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Aristotle and Sophocles on the Elements of Moral Virtue

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INTRODUCTION

1. Poet and Philosopher

In this dissertation I have brought together the work of Sophocles and Aristotle with a view to examining a variety of topics in the area of moral philosophy and moral psychology. This is the primary work of the thesis. The second purpose of the dissertation, which is a corollary of the first, is to demonstrate the importance of using both literature and philosophy in the education of the moral agent. The reason that I have chosen Sophocles and Aristotle for the work of this dissertation is that they both share the same fundamental conception of human nature and human purpose. They understand a human being to be a complex of reason, emotion and desire that are not intrinsically opposed to each other but are capable of being integrated into a harmonious whole.[1]

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[1]Interest in the relationship of the emotions to reason appears to be something that pre-occupied much of Greek culture, especially fifth century Athenian culture. Thus, Socrates was especially careful to affirm the dominance of reason over the passions in the Protagoras. In Republic IV.13 Plato demonstrates an intimate and profound understanding of the way in which the passions can be in opposition to the dictates of reason in his story about Leontius, son of Aglaion who gave in to his desire to gaze upon the bodies of criminals being handled by an executioner. Plato, however, goes on to show that although the passions are capable of opposing reason they are equally capable, through moral education, of being brought in line with the dictates of reason. Euripides,

This excellent integration of the various elements of the human psyche is a major part of successful moral education and is the fertile ground out of which excellent choice springs. The integration of ourselves into psychological wholeness and the development of the various virtues of character are constitutive of human purpose, which is, as Aristotle put it, eudaimonia or flourishing. This will be constituted by a life that is rich in virtuous activity which is performed both for and with others. In this way we see that friends are an important part of the moral life as both the occasion of our exercise of the virtues and as promoters of virtuous activity. Thus, both the poet and philosopher share a fundamentally similar conception of what it means to be human and the specific purpose that is ours, as human beings, to realize. They understand that the development of the virtues (including friendship, which is a virtue) and the integration of the various elements of the psyche are a necessary part of fulfilling our nature and that this kind of realization of our

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characteristically, portrays the emotions and reason in irreconcilable opposition to each other which, inevitably, leads to disaster. In this regard, we have only to think of Phaedra's passionate love for Hippolytus or Medea's all-consuming hatred for Jason that impels her, in opposition to what she knows is right, to slaughter her children. Sophocles, more in line with the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition, views reason and passion as not intrinsically opposed but capable of being integrated into a harmonious whole. We can see this in the figure of Neoptolemus in the Philoctetes as well as the figures of Theseus and Oedipus himself in Oedipus at Colonus. The latter, in fact, achieves a kind of immortality through finally bringing about a reconciliation of the formerly warring elements with himself. See Blundell, Helping Friends, p. 272.

nature is constitutive of human flourishing.

This conception of the moral person is rich and fully appreciates the complexity of both the rational and emotional aspects of being human. Implicit in this conception of the moral person is also an appreciation of the messiness of moral action and, perhaps more importantly, the precariousness of achieving moral virtue and living the good life. We can see this in the way that this conception of the moral life takes into account the full spectrum of the elements of the human psyche and understands that these parts must come to form a well-integrated whole if we are to realize our nature. This is an enterprise that is fraught with risks because these elements are viewed, at least potentially, as in opposition to each other and it is the delicate business of moral education to bring them into a harmonious whole. But this, as the philosopher and the tragedian see it, is the only path to authentic human agency and the practice of virtue. This integration may, of course, not be realized and the individual may come to live a frustrated rather than a fulfilled life. Implicit in this conception of the moral agent is also the recognition of the need for a good teacher who can instruct us in the ways of virtue and flourishing. In this conception of the human person and human purpose there is a profound appreciation of the crucial role that others play in our growth in the moral life. In their sense of the centrality of the role of a good teacher and good friends both the

tragedian and the philosopher realize the fundamentally social character of our growth toward virtue or vice.

The anthropology which Sophocles and Aristotle fundamentally share and the conception of human life to which it gives rise seems to me to be superior to certain of the dominant modes of ethical thought in existence today. According to the Kantian conception of morality, everything which we have enumerated above (the role of the emotions, teacher, friends, etc.) would be irrelevant to a proper study of ethics. This is so for Kant inasmuch as he holds that we do not need any kind of anthropology or understanding of human purposes in order to do ethics. Experience is, in fact, irrelevant according to Kant's view since we need only concern ourselves with the autonomy of the willing subject in fulfilling the moral law. Kant would be equally suspicious of the characterization of moral philosophy as concerned with the messiness and contingeny of everyday existence. Again, for Kant, experience is immaterial to the proper study of ethics inasmuch as ethics should not be concerned at all with how people actually act but with how they ought to act.

The conception of morality which Sophocles and Aristotle espouse seems to me to be superior to the dominant voices in ethical thought today because of their emphasis upon the practical nature of ethics. In many ways, this comes down to being centrally preoccupied with the issue of character. The tragedian and the philosopher both have a sense that ethics

is not about finding out what rule or rules one should follow[2] but about what sort of person one should become. It is the task of ethics, as they see it, not to construct a theory of the good but actually to become good. Thus ethics is understood to be a much more dramatic enterprise in which we are concerned with the making or breaking of lives and not simply with arriving at a correct formulation of some abstract rule such as the moral law or the principle of utility.

Their anthropology is preferable because they take into account all aspects of the person, the rational, emotional and desiderative and understand that these elements of the human psyche must be brought into some kind of harmonious whole if we are to bring our nature to its realization. They do not ignore important aspects of human experience with respect to moral decision-making such as Kant does in his repudiation of the role of the emotions. Again, their conception of the human person involves the need for others (as teachers or friends) in order for the specifically human purpose to be fulfilled. This social aspect of the moral life seems to me to be much closer to reality than, for example, Kant's preoccupation with the autonomy of the will and its relation to duty.

It is because of their richer anthropology and sense of human purpose as well as their appreciation of the complexity

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[2]This is characteristic of utilitarianism also which is preoccupied, primarily, with the attempt to enunciate the most successful form of the principle of utility.

and messiness of moral decision-making that I have suggested that Sophocles and Aristotle are preferable to the dominant modes of moral thinking today. This fuller anthropology, I would like to suggest, implies the need for appealing to both literature as well as philosophy in our analysis of the moral agent.[3] We need to appeal to literature for its ability to present moral complexity through the depiction of full-bodied, thinking and feeling characters who are in a situation in which a decision must be made. In general, literature will be relevant for its concreteness and its ability to assist us in becoming effective moral agents by helping us to appreciate the important role that the emotions play in excellent moral agency. It does this, of course, by eliciting our own emotional response to the characters and situations that are depicted in the drama. But if we are to take our cue from the moral anthropology which Sophocles and Aristotle hold, we shall need more than simply an emotionally charged presentation of particulars in order to understand the nature of the moral agent and the moral life. We shall also need the unifying and explanatory force that it is the peculiar part of a logos to provide. It is for this that we have turned to Aristotle. In this way then, it is a secondary aim of this

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[3]On the central importance of literary works in moral philosophy see, Martha C. Nussbaum, "Consequences and Character in Sophocles' Philoctetes," Philosophy and Literature, 1 (1976-77), 25-29; Martha C. Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness (Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1986).

dissertation to show that we need the accounts of both literature and philosophy in order properly to understand the nature of the moral agent and the moral life. Thus, it will be my aim to show that literature is needed for its emotional power and its ability to present forcefully the phenomena of human moral experience while philosophy is needed for its explanatory power in bringing the diversity of the phenomena into some unified whole.

This bringing together of philosophy and literature is advantageous to the education of the moral agent in many respects. First, the use of literature will be of great benefit to a popular audience precisely because of its concreteness and its emotional power. An individual uninitiated or uninterested in the subtleties of strictly philosophic discourse may still be drawn into an understanding of the various moral issues under consideration because of literature's immediacy and emotional evocativeness. Secondly, even those who are well-versed in the various schools of ethical thought will be benefited by this convocation of philosophy and literature for seeing the important way in which they can be played off of each other. For example, it will be of value for such an audience to perceive the various strengths that are peculiar to each media and to come to understand that both philosophy and literature shed a different light on our understanding of the moral agent and the moral life. While the use of literary technique is not

directly relevant to the professional activity of the moral philosopher (e.g., writing a book about moral philosophy) it may still be useful for him as a moral person. Let us turn, then, to a discussion of the major themes of this dissertation in order to present a synoptic overview of the entire work.

2. Nature and Virtue

In the first chapter we see the tragedian and the philosopher's penchant for the concrete over the abstract in their concern to determine the relationship of human nature to virtue. Again, they are not concerned with constructing a sound moral theory after the manner of modern moral philosophy but with discerning the kind of being that a human being is and what this might reveal with respect to the development of the virtues. They show their appreciation of the complexity of human nature and their willingness to include all of the phenomena in the way that they recognize the entire person in his rational, desiderative and emotional aspects. They view the human person as a complex web of all of the above elements that must be brought into some kind of harmonious organization if virtue is to be achieved and flourishing is to be made possible. According to Sophocles and Aristotle this integration is not given to us by nature but requires an educator who will assist in the moral formation of the individual. In this way we see that the ancients fully appreciated the concrete character of ethics, the complex nature of a human being, the involved process of

moral formation and the social aspect of morality. I shall argue that this ancient anthropology is superior to more recent developments in the Kantian tradition in all of these ways. Modern moral philosophy after Kant is overly committed to the abstract rather than the concrete in its pre-occupation with the formulation of rules instead of the proper formation of character. In its single focus upon the role of reason it does not show an appreciation of all aspects of the human psyche in the formation of the moral person. This is particularly evident in its ignoring of the role that the emotions play. Finally, moral philosophy in the Kantian tradition does not recognize the social character of morality and the vital role that others, particularly teachers, play in an individual's growth into moral personhood. I begin our discussion of Sophocles' and Aristotle's position by showing how they took up their stance in opposition to the archaic tradition that preceded them.

According to the archaic tradition (whose primary spokesman is the poet, Pindar)[4] one's nature is determinative of the quality of one's character. In short, noble sons are presumed to be born from noble fathers and the base or wicked from the wicked. Sophocles' position is particularly noteworthy in this regard because he is writing as a poet and

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[4]I have chosen to employ Pindar as representative of the archaic tradition because he, more than anyone else, most starkly contrasts the efficacy and sufficiency of nature for virtue with the uselessness and inefficacy of education. See below chapter 1, footnote 1.

the poets (including Homer) were those who traditionally espoused this view. It is my contention that, in this play, Sophocles offers a direct challenge to the archaic notion that nature is a sufficient guarantee of virtue. Sophocles accomplishes this by portraying the sudden and rather unexpected downfall of Neoptolemus, the son of the noble Achilles, through both the young man's over-confident reliance upon his inherited nobility to keep him on the path of virtue and, more significantly, the pernicious influence of a wicked teacher. The centrality of education in the moral formation of Neoptolemus is emphasized in the articles of Peter Rose and Mary Whitlock Blundell.[5] Through the depiction of Neoptolemus' fall into the practice of villainy under the deleterious influence of Odysseus, Sophocles argues, in dramatic form, for the insufficiency of nature to achieve virtue. We are shown that although Neoptolemus' noble nature is a good starting point for the development of the virtues this will not, by itself, be sufficient to attain virtue. Neoptolemus is in need of the sort of teacher who will not undermine him but will affirm his sense of justice and help him live up to it. In this way, Sophocles points to the crucial role of the educator in the development of the virtues. My position with regard to the character of

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[5]See Peter Rose, "Sophocles' Philoctetes and the Teachings of the Sophists," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, 80 (1976), 81-83, 89; Mary Whitlock Blundell, "The Phusis of Neoptolemus in Sophocles' Philoctetes," Greece and Rome, 35 (1988), 140-142.

Neoptolemus is in marked contrast to the position of two recent commentators on the play, namely, Albin Lesky and Gregory McNamee.[6] According to both Lesky and McNamee the figure of Neoptolemus does not undergo any real change in the course of the drama but simply resumes the nature (phusis) which he had renounced at the beginning of the play. Lesky, in particular, emphasizes the relatively primitive conception of human personality which existed in the pre-sophistic (i.e. pre-Euripidean) presentation of human personality on the Attic stage. He contends that we ought to resist the temptation to attribute any significant change to the character of Neoptolemus at the close of the play inasmuch as writers such as Aeschylus and Sophocles understood human nature, fundamentally, as changeless and fixed. I argue that this position simply does not do justice to both the psychological complexity of Neoptolemus in his anguished deliberations as to what to do nor the crucial moral guidance that Philoctetes gives in the drama. It is my contention that the tragedian is showing us that nobility of nature is no guarantee of the attainment of virtue and that, without the presence of some kind of moral example, even noble natures are liable to permanent corruption.

While the tragedian makes his point through the medium of dramatic portrayal, Aristotle discusses the issue of the

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[6]Albin Lesky, Greek Tragedy trans. by H. A. Frankfort (London, New York, Harper and Row, 1978); Philoktetes trans. by Gregory McNamee (Port Townsend, Copper Canyon, 1986).

relationship of nature and virtue through a more conceptual framework. The philosopher, too, holds that untutored nature is insufficient to achieve virtue. According to Aristotle, we neither grow into possession of the virtues by some sort of natural process (like a tadpole becoming a frog) nor is the engendering of the virtues contrary to our nature. But we are, by nature, capable of receiving and engendering them in ourselves through the process of habituation. In this way, Aristotle indicates that he, like Sophocles, views our relationship to the virtues as a certain potentiality that is realized through practice or habituation. Thus, in this chapter, I maintain that the philosopher and the tragedian share a fundamentally similar anthropology in their view that nature is insufficient for virtue and requires the augmentation of moral education. This view is presented through the emotionally charged and concrete medium of Sophocles' art as well as argued for through the medium of philosophic discourse in Aristotle.

3. Moral Exemplar and Moral Standard

In chapter two I develop further the theme, touched upon in the previous chapter, of the importance of a role model in moral education. I also address the broader question of the ultimate standard of value for Sophocles and Aristotle. Once again we can see the emphasis upon the concrete in the ancient conception of ethics in several ways. First, we note that the recognition for the need of a teacher stems directly from the

understanding that human nature is insufficient to achieve virtue. This is based upon an empirical judgment. Secondly, the remedy that is sought is not in terms of formulating some kind of abstract principle which ought to be followed (as in modern moral philosophy) but is in terms of a particular individual from the society who is well-equipped to instruct the student and inculcate the habits of virtue in him. Of course the appeal to a concrete individual as a standard of action would be, for a Kantian, utterly wrongheaded. Again, for Kant, experience is immaterial to the doing of ethics and no number of excellent moral exemplars could ever add up to the exceptionless rigor demanded by the moral law. But, in the ancient conception of the moral agent, such exceptionless rigor is unrealistic and out of touch with the contingent character of moral action. Thirdly, we can see here an implicit affirmation and recognition of the inherently social character of the formation of the moral agent. Again, it is my contention that Sophocles and Aristotle share the same fundamental moral anthropology and that this conception of the moral agent is superior to more modern developments. In the spirit of this anthropology that takes into account the whole person we see that Sophocles presents his position on the moral agent through the concrete and more emotionally oriented medium of poetry while Aristotle furnishes a more rational account of the phenomena which are presented by the poet.

