding that they have the power of actions and will not be deprived of its existing freedom by way of listening, but will try to preserve it by way of protecting it with action and not giving in. (6.40.2)

Again, his identification of words and actions is surely self-referential and is at least as applicable to his own speech as it is to that of Hermocrates: speeches are like deeds, and their effects can determine whether a city enjoys freedom or is enslaved – which one Athenagoras himself is actually promoting with his own speech is a question that he himself invites. In his idealized image of the deliberative ἀγών, Athenagoras also stresses the importance of 'judgment' and 'self-sufficiency': the city will itself make a judgment by itself. But there is perhaps a contradiction when he elaborates this theme of self-sufficiency through a contrast between listening (ἐκ τοῦ ἀκούειν) and not giving in (ἐκ δὲ τοῦ...μὴ ἐπιτρέπειν). It is through listening to the opposing view that the city would be deprived of its freedom – so not giving in here amounts to not listening. Clearly he is exploiting the fine line between listening and obeying (ἀκούω certainly can mean 'obey' in Homer; cf. *LSJ* II.2). The implication, however, is that, in order to remain autonomous and to preserve its freedom, the city must not even *listen* to the opposition; but how then will it make any kind of informed judgment at all? And the complex use of the λόγος/ ἔργον opposition is worth noting here as well. On the one hand, the oligarchs' words have the same power as deeds; but on the other hand, (mere) listening is to be distinguished from holding firm and protecting 'in deed' (ἔργῳ φυλασσομένη). Since the oligarchs' words are not mere words, but are equivalent to deeds, likewise the assembly must not respond with mere listening, but with judgment and action (which, in fact, apparently precludes listening).

If Syracuse were the same sort of democracy as Athens, it seems likely that Athenagoras would win this ἀγών and Alcibiades' predictions about the factionalism and

gullibility of the Syracusans would be proven accurate.<sup>314</sup> But after the debate, one of the generals steps forward and peremptorily dictates that it will certainly do no harm to make some preparations. Further, he pronounces a judgment on the debate that clearly applies only to Athenagoras' speech: διαβολὰς μὲν οὐ σῶφρον οὔτε λέγειν τινὰς ἐς ἀλλήλους οὔτε τοὺς ἀκούοντας ἀποδέχεσθαι ('it is not temperate either for people to cast aspersions on each other or for those listening to accept them,' 6.41.2). Unlike Athenagoras, the general does not try to dissuade the people from listening to the arguments that he finds harmful, but only says that those listening should not accept such arguments. And his use of the word σῶφρον, I would argue, marks his objections to Athenagoras' speech as having to do with excessive competitiveness. Indeed, the general is the voice of reason, reminding us of what deliberative contests are for (deciding about what should be done) and what they are not for (the competition of individuals or factions over power and influence).

In conclusion, Thucydides' paired speeches show an affinity with Aristotle's discussion of deliberative rhetoric both in their concern with defining deliberative rhetoric in distinction from the other branches and in their exploration of the problematic ethical status of deliberative rhetoric. While it may be a given in both authors that assemblymen are concerned with advantage rather than with justice, it is by no means clear that a sharp line can be drawn between the two; and if deliberative rhetoric is the most political of the branches of rhetoric, then it can never really ignore justice without dire consequences. But one extremely important element that Thucydides brings to the discussion is the importance of competition. In the debates that he presents, it is competition that drives the speakers to formulate and demonstrate their own accounts of proper deliberative rhetoric, which indeed they only distinguished from the other branches by way of demonstrating the inappropriate and unfair strategies of their opponents. Likewise, questions about how and to what extent justice, or morality, should play a part in deliberation are raised primarily to support one's own policy against those of one's rivals. Like Aristotle, Thucydides does give us rhetorical (as well as political and ethical) theory, but, for the most part, he presents that theory as it is produced by political actors vying for influence in the messy reality of actual assemblies. The reader thereby comes away with the impression that such theorizing is usually just one part of the competitive rhetorical activity that it seeks to understand. But while the debates that Thucydides presents primarily demonstrate for the reader various examples of bad, harmful competition, he does offer some hints of his conception of good, healthy competition. Although the contestants themselves will inevitably be passionate and self-interested, and will often be deceptive, nonetheless, if there is an intelligent, reasonable individual who can stay above the fray, consider both sides, and offer either judgment or analysis, then the outcome can be beneficial. The Syracusan democracy serves as an example of this alternative kind of competition, as does Thucydides' own *History*.

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<sup>314</sup> Hornblower (note for 6.41): "This speech, among other things, reminds us (by closing down the debate peremptorily) that this is not quite Athens after all."

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