The tragedian dramatically portrays the central place

of the role model by showing both the devastating consequences that a poor role model can have and the critical role that a good moral example can play. Sophocles shows us the depths to which the influence of a bad teacher can reach in Neoptolemus' lying tale that he tells to Philoctetes as well as his final commentary on the tale. I argue that the gross fiction that he tells in which he has lost his fatherly inheritance to Odysseus actually reflects his own condition of having betrayed his moral identity. Sophocles further signifies that the young man is in a truly perilous state when Neoptolemus, in Odyssean fashion, attributes responsibility for his own wrongdoing to someone else. The tragedian demonstrates the central importance of the role model by showing us how Philoctetes awakens in Neoptolemus the sense of shame which he claimed he had thrown off under Odysseus' influence and the way in which the broken hero helps Neoptolemus to honor and live up to his original moral principles.

Aristotle does not furnish us with a dramatic instance of a particular, educational relationship as does Sophocles. This is more the part of a poet. He does, however, show himself to be in sympathy with the tragedian when he argues for the central importance of the educator and the lawmaker in the moral formation of individuals and the citizen body. The philosopher, thus, makes programmatic what is presented as a particular relationship by the tragedian. It is the work of the educator and the lawmaker, he affirms, to instill

within the people of the polis certain excellences of character that will result in both individual flourishing and the common good of the state.

In addition, I have argued that Sophocles and Aristotle both share a fundamental sense that the ultimate standard by which things in the human realm are to be measured and assessed is divine. While they are in agreement in their appeal to the divine, their emphases differ somewhat. Sophocles appears to stress human ignorance and the inadequacy of human action and appeals to the divine as a response to the tragic impasse to which the characters in the play have come in the course of the drama.[7] Aristotle's God, on the other hand, serves more as the ultimate horizon in terms of which human beings are exhorted to model themselves. This "modeling ourselves" after the divine is accomplished, according to Aristotle, through contemplative activity (such as, for example, the practice of philosophy) in which the divine element in human nature is recognized and allowed to flourish.[8] In this way it can be seen that both tragedian and philosopher appeal to the divine as the final standard by which the human realm is to be understood but each has a

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[7]For this interpretation of the theophany of Heracles see Mary Whitlock Blundell, Helping Friends and Harming Enemies (Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1989); Alasdair MacIntyre, Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); Karl Reinhardt, Sophocles (New York, Harper and Row, 1979).

[8]See J. A. Stewart, Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle, 2 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1892), pp. 442-444.

somewhat different conception of how the divine and the human are related. This appeal to the divine as the ultimate standard was widely shared in ancient culture. We see it operative in the work of the lyric poets, the tragedians and the philosophers. It seems to me that the significance of this appeal is that, for the ancients, the human good or any system of goods is not self-validating or self-authenticating but requires an appeal to the divine as the source or well-spring of their goodness. In this way they implicitly recognized that we, as human beings, do not create our own nature but rather bring into realization some purpose that is peculiarly ours to attain. In this way we can also see that the ancients attempted to secure the objectivity of values. For, once again, human nature and human purpose is not seen as something that is of our own making but is something that we express well or poorly. Thus, we see that the good which Philoctetes and Neoptolemus seek, reconciliation, friendship and heroic valor, is unattainable on the strictly human plane and can only be achieved through the intervention of Heracles. Similarly, Aristotle's analysis of the human good throughout much of the Nicomachean Ethics can only find its completion in contemplative activity of the divine. The role of the divine in the ancient conception of the moral agent tends to

be de-emphasized in much modern moral philosophy.[9]

4. The Emotions and Moral Education

In chapter three I argue that Sophocles and Aristotle are in basic sympathy with each other in both their conception of the nature of the emotions and the role which the emotions play in living the moral life. Interest in the emotions and their relationship to the moral agent is indicative of precisely this fuller, more robust anthropology which I have been talking about. Modern moral philosophy either ignores the role of the emotions in the moral formation of the individual or, as is the case in the Kantian tradition, is positively hostile to them. The ancient anthropology which Aristotle and Sophocles espouse takes full account of the entire person and sees that the affective side of the human psyche has a crucial role to play in the process of moral education. As we have stated before this ancient anthropology takes into account both the affective and the rational sides of the human psyche. It is appropriate, then, that the tragedian present the emotional and more immediate aspects of

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[9]The fact of Aristotle's appeal to the divine as a final standard which supersedes even the exemplarity of the phronimos has often been played down in recent literature. In her recent study The Fragility of Goodness, pp. 373-377, Martha Nussbaum argues that Aristotle's discussion of the divine in EN X is absolutely irreconcilable with his analysis of the human good and human flourishing in the bulk of the Nicomachean Ethics. She even goes so far as to suggest that EN X.6-8, where Aristotle makes his most explicit appeals to the divine as the ultimate horizon of human striving, may have been a spurious insert by someone else.

this anthropology and that the philosopher furnish us with an explanatory logos of the phenomena that are presented by the dramatist.

The tragedian and the philosopher, I contend, hold that the emotions are not irrational drives or impulses, but are cognitive in nature. As such, they are capable of signifying something about the general moral contours of a given situation and directing the individual to an appropriate or virtuous response. In this way, the emotions furnish a certain orientation or impetus to the good. Once again we shall see that both the poet and the philosopher make interesting and necessary contributions that enrich our understanding of the topic under consideration.

The tragedian presents, dramatically, the position on the emotions for which I am arguing through the figure of Neoptolemus.[10] The poet shows us that Neoptolemus' experiences of the emotions of shame, compassion and deep distress force him to reconsider the justice of the course of action that he has chosen under pressure from the son of Laertes. The experience of these powerful emotions furnishes a certain orientation to the good for Neoptolemus in which he realizes that he is committing an injustice against Philoctetes and is,

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[10]Blundell, "The Phusis of Neoptolemus," 140, discusses the importance that the emotions play in Neoptolemus' moral education but does not show, as is my concern in this chapter, how this reveals the tragedian's cognitive conception of the nature of the emotions and how the emotions are capable of orienting an individual to the good.

in turn, doing violence to his very moral identity.

Aristotle provides us with a philosophical analysis in which he demonstrates the precise connection between the emotions and cognition in Book II of his Rhetoric. He furnishes the logos for which Sophocles presents the dramatic instance. According to the Stagirite, it is the perception of a certain state of affairs which is the efficient cause (that on account of which) of emotional response.[11] This analysis accounts for the connection between the emotions and cognition in terms of efficient causality. Aristotle's insight also helps us to see how the emotions can orient us to the good in such feelings as compassion, where a sympathetic response is evoked on account of the perception of another's undeserved suffering, or in a feeling such as righteous indignation (nemesis), where pain is felt on account of another's undeserved good fortune.

I argue that Aristotle furnishes us with two additional, excellent examples of the way in which the emotions can provide a certain impetus or orientation to the good in Politics II and Nicomachean Ethics VIII.[12] In the first example from Politics II, Aristotle shows us that the emotions

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[11]My reading of Aristotle on the emotions is largely indebted to the work of W. W. Fortenbaugh, Aristotle on Emotion (New York, Harper and Row, 1975) and William M. A. Grimaldie, S.J., Aristotle, Rhetoric II A Commentary (New York, Fordham University Press, 1988).

[12]See Harold Baillie, "Learning the Emotions," The New Scholasticism, 62 (1988), 224-226. I am largely indebted to Baillie's article for this discussion.

cannot be ignored or suppressed in the way that they must be if Plato's communism of wives and children is to be realized in kallipolis. Aristotle argues, here, that the emotions have a prior claim to that of the unity of the state and actually delineate the proper bounds of what can reasonably be proposed by practical intelligence. If the emotions are ignored, he warns, then the works of practical intelligence will be vitiated. Thus, the Stagirite maintains that Plato's kallipolis will be rife with the very civil unrest that was supposed to be eliminated through the political measure of shared wives and children. From this example we can see that Aristotle views the emotions as furnishing a certain negative or limiting function on the proposals of reason. In our second example we see that Aristotle understands the emotions as capable of providing initial positive direction too. In Nicomachean Ethics VIII Aristotle affirms that the emotional, "pre-ethical" bond that exists between a mother and her child ought to serve as the paradigm for what the ethical relationship of friendship should be like. He asserts that friendship is, above all, characterized by a willingness to give love rather than to receive it and that this willingness to give love without expecting any return is most excellently illustrated in the emotional tie that mothers demonstrate toward their children.

In this way I maintain that both tragedian and philosopher are in fundamental agreement with respect to their

conception of the human person. They both see the emotions as playing a crucial part in the formation of the moral agent. But they each express themselves through their own medium in a way that sheds a new and different light on the issue.

5. Choice and Responsibility: Odysseus

In chapter four I explore the issue of choice and responsibility by way of an analysis of the language and actions of the figure of Odysseus. In the ancient conception of ethics we are primarily concerned with the sort of person one should become, not, as in modern moral philosophy, with the explication of rules. In the spirit of this more concrete and dramatic approach to ethics, it is perfectly in keeping to explore different kinds of human agents as they act in concrete situations. This is important and relevant not only with respect to the issue of concreteness but also with respect to the role that we have seen the moral exemplar plays in ancient moral anthropology. For a Kantian the appeal to various examples for instruction would be of no use inasmuch as they cannot illuminate us with respect to what we ought to do. In accordance with this more ancient anthropology, the ancients held that an individual can be beneficially instructed through the witnessing of good and (as here) bad examples. In the case of Odysseus we are presented with an inauthentic human agent in action. Odysseus will, thus, function for us as a kind of anti-type. It is through witnessing the figure of Odysseus that we shall see how vice

produces enmity and frustrates the possibility of friendship among the three characters. Second, it will be seen how Odysseus' deleterious influence is exercised upon Neoptolemus when the son of Laertes teaches the young man in the ways of injustice. Third, we shall note that Odysseus' settled state of vice distorts his ability to deliberate well as we witness him attempting to achieve ignoble ends through ignoble means. Finally, it will be seen, both through the language that he employs and through various other means that Odysseus is incapable of claiming responsibility for his actions and making an authentic choice.

An examination of Odysseus' language in the play reveals that, when expressing necessity, Odysseus consistently prefers the Greek dei over chre. The former signifies the sort of necessity that external circumstances impose upon one without there being any contribution (e.g. deliberation, choice) on the part of the agent. The latter, on the other hand, signifies the sort of internal or subjective necessity that an agent experiences in choosing a particular course of action over another.[13] Odysseus' preference of dei over chre, I argue, indicates his attempt to shun moral responsibility and to attribute responsibility for his own actions to some force or set of circumstances to which he must simply submit. Through this linguistic feature of the son of Laertes'

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[13]For this strategic linguistic distinction and its function in the play see, Seth Benardete, "Chre and Dei in Plato and Others," Glotta, 43 (1965), 297-298.

language I submit that the tragedian is signifying Odysseus' ignoble attempts at subterfuge and moral irresponsibility.

I maintain, furthermore, that Sophocles' view of the character of Odysseus is that of a panourgos, namely, the sort of person who is willing to do or say anything in order to achieve his own goals.[14] The tragedian indicates this in a number of different ways. Philoctetes, with whom the tragedian is in basic sympathy, characterizes Odysseus as a panourgos on several occasions. In this way Sophocles identifies Odysseus with panourgia and demonstrates that he is aware of the etymological meaning of the term in his drama. Sophocles shows us that Odysseus is fully willing to manipulate moral terms in the interests of doing whatever is expedient to achieve his own goals. This cynical, inconsistent use of moral terms that are fashioned for the circumstances is characteristic of a panourgos. Finally, I argue that Sophocles shows us that Odysseus is actually motivated by selfish goals and not (as his character asserts) the general good of the community. The tragedian indicates this by

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[14]In holding this view I support the position of Mary Whitlock Blundell, "The Moral Character of Odysseus in Philoctetes," Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies, 28 (1987), 321-329, over that of Martha C. Nussbaum, "Consequences and Character in Sophocles' Philoctetes," Philosophy and Literature, 1 (1976-77), 29-39. Blundell believes that Odysseus is motivated by selfish goals and that he is willing to do or say anything in order to achieve them. Nussbaum, on the other hand, holds that Odysseus is motivated by serving the interests of the state under whose auspices he is willing to do or say anything. I find Blundell's arguments in favor of Odysseus' basically selfish motivation to be more persuasive.

revealing that Odysseus' primary motivations are victory under any circumstances and the desire to be given the gift of honor which, by right, should go to Philoctetes. He, furthermore, shows the hypocrisy of Odysseus' claim to be motivated by concern for the commonweal through Philoctetes' damning disclosure that the son of Laertes initially refused to fight at Troy and had to be tricked and forced to go.

In accord with the fundamentally similar anthropology which Sophocles and Aristotle share it is appropriate that Aristotle furnish us with a rational account of the emotionally charged phenomena which the dramatist has presented. In this way, the philosopher contributes to this chapter a philosophical analysis of the nature of villainy (panourgia). We have argued that Odysseus is a villain (panourgos) and it is the philosopher's part, here, to furnish a logos of the character of the panourgos and panourgia. Aristotle sees panourgia as related to the indeterminate capacity which he calls cleverness (deinotes). Cleverness is the ability to perform those steps (usually the most efficient) which are conducive to a goal and to achieve that goal. If the goal is noble then cleverness deserves praise, but if the goal is wicked then cleverness is criminal or villainous (panourgia). In this way we can see that, according to Aristotle, villainy is a kind of cleverness gone awry. The philosopher believes that this is due to a failure of moral virtue where one's admirable ability of determining the best means to a given end

is skewed and directed to wicked ends. The Stagirite, in addition, views villainy as a settled disposition (hexis) in which an individual habitually employs his talent to the attainment of wicked ends.

Thus, I maintain that Aristotle provides an excellent logos of the character of Odysseus in his discussion of the nature of villainy. Aristotle shows us that the figure of Odysseus possesses an admirable trait which, because of a fundamental flaw in his character, is vitiated and employed for dubious ends. The philosopher's conception of villainy as a characteristic disposition (hexis) is also helpful in understanding the settled and incorrigible nature of Odysseus' wickedness.

6. Choice and Responsibility: Neoptolemus

In chapter five I consider the nature of choice and responsibility through the emotional turmoil, deliberation and choice which the figure of Neoptolemus makes in the play. In addition, I argue that the tragedian signifies Neoptolemus' responsible and excellent human agency in the transition he makes from using dei (characteristic of Odysseus) to employing chre (indicating choice). This is followed by Aristotle's analysis of deliberate decision or choice (prohairesis) in which I argue that the Stagirite's discussion of prohairesis bears many striking (and philosophically illuminating) resemblances to the decision which Neoptolemus makes in the play.

In many ways, this chapter is the heart of the dissertation for many of the strands that are crucial to Sophocles' and Aristotle's anthropology come together here and are expressed through the authentic human agency of Neoptolemus. The advantages of this fuller ancient anthropology are most evident here because we see the way in which the entire person, rational, emotional and desiderative are taken into account through both the character of Neoptolemus and Aristotle's rich notion of prohairesis. We not only see operative all of the various elements of the human psyche but we see how they can constitute a harmonious whole as they are exercised by the virtuous person. The Kantian conception of the moral agent tends to be indifferent to the achievement of such psychological integration. We can see this most especially in Kant's own acquiescence to the view that morally right actions and inclinations will, almost inevitably, be in conflict and that reason will need to overcome recalcitrant emotions and desires in order that a moral agent may carry out her duty. The ancient conception of the moral agent does more justice to the entire person by taking seriously the emotions and desires (as well as reason) and requiring that all the elements of the human personality be integrated into an unconflicted whole. In accord with this anthropology it is the task of the poet to furnish us with the affective and immediate aspects of this topic through his drama and the part of the philosopher to furnish us with the logos that explains

and unifies the phenomena of human experience.

Through the character of Neoptolemus, Sophocles provides us with a moving portrayal of the young man's transition from inauthentic to authentic human agency. Initially, Neoptolemus attempts to remove himself from responsibility for his own actions. This is evidenced by his consistent use of dei and the way that he, in Odyssean fashion, describes the action that he is taking as something to which he must, simply, submit. During the course of the play, however, Sophocles shows us that the son of Achilles experiences his deceitful pose to be intolerable and chooses to defy Odysseus and undo the damage that he has done to Philoctetes. The tragedian highlights the painful decision that Neoptolemus must make through the young man's pathetic wish that he had never left his home on Scyros and the way in which his choice is preceded by a long and agonizing period of silence where he is at a loss and is deliberating about what to do. Sophocles indicates Neoptolemus' achievement of authentic human agency through his decision in the transition he makes from the language of dei to that of chre; in the moral maturity he displays when he is no longer intimidated by Odysseus; and, finally, in the way that he attains a new sense of his own moral identity by becoming reconciled to himself.

It is, again, the philosopher's task to furnish us with a rational account of the disparate phenomena which the tragedian presents in his drama. Aristotle does this through

his discussion of the nature of choice or deliberate decision (prohairesis).[15] Aristotle closely links choice with moral virtue. Virtue is, he asserts, a determinate disposition to make choices. Making a choice entails moral maturity because we claim responsibility for our own actions and understand that we are becoming who we are through the choices that we make. Hence, making choices is an adult affair; it is not for children. Choice or deliberate decision requires some form of reflective deliberation antecedent to the making of a decision because we are attempting to determine the course of action which will best promote our own and the larger community's flourishing. Finally, Aristotle understands excellent choice to proceed from the sort of person whose emotions and desires are in harmony with his reason. Or, to put it in another way, excellent choice is founded upon the integration of the emotional and desiderative elements of the soul with the rational part of the soul.

The above discussion of prohairesis furnishes us with an excellent philosophical account of the decision which we see Neoptolemus make in the play. Through the medium of philosophical discourse, the various elements of Neoptolemus' decision-making process can be viewed as a coherent whole. Thus, we see that choice involves virtue, assuming respon-

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[15]See Blundell, "The Phusis of Neoptolemus," 141. Blundell mentions that Neoptolemus' choice resembles an Aristotelian prohairesis but does not spell out exactly how his choice can justifiably be so designated.

sibility for one's own actions, moral maturity and a fundamental integration of the emotional and desiderative parts of the psyche with the rational part. All of this Sophocles shows to us through what the figure of Neoptolemus goes through on stage. What the tragedian contributes that cannot be captured through rational discourse is the dramatic portrayal of the anguish that is involved in the process of deliberation and the struggle which is part of attempting to live the life of virtue. The poet furnishes us with the concreteness and immediacy of experience that it is his peculiar part to provide.

7. Friendship and the Moral Life

In chapter six I argue that both Sophocles and Aristotle see friendship as a central element in living the good life. They do not, however, view as an important ingredient in living well simply any kind of association or relationship, but only the sort of friendship where the person is loved for who he is and the good is wished for him for his own sake. Much modern moral philosophy, on the other hand, neglects the role of friendship in the formation of the moral agent either because of its Kantian character where the focus is on duty and the autonomy of the willing subject or because it tends to view morality as the crafting of an adequate procedure for making decisions with respect to various moral quandaries. In any case if, as we have been suggesting, morality has much more to do with what sort of person I am to become and what

sort of life I am to live then the question of friendship comes to be of central importance. This is the case because the issue of what sort of person I am to become and what sort of life I am to lead is intimately bound up with the kinds of people with whom I share my life and call my friends. Friends are an expression both of my own character and, in turn, help shape my character for good or ill. It is in this way that the issue of friendship, in the ancient conception of moral education and the moral agent, comes to be of central concern. For, given this understanding of moral anthropology, friends will be a critical factor in whether I lead a fulfilled or frustrated life. Once again, correlative to this fuller ancient anthropology which includes the emotional and the rational, it is the part of the poet to furnish us with a dramatic and emotionally evocative presentation of the phenomena of human experience while the philosopher provides us with a rational account that serves to explain and bring some unity to the phenomena presented by the dramatist.

Sophocles discusses the issue of friendship by tracing for us the moving course of two individuals who grow in friendship, namely, Neoptolemus and Philoctetes. In addition, the tragedian employs Philoctetes' bow as a central symbol which serves as a kind of measure of the true status of their relationship. Heracles once gave the bow to Philoctetes as a token of gratitude for the son of Poeas' generous and true act of friendship. It is this very bow which, initially,

Neoptolemus seeks to obtain under the guise of genuine friendship with Philoctetes. In this way Sophocles shows us the shallow nature of Neoptolemus' original stance toward Philoctetes when the young man's interest in the suffering hero is nothing more than a means to the end of getting his bow. An implicit comparison is made between Philoctetes' genuine friendship with Heracles and Neoptolemus' sham friendship when the son of Poeas entrusts Neoptolemus with the bow because of the young man's compassion and nobility. The bow serves, here, as an ironic symbol of condemnation because it is being entrusted to someone who is in the process of violating everything that it represents. This does not, of course, last very long because Neoptolemus soon finds Odysseus' deceitful scheme intolerable and decides to undo everything which he has done. He determines to return the bow to its rightful owner and to establish their relationship upon a more genuine basis.

Sophocles signifies Neoptolemus' attempts to establish a true friendship with Philoctetes by the young man's use of persuasion in trying to get Philoctetes to come to Troy. Deceit and force have both been tried and have been found wanting and thus Sophocles points to the only thing which has not been tried, the only thing, in fact, which respects the person and will not (in the end) be found wanting. Even though Neoptolemus' attempts at persuading Philoctetes fail Sophocles indicates to us that Neoptolemus is on the right

track through the intervention of the god-friend, Heracles. Heracles, in effect, sanctions the sort of friendship based upon openness and concern for the character of the beloved which Neoptolemus initiates, however unsuccessfully.[16] The god comes, himself, as a friend in order (at last!) to persuade Philoctetes to go to Troy with Neoptolemus and to affirm the central importance that their friendship will play in achieving great things. By thus situating the fruitless and destructive nature of false friendship side by side with the promise of a heroic destiny based upon a friendship of genuine concern for the other, Sophocles points to the centrality of the latter kind of friendship as a crucial element in the achievement of heroic valour and virtue. In this way the tragedian shows us that the fruit of authentic friendship is the performance of great and virtuous deeds.

Aristotle furnishes us with a detailed, analytical discussion of the nature and character of friendship. He enumerates three kinds of friendship (those of use, pleasure and character) which are differentiated by the various bases upon which affection for the other rests. Friendships that are based upon utility or pleasure are inferior because they are not grounded upon love of the person for who he is but upon some kind of incidental consideration. It is only in the friendship of character that the other is loved for who he is

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[16]See Christopher Gill, "Bow, Oracle, and Epiphany in Sophocles' Philoctetes," Greece and Rome 27 (1980), 143-144.

and the good is wished for him for his own sake. All three forms of friendship are, according to Aristotle, necessary to a flourishing life but the friendship of character, alone, is both necessary and sufficient to a life lived well. This is so inasmuch as Aristotle holds that only friendship which is grounded in the character of the beloved can serve as a stable and reliable basis for the mutual pursuit of the virtuous life. It is here, alone, that friendship becomes a kind of school of virtue in which friends make each other good through their life together. In this way we can see that Aristotle understands that a flourishing life is mediated through such friendships.

Thus, both philosopher and tragedian hold that friendship that is grounded in the character of the beloved is, alone, a fully realized form of friendship and that it is only this kind of friendship which is both a necessary and sufficient condition of a life lived well.

8. Tragic Catharsis and the Education of the Emotions

In this brief appendix I amplify my argument regarding Aristotle's understanding of the emotions as cognitive in character through a consideration of the role of the emotions and catharsis in the Poetics and Politics. Aristotle argues that the successful tragic poet must structure his plot and develop his characters in such a way that compassion and terror (the two most important tragic emotions) are intelligible responses to the events depicted on stage. If

these emotions are appropriately aroused they will lead to what Aristotle argues is the peculiar pleasure of tragedy, namely, catharsis. The experience of catharsis, he argues, is both an aligning of the emotions with the judgments of reason as well as a release of emotional tension that will make us better able to hit the mean in the expression of our feelings in real life situations.

Chapter 1

THE INADEQUACY OF NATURE TO ATTAIN VIRTUE IN SOPHOCLES AND ARISTOTLE

1.1 Introduction

For the ancients, ethics was perceived to be an eminently practical matter. In this way they rightly perceived that morality was not a matter of constructing a sound moral theory, as we see is the case in much modern moral philosophy, but with becoming a particular kind of person and living a certain kind of life. Thus their point of departure is not an attempt to discern and formulate an abstract and universal principle (as we see, for example, with Kant) but an attempt to understand human nature in all of its fullness and variety. In the anthropology of Sophocles and Aristotle, a human being is understood to be a complex of emotions, desires and reason that must be brought into some kind of harmonious integration if the individual is to feel, act and live well. According to the tragedian and philosopher this excellent integration of the elements of the human psyche is not given to us by nature but requires the assistance of a sound moral education. Through this understanding of human nature, this anthropology, we can see that Sophocles and Aristotle appreciated both the complexity of moral agency and the contingent character of

ethics itself. They understood that the moral person was made up of many parts that had to be integrated well and that such integration would require education. This is, of course, a rather precarious business because the integration of these elements of the soul is difficult to achieve and may, of course, end in failure. Such a failure would constitute a broken and frustrated life. This conception of the moral agent also implies the need for others. The achievement of sound moral agency is thus dependent, in a significant way, upon others inasmuch as we shall need good teachers to instruct us in the ways of virtue and happiness. In this way, this ancient moral anthropology shows a profound appreciation of the social character of becoming a moral person.

Moral philosophy in the Kantian tradition, would, of course, view the study of human nature as an irrelevant and wrongheaded point of departure. This is so because Kant holds that everything empirical is unsuitable to contribute to the principle of morality. For Kant the point is not to understand how people actually act but how they ought to act. In addition, Kant shows no appreciation of the social and developmental character of becoming a moral agent because he focuses solely upon the autonomy of the willing subject to the exclusion of the role that others play in our burgeoning awareness of what it means to become a moral person. Furthermore, moral philosophy stemming from Kant tends to focus solely upon the role of reason and ignores or is positively

hostile to the part that the emotions play in becoming a moral agent. Finally, Kant showed no appreciation of the worth of the harmonious integration of the various elements of the psyche with respect to moral action. As we have seen, such a harmony was viewed by the ancients as the ground of excellent choice. There is no moral worth to such integration of the emotional and desiderative elements with the rational element of the psyche in Kant's view. In fact, Kant sees that inner conflict between these various elements that results in the victory of reason over the emotions or desires is of greater moral worth than such integration. The model of integration, it seems to me, is superior to the Kantian view because it does not view emotions and desires as necessarily threatening to rational choice and action or as contributing nothing to an action's moral worth. In the ancient anthropology emotions and desires are potentially disruptive to rational choice and action but they are intrinsically capable of being educated and contributing to the moral development and maturity of the person. For the ancients, this integration was the conditio sine qua non of mature and moral agency.

We have noted how the ancient anthropology of Sophocles and Aristole more fully appreciates the whole person in his rational as well as emotional aspects. We have also noted how this ancient conception of ethics does greater justice than modern ethics to appreciating the contingent character of morality. This stems, I would contend, from its greater sense

of the concrete nature of ethics. In keeping with this fuller anthropology which appreciates the whole person in both her rational and emotional aspects it seems entirely appropriate to include the work of both the literary artist and the philosopher in our analysis of the moral agent. We need to appeal to literature in the way that it is capable of forcefully presenting the immediacy and concreteness of a situation. It is also needed for its ability dramatically to depict thinking and feeling characters who draw us in, emotionally speaking, and thereby help us to become more effective moral agents through the emotional identification with a particular moral situation that drama provides. The ancients viewed this as a form of moral education because they believed that we could be assisted in understanding how to respond to actual life situations through our witnessing of the various characters' actions and emotional responses on the stage.

We shall also need to appeal to philosophy in order to understand the nature of moral agency inasmuch as we need more than simply an emotionally charged presentation of particulars that we receive from the dramatist. We also need the unifying and explanatory powers that it is the peculiar part of the philosopher to provide. In this way we shall turn to the work of Aristotle in order to receive a <u>logos</u> of the phenomena presented by the poet. Thus, it is my contention that we require both accounts in order properly to understand the

nature of the moral agent and the moral life. Literature is needed for its emotional power and its capacity for presenting the particulars of human experience in a forceful way. philosophy is needed for its explanatory powers in bringing the diversity of the phenomena of human experience into some unified whole. Let us turn, then, to a more detailed consideration of Sophocles' and Aristotle's position with respect to the relationship of nature to virtue and how their view constituted a break from the archaic tradition.

Sophocles challenges the archaic Greek conception of nature as being sufficient for the achievement of virtue. According to the archaic understanding one's inborn nature is determinative of one's character.[1] A person is, as it were,

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[1]One of the clearest statements on nature as an inherited excellence comes in the works of Pindar. In his Pythian Ode 8 Pindar says that it is due to nature that the noble spirit is made conspicuous from fathers to their children (Phua to gennaion epiprepei ek pateron paisi lema, Pythian 8.44-45). Pindar emphasizes here the importance of nature by placing it first in the sentence. Furthermore, he shows the centrality of inherited nature through his use of the preposition ek with the genitive pateron in juxtaposition with the dative paisi in line 45. In this way he emphasizes the fact that nobility of spirit and character (to gennaion lema) is directly passed down from fathers to their children. In his Olympian Odes and Nemean Odes Pindar makes a pointed comparison between that which comes by nature and that which comes by teaching. He praises the former and disparages the latter. In Olympian 13 Pindar says that it is a hard struggle to hide one's inborn nature (amachon de krupsai to suggenes ethos, Olympian 13.13). The idea seems to be that sooner or later this nature will assert itself, perhaps even against one's conscious wish or choice. The true poet, he says in Olympian 2, is the one who knows many things by means of nature (sophos ho polla eidos phua, Olympian 2.86), while those that have learned the art of poetry (mathontes, Olympian 2.86) are blustering and intemperate of tongue like crows (labroi panglossia korakes hos akranta, Olympia 2.87) chattering in vain against the god-like

born into who he is and thus his nature predetermines the quality of his character. If a person, for example, is born from a noble father then it would be expected that he or she would turn out to be equally noble. The base or wicked would, likewise, be expected to be born from the wicked. Sophocles shows us the inadequacy of this conception of ethics when Neoptolemus, the son of noble Achilles, is eventually induced to carry out an elaborate, deceitful scheme that he himself considers to be disgraceful. Neoptolemus initially opposes Odysseus but his rather naive and unreflective appeal to the nobility of his father's nature is no match for the pressure and rhetorical skill that the son of Laertes exerts on him.

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bird of Zeus. Again, in Olympian 9 he asserts that everything which is best comes from nature (to de phua kratiston hapan, Olympian 9.100) but many men have striven to acquire renown for virtue from mere teaching (polloi de didaktais anthropon aretais kleos orousan aresthai, Olympian 9.100-102). This latter sort of fame, Pindar says, has no part in the gods and thus is none the worse for being silenced (aneu de theou sesigamenon ou skaioteron chrem' hekaston, Olympian 9.103-104). Finally, in Nemean Ode 3 he says that it is by means of inborn valor that a man has great power (suggenei de tis eudoxia mega brithei, Nemean 3.40) while the man who only has learning lives in darkness, breathing changeful purposes which go this way and that (psephenos aner allot' alla pneon ou pot' atrekei, Nemean 3.41-42). He never enters with a firm step but tastes of countless forms of prowess with an undecided mind (kateba podi murian d' aretan atelei noo geuetai, Nemean 3.43). From a brief consideration of these texts from Pindar we can see the central place that nature has with respect to excellence (arete). Excellence in the form of physical prowess and moral virtue is passed on in toto from father to son and it is this kind of inborn power and strength that is alone worth having. The sort of excellence that comes from learning or training is disparaged as being chimerical and having no part in divine life.

See also Lesky, Greek Tragedy, pp. 125-126 ; Rose, "Sophocles' Philoctetes and the Teachings of the Sophists," 87-88, 97-98; Blundell, "The Phusis of Neoptolemus," 137-138.

Through the swift and certain succumbing of the character of Neoptolemus, Sophocles shows us in dramatic form the inadequacy of the archaic model with respect to its confidence in the sufficiency of nature for the achievement of virtue. In this way, by implicitly calling attention to the inadequacy of nature (phusis) for virtue, Sophocles highlights the importance of other factors necessary to the achievement of virtue namely, moral education and a moral guide or exemplar.

Aristotle discusses in philosophic garb what is presented to us through the medium of tragic poetry in Sophocles. According to Aristotle we have a certain natural proclivity for the development of the virtues but this tendency needs to be augmented by the educative process of moral habituation. We are not born with the virtues through some kind of inherited nobility (as the archaic model would have it) nor are the virtues inculcated in us contrary to our natural proclivities but we have, as Aristotle sees it, a certain inborn potency to receive, develop and bring the virtues to perfection. The process of habituation is a kind of training of the emotions and desires through activity in such a way that we experience pleasure and pain at what we ought. This is, according to Aristotle, correct education and it is the indispensable foundation for the acquirement of complete virtue.

Thus in this chapter I argue that Sophocles and Aristotle are in accord with each other on the insufficiency of

nature for the attainment of virtue. Sophocles shows us this insufficiency powerfully by actually presenting us with a particular case of an individual whose noble nature is overthrown by the bad influence of a wicked person, even if only temporarily. His great strength as a dramatic artist is precisely this ability to "discuss" a philosophical issue through the medium of a particular instance which has universal significance. Through the vehicle of dramatic action and characterization Sophocles is surely telling us that leaving noble natures heedlessly under the tutelage of the corrupt will inevitably spell disaster.

Aristotle does not present us with characters in a drama because his medium is philosophical discourse. His statement of the case on the insufficiency of nature for virtue is therefore less vivid and immediate than that of Sophocles but he furnishes a certain precision in vocabulary and conceptual framework which is not the part of poetry to provide. In some ways, he will bring into sharper focus the moral phenomena that the dramatist presents so movingly through the medium of tragedy. It will be my purpose then in this chapter to demonstrate that for both tragedian and philosopher nature (<u>phusis</u>) is a good starting point or potential for the development of the virtues but requires, in addition, the nurturing of a sound moral education in which appropriate feelings and actions are established through habituation. Let us turn then to a consideration of dramatist and philosopher.

1.2 The Insufficiency of Nature for Virtue in Sophocles

When Neoptolemus hears Odysseus' scheme (sophisma) to capture Philoctetes, he respectfully responds that he abhors doing whatever he feels distressed at hearing (ego men hous an ton logon algo kluon/ Laertiou pai tousde kai prassein stugo, Phil. 86-87) because, he says, it is neither his own nature nor that of his father's to do anything "by means of wicked art" (ephun gar ouden ek technes prassein kakes out' autos outh', hos phasin, houkphusas eme, Phil. 88-89). He states that he would rather fail acting nobly (kalos dron examartein, Phil. 94-95) than succeed with wickedness (nikan kakos, Phil. 94-95). Unlike Odysseus for whom victory (nike) is everything, Neoptolemus is sensitive to his heritage, to the father whose reputation for nobility he wants to emulate and to his own principle of not doing anything "by means of wicked art." His own moral intuitions are that it is always better to act nobly and even to fail to achieve one's desired goal than to come away with victory through wickedness (Phil. 88-89).

This is, of course, unintelligible to Odysseus. Through a series of clever verbal maneuvers, Odysseus gets Neoptolemus to accept the use of deceit (dolos) in order to make off with Philoctetes' bow. He promises the young man that he will carry off the twin gifts of a reputation for being wise (sophos) and good (agathos) when he successfully accomplishes his task (Phil. 119). Whatever hesitations that Neoptolemus

may have had are now abandoned and he cries, "Let it go, I'll do it, throwing off all sense of shame." (ito poeso, pasan aischunen apheis, Phil. 120).[2] Morally speaking, Neoptolemus has taken a significant step toward placing himself in the hands of Odysseus. It will not be a comfortable match. B. M. W. Knox has written that Odysseus and Neoptolemus "are strange bedfellows."[3] Indeed, the inexperienced and principled young man coupled with the wily, amoral man of the world are an odd team and Neoptolemus will have to travel a

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[2]See The Philoctetes of Sophocles, ed. Sir Richard Jebb (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1954), p. 71. Jebb states here, " ito is a defiance of the possible consequences ('happen what may'): cp. Eur. Med. 819 (Medea, having taken her resolve to kill the children) ito perissoi pantes oun meso logoi." After much painful deliberation Medea determines to kill her two children in order to make her revenge upon Jason complete. Of course, in the passage from Euripides, there is a kind of headlong ruefulness in Medea's use of the verb ito. It is unclear just how we are to take this ito used by Neoptolemus. We might imagine him uttering the word with the same sense of desperation as Medea. He is, of course, not about to embark upon as extreme an act as she but he is trying to muster all the strength necessary to perform an act that goes against his character. We might even take this utterance as the pleased and excited release of a young man who is just about to set out upon his first adventure and has high hopes of renown and glory. He has, after all, just been promised the highly prized epithets (though sophos certainly could be used pejoratively) of "wise and good" man. At any rate, whichever way we take this, as a pained or a pleased expression, this utterance appears to mark Neoptolemus' consent to give himself over to Odysseus (Phil. 84) and thus to abandon his former moral identity.

[3]Bernard M. W. Knox, The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1964), p. 121. The quotation continues: ". . . in the prologue the cynical worldly wisdom of the older man provides a brilliant contrast with the all-too-naive idealism of the boy."

long and hard road in order to discover his true moral identity.

In this opening scene, Sophocles shows us how a principled young man who is of excellent lineage abandons his moral intuitions under the coaxing and cajoling of the wily manipulator, Odysseus. He is now to embark upon a scheme that will do violence to his character. And yet, even here Odysseus has couched the results of carrying out the plan in such a way (namely, that Neoptolemus will be renowned for his wisdom and goodness) that it appears to be in accord with his noble nature (phusis). Odysseus is, in this way, playing as much of a deceit upon Neoptolemus as he is requiring Neoptolemus to play on Philoctetes. He knows that the young man's expression of pain (Phil. 86-7) shows an attraction to what is noble and good and a revulsion from the disgraceful. Hence he anticipates the need for masking the deed in terms of moral approbation.

It is clear that Neoptolemus has good potential for the development of the virtues. We can see this in the pain and hesitation he feels (Phil. 86) toward Odysseus' proposal.[4] Initially at least, he prefers open violence (bia) to the underhanded approach of the son of Laertes (all' eim' hetoimos

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[4]The word that Neoptolemus employs here is algos. It is a strong word signifying both mental and bodily suffering. He uses the same word at 806 to express the distress that he feels for Philoctetes' suffering. Philoctetes in turn, describes Neoptolemus as "bearing painfully" (algeinos pheron, Phil. 1011) the witness of his own treatment at the hands of Odysseus.

pros bian ton andr' agein/ kai me doloisin, Phil. 90-91).[5] He demonstrates a proper sense of shame at telling such a terrible lie (ouk aischron hege deta ta pseude legein;, Phil. 108) and does not know how he will muster the daring so boldly to face the suffering hero (pos oun blepon tis tauta tolmesei lakein;, Phil. 110). But in the end, Sophocles shows us that Neoptolemus relies too heavily upon his nature (phusis) as something of a defensive shield which will protect him from all wrongdoing. He firmly believes that the nature which he inherited from his father will prove to be a kind of inviolable bulwark against "doing anything from wicked design" (Phil. 88-89). The naivete of his confidence in his inherited nature makes him easy prey for the wiles of an Odysseus.

In this opening scene, with its constant references to the nobility of Neoptolemus' nature (Phil. 51, 79, 88, 96,) and his subsequent and swift downfall into the practice of villainy (Phil. 120), Sophocles is critical of the archaic notion that one's inherited nature is a sufficient guarantee of excellence of character. In the archaic conception of things, one's nature was considered to be the core of qualities and characteristics which an individual inherited from his parents, particularly from the father. This core of character traits was considered inviolate and determinative of character. One's nature was considered to be the script, as it were, writ upon the soul.

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[5]See Blundell, "The Phusis of Neoptolemus, 138.

1.3 Sophocles Responds to the Archaic Tradition

Sophocles constructs the opening scene of this play in response to the inadequacy of this archaic conception of nature. It is against this backdrop that he will seek to articulate a more nuanced conception of the role of nature with respect to moral excellence through the character of Neoptolemus.

Sophocles shows us that while Neoptolemus' excellence of lineage is surely a fine starting point, a good potential[6] for the development of virtue, it cannot stand firm on its own. It must be bolstered by some form of correct education and moral guidance or it will become victim to precisely the sort of bold and shameless rhetoric that Odysseus employs (Phil. 109, 111). As we have said, Neoptolemus has good potential for the development of the virtues. He feels appropriate pain at the idea of practicing deceit, but his emotional response is ridiculed by the son of Laertes (Phil. 96-99) and thus Neoptolemus has no friendly support for the noble and honorable feelings that are the part of his nature.

In this way, then, Sophocles is showing us the insufficiency of the archaic model with respect to the achievement of excellence. Neoptolemus, the son of the noble warrior Achilles, easily abandons his principles under the pressure of an unscrupulous politician like Odysseus. He appeals to

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[6]On phusis as a potential or capacity for the development of moral excellence in the character of Neoptolemus see, Blundell, "The Phusis of Neoptolemus," 145-147.

his father's nature and the kind of principles and actions which that nature represents but all of these things are easily subverted and disposed of by Odysseus. What Sophocles is showing us is that Neoptolemus lacks someone who might teach him and act as an adequate moral example. He has, after all, been deprived of the role model of his father Achilles from an early age because of the war at Troy. It is rather ironic that Sophocles has him appeal to the inborn excellence which he has inherited from his father at the very time when that excellence will prove to be insufficient. Thus, we see that nature, though a good beginning for virtue, needs to be bolstered by excellent education, example and action, all of which Odysseus cannot provide.

Two recent commentators on the play, Albin Lesky and Gregory McNamee, give a different interpretation of this play with respect to the question of the relationship of nature and character.[7] Both Lesky and McNamee argue that Sophocles is siding with the archaic conception of nature's sufficiency for the achievement of moral virtue. Inasmuch as nature (according to the archaic understanding) constitutes the essentially inviolable core of human personality that is inherited by birth Neoptolemus does not undergo, they argue, any real change in the course of the play but only re-assumes what he already had from the beginning. They do not grant, in my opinion, sufficient scope to the crucial role that

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[7]Lesky, Greek Tragedy; McNamee, Philoktetes .

Sophocles has Philoctetes play as a moral guide and hence for the importance of education with respect to Neoptolemus' moral victory at the close of the play. Neoptolemus' nature does not re-assert itself unaided. His excellent nature is, as we have stated, a good starting point for the inculcation and development of the virtues but, in the absence of the moral guidance of Philoctetes, it would have stagnated and become thoroughly corrupted by the deleterious influence of the son of Laertes.

We shall quote briefly first from McNamee, then extensively from Lesky and follow up with our own discussion with respect to Sophocles' views on the relationship of nature and character. McNamee briefly articulates Sophocles' agreement with the archaic view concerning the centrality of nature in the achievement of moral excellence in the introduction to his excellent translation of the play:

> In his drama Sophokles places himself squarely among those who hold that one's character is determined not by environment or custom but by inborn nature (phusis), and that one's greatest dishonor is to act, for whatever end, in ways not consonant with that essence. Neoptolemus learns through the course of the Philoktetes that he is simply unable, by virtue of his noble birth, to obey the roguish Odysseus' commands: his ancestry and the nature it has given him do not permit him to act deceitfully, no matter what profit might tempt him.[8]

Lesky develops this conception of ancestry as the central category for understanding the moral character of Neoptolemus at much greater length. He argues that all Greek

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[8]McNamee, Philoktetes, pp. 1-3.

drama of the classical period (namely that of Aeschylus and Sophocles) lacks the psychological and moral complexity of the drama of Euripides whose plays first presented the kind of interior dialogue and strife that have become the hallmark of contemporary drama. The decisive lack of any such complexity of character, he argues, is due to the pre-sophistic understanding of human nature as changeless and inflexibly determined:

> In a modern character drama an individual and all the different facets of his being are the centre of the action, and the changes that take place in him are frequently shown as well. Euripides--after a revolution in ideas about human nature--was the first to incorporate such changes in his dramatic representations. They do not occur in classical drama, in fact they are alien to its spirit, in a significant way. We saw that the actions of Neoptolemus, in different passages of the drama, were contradictory, but we should misinterpret the play if we ascribed this to a change in him as a person. A different concept altogether is needed to interpret this figure. When Odysseus explains his mission to him, he says understandingly (79): 'I know, young man, it is not your natural bent (phusis) to say such things nor to contrive such mischief.' With this word phusis we encounter the notion of an inborn quality in a man, which at that time was considered fundamental to human nature and which will help us to understand this play. Its psychological core is not a change in Neoptolemus but the victorious reassertion of his phusis against all temptation and after he had disowned it, however grudgingly. Neoptolemus himself states, at a decisive moment in the drama (902), one of the most profound truths of pre-sophistic Hellas when he speaks of the distress in which man lands himself if he disowns his phusis and does not act in harmony with it. And his greatest reward for the reassertion of his self are the words of Philoctetes (1310): 'You have shown your nature and true breeding, son of Achilles.'
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> This concept of phusis as man's permanent possession, his inalienable, unchanging inheritance, contains a fundamental trait of Sophoclean man. Beyond it lies an idea that was inherent in archaic Greek culture and remained valid up to the end of the great classical period: what man inherited through his descent determined

his character once and for all.[9]

Lesky makes the distinction between classical portrayals of character and those of the post-sophistic type explicit in his comparison of Sophocles' character Ajax with the character of Euripides' Medea:

> When the attendant comes back from the palace with the boys and announces with joy that their sentence of banishment has been lifted, he finds Medea in a state of profound agitation. After he has left her we witness her inner struggle in a speech which, although it refers to the chorus once (1043) is essentially a monologue. The intensity with which inner experiences are portrayed here is unequalled in Attic tragedy; it also reveals man's tragic potentialities from a new angle. We are not shown, as in the death of Sophocles' Ajax, a rigid predetermination rooted in his phusis, but a human being as a prey to the contending play of forces which have their source in his soul, and are struggling for mastery over it.[10]

The interpretation of McNamee and Lesky does not do justice to the moral and psychological complexity of the character of Neoptolemus. They both argue as if Neoptolemus' reassertion of his nature is, after a brief struggle, a foregone conclusion. But this is far from the case in the play. From the moment Neoptolemus asserts that he will take part in Odysseus' scheme it is utterly unclear until the very end of the play (Phil. 1222ff.) whether Neoptolemus will recover the moral intuitions with which he began the play (Phil. 94-95) or be permanently corrupted by the influence of Odysseus. Sophocles never tires of pointing out that the

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[9]Lesky, Greek Tragedy, p. 125.

[10]Ibid., p. 146.

influence of a wicked teacher can sink very deep. We see this when Neoptolemus, in Odyssean fashion, covertly excuses himself for his own wrongdoing by denying that Odysseus is responsible for having taken his fatherly inheritance and places responsibility instead upon those in power (Phil. 385-388). Again, we witness this same distancing of himself from personal responsibility (a nefarious Odyssean trait) when Neoptolemus appeals to such abstractions as necessity (ananke, Phil. 922) and the expedient (to sumpheron, Phil. 926) when he seeks to justify the brutal way in which Philoctetes must be treated if Odysseus' scheme is to be successful. Sophocles is surely pointing to the central importance of the role of education and the potentially devastating influence of the teacher in the simply masterful way in which Neoptolemus throws himself, almost zealously, into the practice of deceiving Philoctetes (Phil. 343-390). The ancient audience watching this for the first time must have wondered whether the son of Achilles had, in fact, given himself over once and for all to the son of Laertes (Phil. 84)!

Sophocles' Neoptolemus seems to me to have every bit of the psychological and moral complexity that Lesky attributes to Euripides' Medea. His struggle is in many ways similar to that of Medea inasmuch as he is the victim of the same kind of interior conflicts and anguish that afflict her. Medea has her great soliloquy in which she agonizes whether actually to go through with the killing of her children (Medea 1038-1080),

but Neoptolemus is also plagued by this sort of inner division. He is paralyzed by emotional confusion (aporia) and remorse just at the point when Odysseus' scheme is going to carry the day (Phil. 895-899). His use of the word algos (grief, distress) highlights his mental suffering (Phil. 806, cf. also 1011) and, like Medea, he is so divided that he cries out at several points in the play, "What shall I do?" (Phil. 908, 969, 974). The struggle and confusion that Sophocles portrays through the character of Neoptolemus show us that for the playwright the emergence of virtue is something tenuous and difficult. It comes in and through struggle and pain and requires the assistance of a worthy role model if it is to come to the light. When the son of Achilles returns to the stage again after his extraordinary silence we are not witnessing the mere reassertion of his nature in a fashion that is in some way rigidly predetermined,[11] but are seeing what happens when a person, after much painful deliberation, has opted fundamentally for one way of life over another. Since the character of Neoptolemus is more complex than Lesky and McNamee indicate, since he is as it were, three-dimensional and not one-dimensional, we must take into consideration other factors than only his nature. This is what Sophocles is showing us with the character of Neoptolemus: a promising nature is not sufficient for virtue as Pindar and the archaic tradition would have it, but requires in addition

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[11]Lesky, p. 146

the nourishment and guidance of correct education if it is to attain the goal of excellence.[12]

1.4 Nature and Virtue in Aristotle

Aristotle also maintains the insufficiency of nature for virtue but develops his position through the medium of philosophical discourse. He renders explicit and thematic the relationship of nature to the moral life that is presented dramatically in Sophocles. Because he is doing philosophy Aristotle cannot show us in as moving a way as the tragedian the struggle that is involved in the quest to achieve virtue. This is the peculiar virtue that is part of the tragedian's art to show. But he does furnish a clearer conceptual schema through which to understand the action that Sophocles presents.

For Aristotle, we have a certain natural affinity or orientation toward the good, but this natural predeliction is clearly insufficient for the achievement of virtue in the complete sense. Like Sophocles, then, Aristotle holds that nature is a good starting point for the development of the virtues but he makes it explicit that moral training is the

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[12]See Rose, "Sophocles' Philoctetes and the Teachings of the Sophists," 89; Blundell, "The Phusis of Neoptolemus," 138, 145. Rose correctly points to the importance of education in the character formation of Neoptolemus and Blundell rightly perceives that Sophocles is emphasizing the potentiality of Neoptolemus' phusis.

condition sine qua non of the full realization of nature's potentialities with respect to the question of excellence (arete). In the opening of his Nicomachean Ethics, he says that every undertaking seems to aim at some good and so it has been well said that the good is that at which all things aim (dio kalos apephenanto tagathon hou pant' ephietai, EN 1094a2-3). But natural proclivity must, according to Aristotle, be united to education or training in the form of habituation (ethos) if nature is ever to be brought to completion.[13] Aristotle points out the philosophical implications of the connection between character and habituation by indicating the etymological similarity of the words ethos (character) and ethos (habituation, custom or practice, EN 1103a17-19). If moral excellence is necessarily connected to ethos (habituation, practice), then, Aristotle asserts, none of the moral virtues are engendered in us by nature (delon hoti oudemia ton ethikon areton phusei hemin enginetai, EN 1103a19-20). If it takes habituation to arrive at the moral virtues then we do not simply grow into them by nature but we acquire them through practice.

Aristotle states this negatively by asserting that if the moral virtues are acquired by some kind of habituation then they cannot be engendered by nature inasmuch as natural properties cannot be altered by habit. If we acquired our

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[13]See Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 52-53.

moral characters by nature then there would be no hope of our ever altering them. They would be fixed and inviolate much like the archaic conception of nature that Sophocles is challenging, and much like the stone to which Aristotle refers that cannot be habituated to stay up no matter how many times one throws it upward (EN 1103a20-22). The moral virtues, Aristotle conludes, are engendered in us neither by nature nor contrary to nature but we are capable, by nature, of receiving or accepting them (out' ara phusei oute para phusin enginontai hai aretai alla pephukosi men hemin dexasthai autas EN 1103a23-25) and bringing them to perfection through habituation (teleioumenois de dia tou ethous, EN 1103a25-26).[14]

The notion of practice as a way of developing, augmenting and completing our natural powers, while implicit in Sophocles, is at the very center of Aristotle's moral philosophy. This is why such emphasis is placed upon action. For Aristotle, activity is the road to becoming a particular kind of person:

> For the things which we have to learn before we can do them we learn by doing: men become builders by building houses, and harpists by playing the harp. Similarly, we become just by the practice of just actions, self-con-

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[14]Aristotle indicates the general insufficiency of natural capacities with a view to the acquirement of virtue in his discussion of the relationship of practical wisdom (phronesis) to moral virtue (ethike arete) in EN VI.12. The natural capacity (dunamis, EN 1144a23) of cleverness (deinotes) requires the correct education of the passions in order to become the virtue of practical wisdom. Similarly, natural virtue (phusike arete) can only become virtue in the full sense (kurios arete) by the experienced and educated guidance of practical wisdom.

> trolled by exercising self-control, and courageous by performing acts of courage. (EN 1103a32-1103b2.)[15]

It is by action too that the education of our emotions takes place:

> It is by acting in the face of danger and by developing the habit of feeling fear or confidence that some become brave men and others cowards. The same applies to the appetites and feelings of anger: by reacting in one way or in another to given circumstances some people become self-controlled and gentle, and others self-indulgent and short-tempered. (EN 1103b14-20.)[16]

Aristotle lays particular and striking emphasis upon the necessity of persistent practice with a view to the acquisition of the virtues when he cautions us concerning the vast difference between practicing the virtues or merely talking about them:

> Thus our assertion that a man becomes just by performing just acts and self-controlled by performing acts of self-control is correct: without performing them, nobody could even be on the way to becoming good (ek de tou me prattein tauta oudeis an oude melleseie ginesthai agathos). But most people do not perform such acts, but by taking refuge in argument (epi de ton logon katapheugontes) they think that they are engaged in philosophy and that they will become good in this way. In so doing, they act like sick men who listen attentively to what the doctor says, but fail to do any of the things he prescribes. That kind of philosophical activity will not bring health to the soul any more than this sort of treatment will produce a healthy body. (EN 1105b5-18.)[17]

Habituation is necessary with a view to bringing about the proper response to pleasure and pain. Aristotle contends that

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[15]Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics trans. by Martin Ostwald (New York, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1962), p. 34.

[16]Ostwald, p. 34

[17]Ostwald, pp. 39-40.

the entire matter of the study of ethics is necessarily concerned with pleasure and pain inasmuch as it is not unimportant for our actions that we feel joy and pain in the right or wrong way (dia tout' oun anankaion einai peri tauta ten pasan pragmateian ou gar mikron eis tas praxeis eu e kakos chairein kai lupeisthai, EN 1105a5-7). He reiterates this same point when he states that a sign (semeion, EN 1104b5) of our character disposition is furnished by the pleasure or pain that accompanies our activities. It is crucial, he says, that we be brought up from our earliest days to delight and be pained at what we ought (dio dei echthai pos euthus ek neon, hos ho Platon phesin, hoste chairein te kai lupeisthai hois dei, EN 1104b12-4). This is what Aristotle, following Plato calls correct education (orthe paideia, EN 1104b13).[18] It is

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[18]In Republic III.12 (401e-402a) Plato talks about the power of music to instill feelings of pleasure and pain at the proper things in the young. Music is especially suitable to the education of youth because rhythm and harmony "sink down into the depths of the soul" (kataduetai eis to entos tes psuches ho te ruthmos kai harmonia, Republic, 401d6-7) and "take the strongest hold upon it, leading the soul to gracefullness and making it graceful" (kai erromenestata haptetai autes pheronta ten euschemosunen kai poiei euschemona, Republic 401d7-8). He maintains that children need to be emotionally attuned to what is disgraceful and noble from an early age. This emotional education he insists, must be instilled even before the children are capable of understanding the reason why something is disgraceful or noble (ta men kala epainoi kai chairon kai kata dechomenos eis ten psuchen trephoit' an ap' auton kai gignoito kalos te kagathos ta d' aischra psegoi t'an orthos kai misoi eti neos on prin logon dunatos einai labein, Republic, 401e4-7). It is through this emotional affinity with the beautiful and the good established in their youth that children will be capable of recognizing the reason or reasons why something is noble or disgraceful later in their adult lives (elthontos de tou logou aspazoit' an auton gnorizon di' oikeioteta malista ho houto trapheis;,

the indispensable foundation for the development of moral excellence.

1.5 Conclusion

I have argued that the ancient anthropology (and its concomitant conception of the moral person and the moral life) of Aristotle and Sophocles is superior to more modern conceptions of the moral agent for several reasons. First, this anthropology shows a much greater appreciation of the concrete character of ethics in its concern for the question of human nature. The question of the development of the virtues was the central concern of the ancients and they saw that this issue was directly related to the sufficiency or insufficiency of human nature to attain them. In this way we can see that Sophocles and Aristotle start with the empirical and make important judgments with respect to the necessity or non-necessity of moral education based upon a human being's nature. Moral philosophy in the Kantian tradition is much more abstract because it holds that the question of human nature and human experience in general is unimportant to the formulation of the moral law.

Secondly, we have seen that the ancients show an appreciation of the complexity of the moral agent that is lacking in much modern moral philosophy which focuses solely upon the rational to the exclusion of the role of the emo-

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Republic 401a3-4).

tions. It is precisely this recognition and appreciation of all of the elements of the human psyche, rational, emotional and desiderative, and the need for their harmonious integration, that leads the ancients to the insight that this harmony of parts is simply not given to us by nature. Thus Sophocles and Aristotle understand that nature is insufficient to achieve virtue and that moral education is necessary. In this way they also appreciate the developmental character of the life of virtue and the social aspect of becoming a moral agent that is decidedly lacking in the Kantian conception of moral philosophy.

I have argued, in addition, that, given this anthropology, it is entirely appropriate to appeal to or to include literature as well as philosophy in order fully to appreciate those elements that are a part of becoming a moral person. Literature is needed for its concreteness and emotional evocativeness in the formation of the moral agent while philosophy is needed for its ability to furnish an explanatory and unifying logos of the phenomena presented by the dramatist.

The philosopher provides the conceptual framework through which we see that human nature is a potentiality to receive the virtues only with the aid of educative habituation. The tragedian shows us the insufficiency of unaided nature to attain virtue through the dramatic portrayal of a young nobleman's initial fall into villainy because of the

influence of a wicked teacher and a naive over-reliance upon his noble nature to keep him on the path of virtue. It is the peculiar virtue of poetry (especially tragic poetry) to show graphically through action the struggle and the uncertainty that is involved in attempting to live the life of virtue.[19] And it is in this way (by portraying the struggle, the necessity of a good role model and the uncertainty of the outcome) that Sophocles challenges the archaic conception of achieving virtue through noble descent. The son of Achilles clearly has a certain affinity for virtue (pos oikeion tes aretes, EN 1179b30-31), loving what is noble and hating what is disgraceful (stergon to kalon kai dischrainon to aischron, EN 1179b31-32). Still, this is only a good beginning; it is no guarantee of the achievement of virtue. It is like preparing the soil in advance, Aristotle says, for the reception of the seed (EN 1179b26-27). In order for the seed to grow and become sturdy and strong, continuous activities in accord with virtue are required in order that virtue may take permanent root (EN 1105b10-15). Both Sophocles and Aristotle, then, point to the notion that nature is a good potential or starting point for virtue but that it requires the bolstering and development that only habituation and education can give. Neoptolemus is ripe for the reception of the virtues (EN 1103a26) but much more will be required of him if he is to find his way to moral maturity. He will have to be educated

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[19]MacIntyre, After Virtue, pp. 163-164.

in the very human school of suffering, will have to discover the true meaning of friendship and make a choice that will be determinative of his character and fate.

Chapter 2

MORAL EXEMPLAR AND MORAL STANDARD IN SOPHOCLES AND ARISTOTLE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I develop further the theme, touched upon in the previous chapter, of the importance of a role model in the formation of the moral person. I also address the broader question of the ultimate standard of value for Sophocles and Aristotle. Once again we can see the preference for the concrete over the abstract in the ancient conception of ethics in several ways. First, we note that the recognition for the need of a teacher stems directly from the understanding that human nature is insufficient to achieve virtue. This is based upon an empirical judgment. Secondly, the remedy that is sought to augment the deficiency of nature is not in terms of formulating some kind of abstract and universal principle (the categorical imperative, the principle of utility) but is in terms of a particular individual from the community who is well-equipped to instruct the student and inculcate the habits of virtue in him. Of course, the appeal to a concrete individual as a standard of action would be, for a Kantian, utterly wrongheaded. Again, for Kant, experience is immaterial to the doing of ethics and no number of excellent moral exemplars could ever add up to the exceptionless

rigor demanded by the moral law. But, in the ancient conception of the moral agent, such exceptionless rigor is unrealistic and out of touch with the contingent character of moral action. Thirdly, we can see here an implicit recognition and affirmation of the inherently social character of the formation of the moral agent. We grow into moral goodness not by gaining insight into the nature of our moral autonomy but in and through watching others feel, choose and act well. Again, it is my contention that Sophocles and Aristotle share the same basic moral anthropology and that this conception of the moral agent is superior to more recent developments. As a corollary to this anthropology that takes into account the whole person and enjoys a richer sense of the elements of the moral life it is my contention that we, as potential moral agents, need the strengths of both poetry and philosophy. We need poetry for its immediacy and concreteness as well as its ability to depict and evoke the emotions. On the other hand we need philosophy for its explanatory power and its ability to furnish a <u>logos</u> that can serve to unify the more disparate strands of human experience presented through the medium of poetry. Let us turn to a more detailed examination of the contributions of Sophocles and Aristotle in this chapter.

In Sophocles we shall see how the elaborate lie that Neoptolemus tells Philoctetes actually mirrors the young man's own moral dilemma. It is my contention that Sophocles is showing us through Neoptolemus' fiction the dire consequences

that ensue for the young and inexperienced when they are guided by the morally wicked. The insufficiency of unaided nature to achieve moral virtue is made devastatingly clear by Sophocles when we chillingly witness Neoptolemus speak in very Odyssean tones as he covertly excuses himself from any moral responsibility for his actions (Phil. 385-388). Contrariwise, the figure of Philoctetes, in marked contrast to Odysseus, is seen to be a much more adequate model for the son of Achilles.[1] It is Philoctetes who reawakens in the young man a sense of his own moral identity when he encourages him to live up to the legacy of his father and to the nature which was bequeathed to him. For example, he lavishly praises Neoptolemus for nobly enduring his sufferings with him (Phil. 869-871, 874-876). The good role model praises his student when he acts well and censures him when he acts wickedly. Philoctetes roundly abuses Neoptolemus with his words when he finds out that the son of Achilles has betrayed him to Odysseus.

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[1]It is my contention that Sophocles is in fundamental sympathy with the character of Philoctetes and hence I shall assume that he "approves" of the affect that the son of Poeas has on Neoptolemus. His sympathy with the figure of Philoctetes is shown in the final routing of Odysseus from the stage at the end of the play where Philoctetes gets the last word:

> Know this much young man, that these supposed foremost of the Achaeans are mere false and blustering heralds who are bold with their words but cowards at the spear point (Phil. 1305-1307).

Sophocles further shows his sympathy for Philoctetes in the epiphany of Heracles who comes finally to vindicate him for the injustice of his sufferings, to free him from his physical pain and to reinstate him into human society.

He forces the young man to feel the shame of what he has done and it is precisely this sense of shame which, in part, leads Neoptolemus to choose to abandon Odysseus' scheme and to pursue a more just course of action.

Aristotle makes programmatic what is portrayed by Sophocles in the relationship between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus. Sophocles shows us the way in which the older man exercises a formative influence on the son of Achilles while Aristotle argues for the importance of the lawgiver in inculcating proper habits in the citizen body. Thus I shall examine 1) the educational relationship which Sophocles depicts in the play, 2) the role which Aristotle assigns to the lawgiver in the moral formation of the citizen body and 3) Aristotle's notion of the person of practical wisdom (phronimos or spoudaios). This will direct us from the question of the particular moral exemplar to the wider question of the ultimate standard of value itself. In this regard it is my contention that Aristotle and Sophocles share a fundamental sense that the ultimate standard by which we are to make judgments regarding human existence is a divine one. Both tragedian and philosopher share a basic sense that the normative measure rests with or in God. The parallel in their thought is interesting and noteworthy. Sophocles shows us this when the impasse to which the play comes at the human level is finally resolved on the divine level with the epiphany of Heracles. Aristotle points to this same standard

when he asserts that the sight (skopos) to which the person of practical wisdom (phronimos) looks in order to determine the mean and general horizon of his pursuits is that which will most promote the contemplation of God. In this way both tragedian and philosopher show, by implication, the insufficiency of making judgments by human standards alone and the need to introduce a standard which transcends the human sphere. Let us turn then to a consideration of Neoptolemus' fictional account of how he lost his father's inheritance.

2.2 The Absence Of A Role Model In Sophocles

Sophocles brings vividly to life the devastating consequences of the lack of a role model in the elaborate lie that Neoptolemus tells Philoctetes, a lie that is a kind of mirror of his own moral situation. In this gross fiction, Neoptolemus says that Odysseus and his father's caretaker, Phoenix, came for him because they said that, since his father died, it was fit that no one else take the citadel of Troy but he (Phil. 347). Allured by the promise of heroic renown (Phil. 352-53), Neoptolemus sets off for Sigeion. When he lands, the entire army come out to greet him, surrounding him and swearing that they see the great Achilles alive once again (ekbanta pas espazet', omnuntes blepein/ton ouket' onta zont' Achillea palin, Phil. 357-58).

Neoptolemus approaches Agamemnon and Menelaus in order to lay claim to the weapons of his father, which are his inheritance by right. The Atreidae inform him that he can have

the rest of his father's belongings but that another man (Odysseus) is "master" (kratunei, Phil. 366) of Achilles' weapons. Neoptolemus is outraged and curses both Odysseus and the Atreidae for their presumption. Odysseus is in turn roused to anger (dechtheis pros haxekousen, Phil. 378) and threatens Neoptolemus with never making it back to Scyros with the weapons of his father in his hand. Neoptolemus says that he sailed for home abused and deprived of his inheritance "by that bastard, son of bastards, Odysseus" (Phil. 384).

Even though the story that Neoptolemus is telling Philoctetes is fiction, Sophocles is showing us here a great deal about the kind of moral betrayal that the son of Achilles is enacting by carrying out Odysseus' scheme. There is a tag at the end of Neoptolemus' account, a kind of commentary that Sophocles puts into the mouth of the son of Achilles concerning Odysseus which is most revealing of all. But we shall simply concern ourselves with this fictional account first and then turn to Neoptolemus' significant commentary on his own story.

First of all, we note that the most significant symbol of his father's former presence and identity as a noble warrior, his weapons, have been given away to Odysseus. Through the loss of this highly charged symbol it seems plausible to suggest that Sophocles is showing us Neoptolemus' betrayal of his father's nature. The story, then, signifies that Neoptolemus has forsaken his nature and hence his own

moral identity by giving himself over to Odysseus for shameless actions (Phil. 83-5). By his actions, he is proving to be more the son of Laertes (pai Laertou) than the son of Achilles (pai Achilleos). And yet this is indeed ironic inasmuch as in the story that he tells, Neoptolemus appears as the very image of his deceased father. The entire army is so taken with his resemblance that they surround him in their greeting and swear that it is Achilles come back from the dead. There is something doubly ironic that the very son who has just disowned his moral inheritance should appear in his own lying tale as the spitting image of his father. There is, then, a great discrepancy between the Neoptolemus of the fictional account who, in righteous indignation, seeks to claim his fatherly inheritance and the Neoptolemus who is, in reality, disowning his phusis and his very identity by his actions. In masterful fashion Sophocles communicates to his audience the moral peril that the son of Achilles is in through the vehicle of the very lying tale that the latter employs in order to deceive his father's old friend.

It is through the close association that Neoptolemus draws between himself and his father in his fictional account that we can surmise that Neoptolemus is struggling with his moral identity, between being a pai Laertou or a pai Achilleos. In short, we might say that though he is denying his nature through his actions, he is still very much his father's son and still closely identifies himself with his father. But

the struggle is not over and has not been won by Neoptolemus as we shall see in an examination of the closing lines of his story to Philoctetes.

Sophocles brilliantly depicts the moral struggle that is going on in the character of Neoptolemus in the closing lines of his story where there is a strange and inexplicable reversal of his sentiments toward Odysseus. As we have seen, Odysseus was, in particular, the source of Neoptolemus' outrage. His father's weapons had been given to Odysseus and the son of Laertes claimed that this had been justly done (nai, pai, dedokas' endikos houtoi tade, Phil. 372) because he was there to save both Achilles' weapons and his body from marauders (ego gar aut' esosa kakeinon paron, Phil. 373). Odysseus, in turn, rather vaguely accuses Neoptolemus of not being where he should have been in the battle (ouk esth' hin' hemeis, all' apesth' hin' ou s' edei, Phil. 379). It is, at any rate, Odysseus whom Neoptolemus accuses, in the end, of depriving him of what was rightfully his (pleo pros oikous, ton emon tetomenos/pros tou kakistou kak kakon Odusseos, Phil. 383-84). In the closing lines of his story, however, Neoptolemus lets Odysseus off the hook and says that he does not lay the blame so much on him as those in power, namely, the Atreidae (kouk aitiomai keinon hos tous en telei, Phil. 385). This is the case, according to Neoptolemus, because the entire city and army is in the hands of its leaders (polis gar esti pasa ton hegoumenon/stratos te sumpas, Phil. 386-87).

Those who are unruly or out of control, he goes on to say, become wicked by the words of their teachers (hoi d'akousmountes broton/didaskalon logoisi gignontai kakoi, Phil. 387-88). It seems quite clear that Neoptolemus is covertly defending himself and his own actions by defending Odysseus.[2] He is making a kind of moral subterfuge. By his statement, here, he seems to be more than ever pai Laertou.

As we have seen already, it is characteristic of Odysseus to deny any responsibility for his actions and this is exactly what we see Neoptolemus doing here. Sophocles' placing of these lines just here is a stroke of genius because we catch a brief glimpse of Neoptolemus' pain and the urgent need he has for justifying himself. He is actually in league with the very man whose villainy he is so desperately attempting to excuse. Confused, ashamed and internally divided, Neoptolemus is forced to fool and console himself by telling himself yet another fictitious story in the manner of Odysseus, namely, that he is not responsible for his own actions but his wickedness and deceit must be laid at the feet of his teacher, the son of Laertes. Neoptolemus concludes by saying that the whole story has been told.[3]

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[2]See also Philoctetes ed. T.B.L Webster (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 95; The Philoctetes ed. J. C. Kamerbeek (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1980), p. 77.

[3]Neoptolemus says that the whole story has been spoken (logos lelektai pas, Phil. 389) and these lines reverberate at many levels of meaning and irony. Indeed, Neoptolemus has, in one sense, told Philoctetes his entire tale. But the tale is a lie and so in another sense he has not at all told him

From this passage, Sophocles is showing us that Neoptolemus is in very grave danger of losing his moral identity. With no one to guide him or to support the moral principles with which he initially opposed Odysseus (Phil. 86-95) he simply falls prey to Odysseus' rhetoric and ethic of expediency. He loses a sense of who he is and what he stands for very quickly by engaging himself in a scheme that does violence to his character. What is so telling about Neoptolemus' commentary at the end of his lying tale is that he is not only acting like Odysseus in carrying out this scheme but he is even beginning to talk like Odysseus. Indeed, we may sense that there is hope for Neoptolemus because we see that he painfully feels the need to justify himself. But on the other hand it is clear that Sophocles is showing to us the perilous state that he is in because he is attempting, in classic Odyssean fashion, to distance himself completely from personal responsibility for his own actions. He is trying to

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the entire story. In fact, Philoctetes is more than ever in the dark after Neoptolemus tells him his entire story. This business of having or not having, hearing or not hearing the whole logos is played upon throughout the Philoctetes. At 241, after just having answered Philoctetes' questions evasively and with a minimum of information, Neoptolemus says to Philoctetes, "You know everything." When the tradesman comes to muddy the waters further by relating yet another deceit, he says to Neoptolemus and Philoctetes at the close of his logos, "You heard everything" (Phil. 620). The entire play is filled and fueled by a series of half-truths until the very end. In the end, Neoptolemus will tell Odysseus, "Know it well, that you have heard the whole story" (eu nun episto pant' akekoos logon, Phil. 1240) and, at last, we will know the entire and real account--and it will be a story of reconciliation and fidelity to the demands of justice and friendship.

skirt the fundamental issue of personal responsibility by attributing his own wicked choice to his "teacher" Odysseus (Phil. 388).

It is a subtle and terribly ironic position that Neoptolemus is in, a worthy example of Sophocles' notorious use of irony. Odysseus is seen to be a poor moral exemplar and yet he has instructed the young man well in the wiles of deception.[4] We sense Neoptolemus' anxiety in his closing "explanation" of his lie and yet he is still ignoring that feeling and acting as the instrument of Odysseus' scheme. Neoptolemus seems to "know" that something is wrong but is unwilling to allow himself to know that he knows. At any rate, what Sophocles is pointing to here are the moral perils to which a young person like Neoptolemus is subject when there is no one who might act as an adequate role model. In Neoptolemus' case we see not only what happens in the absence of a moral exemplar but the potential for wickedness when one's paedagogue is morally dubious. It will be Neoptolemus' task, as we shall see, to throw off the influence of Odysseus and discover a sense of his own moral identity in and through the test to which he will be subjected. This Neoptolemus will do in the relationship that he develops with Philoctetes who

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[4]Philoctetes says of Odysseus' 'instruction' of Philoctetes later in the play:

> Your wicked soul, always looking through the recesses [of Neoptolemus] gradually taught him well to be clever in wickedness even though it is unlike his nature and he was unwilling to do this. (Phil. 1013-15.).

acts as a kind of role model for him.

In a very real sense, Odysseus and Philoctetes compete with each other to be the final and decisive moral influence on the young man. Neoptolemus will (as we shall see) eventually surpass even Philoctetes in moral maturity (see Phil. 1299-1304),[5] but the initial guidance and support that he receives from Philoctetes for the moral intuitions which were ridiculed by Odysseus, the way that Neoptolemus strives to be held in esteem by the older man, and the way in which Philoctetes forces Neoptolemus (through shame) to strive to live up to his father's noble nature all contribute to the younger man's profound choice at the end of the play. Let us turn then to a consideration of the passages relevant to these matters in the drama.

2.3 Philoctetes As The Role Model In Sophocles

Philoctetes first confirms many of Neoptolemus' initial feelings and intuitions by his expression of appropriate feelings toward the wicked. It is true that he is preoccupied to the point of obsession with paying back his enemies for the wrong that he has suffered at their hands, but he gives expression to certain moral categories of what is praiseworthy and blameworthy which Neoptolemus has neglected in his service to Odysseus. When Philoctetes hears Neoptolemus' story about how he lost his father's armor to

[5]I shall discuss this in chapter 6 in my examination of the relationship of friendship to the moral life.

Odysseus, Philoctetes asserts that this sounds like the sort of thing that Odysseus would do. He goes on to say:

> I know that he would touch any wicked story with his tongue and be willing to do anything (panourgias, Phil. 408). He will commit every injustice to achieve his goal (meden dikaion es telos melloi poein, Phil. 409).

In this way, then, Philoctetes has characterized Odysseus' actions as those of a panourgos, one who is willing to do or say anything to get what he wants. They both agree that this sort of person is utterly worthless and together lament that warfare and the gods take only the good and leave people like Odysseus and Thersites behind (Phil. 428-30, 446).

It appears that Philoctetes arouses Neoptolemus' former sense of nobility and pride when the former ponders about the injustice of the scheme of things:

> How in the world are we to understand this, when these men die and Odysseus is still here where it ought to be said that he is a dead man instead of these (Phil. 428-430)?

Sophocles shows Neoptolemus' solidarity with Philoctetes' feelings of moral outrage and has him state rather cryptically, "That clever wrestler Odysseus . . . but even clever plans are often tripped up" (Phil. 431-2). Although it is not clear just what Neoptolemus is saying it appears that the tragedian is hinting that Neoptolemus himself may be the instrument of the overthrow of Odysseus' twisted scheme. The young man seems to have been awakened to his original reservations about Odysseus by the sufferings and righteous indignation of the outraged hero. Sophocles does not come out and have Neoptolemus state explicitly that he will foil Odysseus' plans.

He reveals things gradually, constructing his play in a way that respects the fact that the son of Achilles has become morally confused by his involvement with the wicked Odysseus and that his discovery of who he is after the moral obfuscation that he has suffered will be gradual and emergent. In this way, then, Philoctetes helps bring Neoptolemus back to the original moral principles which he abandoned under pressure from Odysseus (Phil. 86-95). Sophocles shows us that Philoctetes is a moral exemplar in that he shows the young man the way back to a proper moral assessment of the situation.

Another way that Sophocles shows us that Philoctetes acts as a moral exemplar to Neoptolemus is the manner in which he encourages the young man to do what is morally noble and in keeping with his father's nature. He accomplishes this simply by his manner of addressing the young man. He often calls attention to Neoptolemus' noble heritage by employing his patronymic (Phil. 260) and by calling him "noble one" (gennaion, Phil. 799, 801). He challenges Neoptolemus to take him on board his ship instructing him:

> Truly, for those who are noble (toisi gennaioisi) the disgraceful is hateful and what is good is glorious. If you fail to do this, reproach is disgraceful, but if you do it, child, the prize is of great glory . . . (Phil. 475-478).

In a remarkable parallel to what Odysseus said earlier when trying to get the young man to give up his moral scruples (Phil. 79-85), Philoctetes encourages Neoptolemus to take up the challenge saying, "The burden is truly not even for a

whole day. Take it upon yourself, dare to do it (hemeras toi mochthos ouch holes mias. tolmeson, Phil. 480-481)![6] It is through this parallel that Sophocles makes apparent that Philoctetes is acting as a kind of moral counterpart to the figure of Odysseus. He invites Neoptolemus to do what is noble and encourages him to live up to his nature, while Odysseus challenges the son of Achilles to throw off his nature and engage in shameful actions.

Like any good teacher, Philoctetes rewards his pupil for the excellent and praiseworthy behavior that he exhibits. Philoctetes does this by offering Neoptolemus the chance to handle his bow and even to be its keeper. Philoctetes asserts that Neoptolemus alone is able to boast that he has touched and handled the bow. And this boast is his, he explains, because of his virtue (aretes hekati, Phil. 669). Philoctetes says that he too acquired the bow because of a good deed that

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[6]Odysseus says to Neoptolemus:

> I know, child, that it is not your nature to say such things nor to scheme to do wicked things, but dare (tolma) to grasp for some sweet portion of victory, and there will be time later to look just. But now give yourself to me for shamelessness for just a brief portion of the day . . . (nun d'eis anaides hemeras meros brachu/dos moi seauton, Phil. 79-84).

Just as Odysseus, the morally corrupt exemplar "dares" Neoptolemus to overcome his phusis and commit injustice, so Philoctetes "dares" the young man to do what is noble and in keeping with those who are gennaioi. The parallel between line 480 and 83 is particularly striking. Again, Odysseus invites Neoptolemus to act shamelessly for "a brief part of the day," while Philoctetes implores Neoptolemus to act nobly and take upon himself a burden which will "not last for even a whole day."

he performed.[7]

The converse of the good teacher's praise is his blame and Philoctetes unleashes a torrent of abuse upon Neoptolemus when he finds out that he has been grossly deceived by him. Philoctetes' harshness is understandable, however, because the "pupil" who has betrayed him is also (or at least has been posing as) his friend. When Neoptolemus informs Philoctetes that he must sail to Troy and plunder it and then refuses to return the bow which was entrusted to him, Philoctetes cries out:

> You fire and utter terror, you hateful masterwork in terrible villainy (panourgias)! What things you have done to me, your suppliant! What ways you have deceived me! You bastard, aren't you ashamed of looking at me? (Phil. 927-930.)

It is important to note here how Sophocles has Philoctetes identify Neoptolemus with the figure of Odysseus. In this way the tragedian points again to the severe consequences that a wicked teacher can bring about and the need for a good role model. Philoctetes is saying that Neoptolemus is, as Jebb puts it, "a work of art in panourgia, a man in whom panourgia assumes its subtlest form."[8] Philoctetes had earlier (Phil. 407-409) referred specifically to Odysseus' amoralism as panourgia. He is now saying that Neoptolemus surpasses even Odysseus in villainy, being himself the masterwork of panour-

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[7]He is speaking here, of course, of having lit the dying Heracles' funeral pyre.

[8]See Jebb, The Philoctetes of Sophocles, p. 163.

gia. Philoctetes awakens once again the shame that Neoptolemus asserted he threw off in order to carry out Odysseus' scheme (Phil. 120). The son of Achilles is unable to respond to Philoctetes and can only turn his face away in shame (hod' hora palin, Phil. 935).[9] Philoctetes' severe castigation of Neoptolemus sets him in the direction of the pain, grief and pity that will ultimately lead the young man to discovering his moral identity and to making a decisive choice against Odyssean expediency. In this way again, we see that Sophocles has the figure of Philoctetes act as a moral exemplar, instructing Neoptolemus with respect to what it is appropriate to feel and to do.

2.4 The Lawmaker And Educator As Role Model In Aristotle

Aristotle's lawmaker plays much the same role with respect to the citizen body that we see Philoctetes play with Neoptolemus in the play. Just as Philoctetes guides and brings out the best in the son of Achilles so also Aristotle's lawmaker is the one who knows how to formulate the sorts of laws which will engender excellence of character among the citizens. It is not the part of just anyone, he says, to inculcate a good disposition in a person (hontina gar oun kai ton protethenta diatheinai kalos ouk esti tou tuchontos, EN

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[9]It is interesting to note that Neoptolemus anticipated the very shame that he was to feel toward Philoctetes when he questioned Odysseus about lying to Philoctetes, "How then will anyone take it upon himself to say these things and look him in the face?" (pos oun blepon tis tauta tolmesei lakein;, Phil. 110.)

1180b25-26) but only the part of one who knows (tou eidotos, EN 1180b27).[10] With respect to the inculcation of the virtues, the one who knows for Aristotle is the lawmaker. It is up to the lawmakers to habituate the citizen body in such a way that they become morally good (hoi gar nomothetai tous politas ethizontes poiousin agathous, EN 1103b3-4). This he says, should be the will of every lawmaker (to men boulema pantos nomothetou, EN 1103b4-5). Those who do not inculcate the citizen body in the ways of moral excellence fail as lawmakers (hosoi de me eu auto poiousin hamartanousin, EN 1103b5). This is the chief difference he claims, between a good constitution and a worthless one (kai diapherei touto politeia politeias agathe phaules, EN 1103b6). Aristotle points to the importance of the educative role of laws and the lawmaker at Nicomachean Ethics X when he states that it is difficult to obtain a correct rearing (agoges orthes, EN 1179b31) from youth if one has not been brought up under the right laws. Living with self-control and tenacity is not pleasant for the majority of people (EN 1179b32-33, Pol. 1339a29), especially for youth and so their upbringing and pursuits must be regulated by laws. Once this education has become a part of the fabric of their characters (sunethe genomena, EN 1179b35-36) it will no longer be painful.

In Politics VIII Aristotle explicitly states that the

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[10]Aristotle employs the predicate genitive of characteristic in both instances. In this way he specifically emphasizes that which it is a particular person's power to do.

education of the young requires the special attention of the lawgiver (Pol. 1337a10-11). Failure to do so on the part of the lawgiver results in direct harm to the constitution (Pol. 1337a14). Aristotle sets forth a general program of studies for children within a system of public education. The youth are to be trained in both the "illiberal" (useful) and liberal arts (Pol. 1337b5ff.). Education by habit must come before education by reason according to Aristotle, inasmuch as the emotions manifest themselves before reason (Pol. 1338b4-5).[11] Of particular interest in this regard is the importance that Aristotle accords to the place of music in the educational curriculum of the young. Music is the ideal vehicle for educating the youth because learning is a painful process (Pol. 1339a29) and music is, on the other hand, one of the most pleasant of things (Pol. 1339b21).[12] According to Aristotle, rhythms and melodies contain representations (homoiomata, Pol. 1340a18, cf. also 1340a39-40) of emotions such as anger and gentleness and character dispositions such

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[11]This is important with respect to the relationship of Philoctetes to Neoptolemus. Philoctetes does not educate the young man intellectually but morally. It is fundamentally an education sentimentale that he receives from Philoctetes, one in which he learns to feel pleasure and pain appropriately (EN 1104b11-14).

[12]Plato also discusses the importance of music in the education of the young in Republic III (401d5-402a4). Here he states that the rhythms and harmonies of good music sink down deep into children's souls and make them graceful (euschemona, Republic 401d8), enabling them to discern (at the emotional level) what is praiseworthy and what is disgraceful.

as courage and self-control as well as all other moral qualities (Pol. 1340a21-22). The point of exposing children to these various rhythms and melodies is to habituate them to feel appropriate pleasure and pain with respect to the emotions and moral qualities that are represented by the music (Pol. 1340a15-19). Because of the nature of music and its power, everyone is disposed to being thrown into a corresponding state of feeling when they hear that which it represents (Pol. 1340a13-14). Music assists in the educative process by providing a pleasurable means of training individuals to feel appropriate delight, love or hatred toward the various moral qualities (virtuous or vicious) that are brought to life through the medium of rhythm and melody (ten d' areten peri to chairein orthos kai philein kai misein dei delon hoti manthanein kai sunethizesthai methen houtos hos to krinein orthos kai to chairein tois epieikesin ethesi, Pol. 1340a15-18). Correct habituation in feeling appropriate pain and delight at representations is close, Aristotle says, to expression of appropriate feeling with respect to actual life situations (Pol. 1340a23-25).

Thus far we have shown the central place that is accorded to the role of the moral exemplar in the thought of Sophocles and Aristotle. Sophocles' moral position regarding the role model is made clear in his depiction of the educational relationship of Neoptolemus and Philoctetes. Philoctetes acts as a moral guide to the young man in that he

instructs Neoptolemus to feel pleasure and pain appropriately with regard to the things that he has done. It is through the dramatic presentation of this relationship that Sophocles demonstrates the decisive part that a good role model can play. Through the medium of philosophical discourse Aristotle, for his part, discusses the role of the educator and lawmaker with respect to the proper training of the youth and education of the citizen body. He is fundamentally dealing with the same issues that the tragedian is but on a larger scale, that is, within the context of the polis. Thus, his discourse is directed to the development of a kind of program of education for the youth and the setting up of a system of laws that will inculcate virtue in the citizen body. For both tragedian and philosopher, then, the crucial role of excellent moral guidance is made apparent.

2.5 Sophocles And The Issue Of The Standard Of Value

Having thus considered the role of the exemplar as a moral guide I would like to turn now to a consideration of the notion of the exemplar in the broader sense of the term, that is, to the issue of the ultimate standard or measure by which moral judgments are made. Both Sophocles and Aristotle address themselves to this issue and it is my contention that they have a certain affinity with each other in their appeal to God as the standard or paradigm by which things in the human realm are to be judged and understood. Aristotle shows us this in his assertion that the ultimate target with regard

to which all other things are chosen and done by the phronimos is the contemplation of God. Sophocles, in similar fashion, points to the inadequacy of human answers to the question of justice and shows how this problem can only be brought to a resolution through the intervention of the divine. Let us turn then to an examination of the play with respect to the question of a standard of value.

The question concerning a standard of value is from the very beginning of the play asked within a theological framework in the drama. It is placed side by side with the question of the justice or injustice of the gods and their presence or absence in human affairs. When Neoptolemus tells Philoctetes that the noble Ajax has died in the battle at Troy, the son of Poeas responds:

> My god, the poor wretch! But of course not the son of Tydeus, nor that bastard son palmed off on Laertes from Sisyphus. They don't die, even though men like these shouldn't be alive. (Phil. 416-418.)

Philoctetes then asks about Nestor and Neoptolemus informs him that Nestor is fairing badly since his son Antilochus died (Phil. 425). Philoctetes again responds:

> Ah me! You have mentioned two whose names I would least want to hear among the dead. What are we to make of this (ti deta dei skopein) when these men die and someone like Odysseus remains among the living when it should be he who is said to be a corpse instead of these? (Phil. 426-430.)

Finally, when Philoctetes inquires about a certain worthless and underhanded man named Thersites (Phil. 439-440) and Neoptolemus responds that he heard he was still alive, Philoctetes bursts out:

> He would be! No one wicked ever perishes, but the gods wrap them up well and protect them. They delight in turning away from Hades those whose deeds are smooth and utterly wicked (ta men panourga kai palintribe) and they always send out of life those who do what is just and good. How can we make sense of these things? How can we speak in praise when wanting to praise the divine governance of things I discover that the gods are wicked? (Phil. 446-452.)

In the above passages we can see that Philoctetes is struggling to understand why the gods permit the good and just to die and the wicked to flourish. He is bewildered by the seeming absence of a divine standard in the world. He knows that human affairs should be governed by and conform to such a standard but he is tormented by the apparent absence or indifference of the gods.[13] Sophocles drops a hint that such a standard will not long remain absent in Neoptolemus' seemingly casual response to Philoctetes:

> O offspring of your father from Oeta, for the future I shall be on my guard against Troy and the sons of Atreus by looking at them from afar. (Phil. 453-455.)

Neoptolemus' lines here are unremarkable except for the reference to Oeta in his address of Philoctetes. Oeta is the mountain of Malis where the apotheosis of Heracles took place

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[13]See Webster, Philoctetes p. 99: "skopein means almost 'what should one's philosophy be?': what sort of a looking should one do, when the observed facts rule out looking towards the gods" (es theous blepein, Ant. 922); Kamerbeek, The Philoctetes p.80: "ti . . . dei skopein: the nearest parallel seems to me O.T. 964 pheu pheu ti det' an o gunai skopoito tis/ten Puthomantin hestian, and the implied meaning is: 'Where can we look for a divine power upholding the moral order of the world.'"

after Philoctetes consented to light his funeral pyre.[14] The connection of Philoctetes, Heracles and Oeta is made explicit throughout the course of the play (Phil. 479, 490, 664, 729, 1430). The placing of this particular address in the mouth of Neoptolemus directly after Philoctetes has expressed despair concerning the gods' presence in human affairs is no accident. Sophocles is signaling to us the connection of Philoctetes to Heracles and thereby foreshadowing the latter's theophany as the response to the former's anguish. It is only with the in-breaking of the divine in the play that Philoctetes' questions are answered in any definitive way. Neoptolemus attempts to provide a response to the injustices that Philoctetes has suffered by consenting to take him home (Phil. 1402). But while he is doing what is just we sense that his compassionate response will not be adequate inasmuch as Philoctetes' wound will remain unhealed. With the theophany of Heracles Sophocles provides Philoctetes with a way of understanding his former sufferings, the opportunity to be healed (Phil. 1424), a sound and lasting friendship with the son of Achilles (Phil. 1434-1437), and the chance to be honorably reinstated into the human community. Through the theophany of Heracles Sophocles brings to a kind of resolution the many injustices which Philoctetes has suffered by providing the ultimate standard (albeit at times inscrutable)

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[14]See Kamerbeek, The Philoctetes p. 83.

by which human affairs are to be judged and understood.[15]

2.6 Aristotle And The Question Of The Standard Of Value

Aristotle like Sophocles is concerned with providing a standard for both resolving conflicting interpretations with respect to the best course of action and the best life to be lived as a whole. At the level of action he provides the person of practical wisdom (phronimos or spoudaios, for all intents and purposes interchangeable terms) as a kind of embodied ideal of practical intelligence. In the general definition of moral virtue in Book II of his Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle states that the mean is defined by reason (horismene logo, EN 1107a1) or however the person of practical wisdom would determine it (hos an ho phronimos horiseien, EN 1107a1-2). The determination of the best or most appropriate thing to be done in a given situation is the part of the phronimos whose peculiar excellence is logos in the service of practical truth, that is, truth with respect to what should be done (EN 1139a27-32). The person of practical wisdom thus applies logos to the ever-varying situations of life in exemplary fashion. In Book III of the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle states explicitly that the practically wise person acts as a kind of standard and measure with respect to what is to be done and pursued (hosper kanon kai metron auton on, EN 1113a34-35). The prudent person can play a normative role

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[15]See Blundell, Helping Friends, p. 224; MacIntyre, Whose Justice?, pp. 62-63; Reinhardt, Sophocles, pp. 190-192.

in this way because the excellence of his character and practical judgment is such that the factual and normative coincide in his ethical choices. In his judgments the apparent good is co-terminous with the actual good inasmuch as his judgments are made according to right reason (EN 1113a22-24, 1103b31-33). It is in his discussion of the ultimate measure of the right reason (orthos logos) which a prudent person employs that Aristotle appeals to the divine.

At the beginning of Nicomachean Ethics VI Aristotle attempts to clarify the nature of the right reason which a prudent person employs in determining the mean. He states that there is a target (skopos) which a rational person fixes his gaze upon as he strains and relaxes his efforts to attain it (esti tis skopos pros on apoblepon ho ton logon echon epiteinei kai aniesin, EN 1138b22-23). Aristotle defined this target in Nicomachean Ethics I as happiness (eudaimonia). He states here that happiness is our highest good and that knowledge of the nature of happiness will equip us like archers who have a target (skopon, EN 1094a24) to hit the proper mark. He goes on, however, in Book VI to assert that there is also a standard (horos, EN 1138b23) that determines the means which lie between excess and deficiency to which the prudent person looks. Aristotle confesses here the inadequacy of stating that the prudent person acts as right reason demands and asserts that he must define what right reason is and what standard determines it (EN 1138b33-34). Aristotle

never follows through with his promise in Nicomachean Ethics VI,[16] but it seems to me that he does provide us with just this standard in the closing pages of his Eudemian Ethics.

In Eudemian Ethics VIII Aristotle states that a doctor has a certain standard (tis horos, EE 1229a22) by reference to which he judges health or its lack in bodies and in relation to which things which are done to the body are wholesome but if done less or more than the standard dictates are unwholesome. In this way the standard is normative of the medical art as a whole. The prudent person (spoudaios, EE 1249a25) according to Aristotle, must also have such a standard with respect to action and choice (EE 1249a25-b2). The standard which Aristotle proposes is the service and contemplation of God (ton theon therapeuein kai theorein, EE 1249b21). This is the end and reference to which practical wisdom issues her commands (hou heneka he phronesis epitattei, EE 1249b14-15). Whatever mode of choosing and of acquiring things good by nature (bodily goods, wealth, friends or other goods) will best promote the contemplation of God is the best standard (haute ariste kai houtos ho horos kallistos, EE 1249b19) and conversely, whatever standard hinders us from the contemplation and service of God is the worst (EE 1249b20-21). This, Aristotle asserts, is his statement of what is the standard of nobility (horos tes kalokagathias, EE 1249b24) and

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[16]See Whitney J. Oates, Aristotle and the Problem of Value (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 276-283.

the aim of things that are intrinsically good (ho skopos ton haplos agathon, EE 1249b25).[17] In this way then, Aristotle appeals to a standard that transcends strictly human horizons in much the same way that Sophocles does through the theophany of Heracles. Thus both tragedian and philosopher are in agreement that it is only by appeal to the divine that we shall find an adequate standard with respect to the question of value in the human realm.

2.7 The Significance Of The Appeal To The Divine As A Standard

As we have already seen, both poet and tragedian appeal to the divine as the final court of appeal, as it were, by which things in the human realm are to be judged and understood. The poet and the philosopher have, however, somewhat different emphases in their reference to the divine. Both surely furnish us with the sense of the inadequacy of a purely human perspective but the poet seems to stress more the fragmentary and partial nature of human understanding and human action and the need for some kind of divine illumination. The philosopher, on the other hand, appears to stress the divine spark that exists within a human being and the necessity of not frustrating that spark by defining the human dimension solely in terms of the ethical and political spheres. Be that as it may, the central point that must be understood, here, is that the ancients did not see the human

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[17]See Stewart, Notes, 2: pp. 8-9.

good or any system of goods as self-authenticating but required a reference to the divine as the source of the goodness of all human goods. Let us explore this in more detail.

After Neoptolemus has returned Philoctetes' bow to him the young man attempts to convince the ragged hero to come to Troy, be healed by the sons of Asclepius and win immmortal glory on the battlefield as was prophesied by Helenos (Phil. 1330ff.). Philoctetes vacillates painfully and almost yields to the young man's pleas (Phil. 1350-1352). In the end, however, Neoptolemus is incapable of persuading Philoctetes to come because of the latter's intractable will and suspicion. In his anguish, Neoptolemus cries out that it may be best for him to stop trying to persuade Philoctetes to yield and for the hero simply to live without the final salvation which was coming to him (Phil. 1396). Neoptolemus heroically offers to take Philoctetes home as he promised and they are about to embark when Heracles appears.

Sophocles has quite clearly set this final scene up in such a way that all of the proposed solutions are inadequate and require some other form of resolution. That resolution, for the poet, is theophany. Human understanding of the prophecy of Helenos has proved to be inadequate and partial throughout the play (Phil. 603-619, 839-840, 989-990, 1337-1342) and we know that if the son of Achilles takes Philoctetes back home that the hero will never be freed from the

wound that has tormented him for so long. In this way, the poet stresses the fragmentary nature of human understanding and the tragic inadequacy of human action to bring about justice in the world. A god is needed to help clarify the situation for mortals who are all too often blind and to guide them to more fruitful action.

What is unique here is that Sophocles has a god break into the human scene as an act of friendship to a mortal. Heracles tells Philoctetes that he has left the seat of heaven and come for his sake (ten sen d' heko charin ouranias/hedras prolipon, Phil. 1413-1414). Philoctetes responds readily to the god's (and his former friend's) words, calling them "a longed for utterance" (oh pthegma potheinon, Phil. 1445). Sophocles is, in fact, at pains to show that the friendship that is established between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus runs parallel to the friendship that exists between Philoctetes and Heracles (Phil. 654-670). In this way then, Sophocles presents to us something of a divine condescension that is motivated by friendship or love.[18] The poet shows us that a god can intervene in human affairs in order to augment the necessarily partial understanding and inadequate actions of human beings. This intervention can also, he seems to be telling us, be motivated by a god's concern for the tragic plight of an individual.

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[18]See MacIntyre, After Virtue, pp. 157-158; Whose Justice?, pp. 62-63.

Aristotle's appeal to God is as the telos or horizon for humanity's own striving to model itself after the divine.[19] In the passage from EE VIII.3 cited above, the standard by which practical wisdom issues her commands is said to be that which promotes the service and contemplation of God. In EN X.7 we are essentially given the explanation as to why this standard is the most appropriate one. It is because, as Aristotle states, there is something divine in us:

> But such a sort of life would be better than human for he will live in this way [i.e., the contemplative life] not inasmuch as he is human but inasmuch as there is something divine in him (ou gar he anthropos estin houto biosetai all; he theion ti en auto huparchei, EN 1177b27-28).

Aristotle does, of course, furnish other significant reasons as to why the contemplative life is that which is the best for human beings to live, namely, that contemplation is the most unimpeded form of activity, is the most pleasant, the most self-sufficient and is the only one that is really done for its own sake (EN 1177a20ff.). But these are all ultimately dependent upon what human beings are and that there is, as Aristotle states, something divine in us that must not be circumscribed within the boundaries of the ethical and the political. There is, to be sure, a certain tension between the life of praxis and theoria as Aristotle delineates these in the Nicomachean Ethics. Throughout much of the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle appears to lay stress upon the good that can

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[19]See MacIntyre, After Virtue, p. 158; Jonathan Lear, Aristotle: The Desire to Understand (Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 299-302.

be achieved by human beings through action. Thus, the architectonic science of the good is said to be politics (EN 1094a27-28, 1095a17-18) and the virtues are to be developed with a view to the flourishing of the individual and the community (EN 1103bff.). These goals appear to be at variance with a life devoted, ultimately, to contemplative activity.

There is, furthermore, a certain tension between the self-sufficiency which Aristotle assigns to the contemplative and his recognition that friendship is "most necessary for life" (anankaiotaton eis ton bion, EN 1155a4-5). Aristotle seems to recognize this himself when he admits that even the wise person who is supremely self-sufficient (autarkestatos, EN 1177b1) will, perhaps, be able to engage in contemplative activity even better with colleagues (beltion d' isos suner-gous echon, EN 1177a34). Again, there is a certain tension here, in Aristotle's thought, between the solitary and self-sufficient contemplative as exemplifying the ideal sort of life and the life of the individual who is deeply involved in and committed to others' lives in friendship, seeking, as they must, to become as good as possible and to contribute mutually to the making of the best political community.

Aristotle appears to be caught in this tension because he, much like Plato, holds that a human being is metaxu, i.e., the sort of midling creature who, metaphysically speaking,

dwells "between" animals and gods.[20] In short, we as human beings are the middle term, the bridge between the realm of the world and the realm of God. In this way, according to our composite nature, the highest and best life to lead would be that of the exercise of the virtues. And Aristotle spends much of his time telling us just this in the Nicomachean Ethics. But this is not the whole story inasmuch as there is something divine within us that must be recognized and exercised. According to Aristotle, the practice of philosophy is the quintessential way in which this divine element may be actualized.

Philosophy, Aristotle maintains, begins with a sense of wonder where an individual realizes that he does not know a thing and desires to know it. But, according to Aristotle, our desire is not simply to know various facts about phenomena but to know why the phenomena are as they are. In this way, our wonder and desire to know may only be satisfied through understanding the cause or explanation which underlies the disparate phenomena. This is precisely what we are doing, Aristotle maintains, when we are engaged in philosophic contemplation, that is, we are moving toward an understanding of the principles and causes of the world.[21] For Aristotle, the exercise of this kind of understanding is itself divine because it is in this way that we participate, in a human

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[20]See Symposium 203e-204a, 207d-208b.

[21]See Lear, The Desire to Understand, pp. 6-8.

mode, in the way that God (who is himself a first principle and primary cause) understands the world. Hence, it is through this understanding of primary causes and first principles that we actually transcend our own nature.

It is because Aristotle holds that there is this divine element within us which is realized through contemplation that he assigns the happiness which stems from the active life of virtue to a secondary status.[22] This is not to demean the ethical and political spheres, it is only to place them within their proper perspective given the reality of the divine that is within us and which is our ultimate horizon. In this way then Aristotle appeals to a divine standard inasmuch as he holds that there is something divine within us and that through the emulation of God we should, ourselves, strive to become immortal as far as that is possible (all' eph' hoson endechetai athanatizein kai panta poiein pros to zen kata to kratiston ton en hauto, EN 1177b33-34).

This appeal to the divine as the ultimate standard was widely shared in ancient culture. By making reference to a standard that transcends the strictly human dimension the ancients implicitly affirmed that the human good or, indeed, any system of goods could not be understood to be self-authenticating or self-validating inasmuch as those very goods had their origin in the transcendent. It is in this way, furthermore, that we see that the ancients attempted to secure

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[22]See Lear, The Desire to Understand, pp. 309-318.

the objectivity of values. For, by including this reference to the divine, they implicitly recognized that human beings do not create their own nature but rather attempt to bring into realization a nature and purpose that is already given and is peculiarly ours to attain. The importance of the transcendent with respect to the moral sphere is rarely recognized today. It is, at least in part, due to this loss of the role of the transcendent that we have forgotten or lost the sense that there is even such a thing as human nature. This ignoring of the transcendent dimension and its consequences has given rise to many rootless conceptions of moral agency in which the human person is seen as creating his or her nature from the very foundations on up. It seems to me that such positions are doomed to failure because they are bound to be either arbitrary or totalitarian in character. Again, this would be so inasmuch as values would be seen as created and not as discovered or detected in the very nature of things.

2.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, then, I have shown in this chapter that Sophocles and Aristotle share certain fundamental affinities with respect to the importance of the role model and the broader question of the standard of value in general. It has been my contention that their recognition of the importance of a role model stems from their shared anthropology and general conception of the elements that are a part of the

education of the moral agent. We have noted that, in attempting to understand what constitutes the moral life, Sophocles and Aristotle do not begin with abstractions but with human nature and the insufficiency of human nature to attain virtue. It is from this empirical judgment that they infer the necessity of the teacher if the individual is to be educated in those virtues that are requisite to his flourishing. Once again we see the ancients' preference for the concrete over the abstract in their appeal to a living person to serve as a guide in the formation of the moral person. This, as we have stated, is in marked contrast to moral philosophy in the Kantian tradition where the moral worth of examples is called into question inasmuch as they cannot furnish us with the kind of absoluteness required by the moral law. Thirdly, I have suggested that the ancient model is preferable to more modern developments in the way that the ancient model appreciates both the developmental and social character of becoming a moral agent. This is the case because while modern moral philosophies concentrate upon the formulation of a correct principle as the foundation of proper moral education the ancients see that moral education takes place, first and foremost, through a particular relationship that the student has with his teacher. It is this relationship and its affect upon the student that they saw as crucial and not the accuracy of a certain principle. In keeping with this ancient anthropology which takes into account the entire person I have

relied upon Sophocles to furnish us with the particulars of human experience through an emotionally charged medium which elicits our own emotional response. Aristotle, on the other hand, I have employed in order to provide us with the logos of the phenomena that Sophocles presents. In this way, we take into account both the diversity and unity of experience as well as the emotional and rational aspects of the human person.

Sophocles shows both the devastating consequences that a poor role model can have and the crucial importance that the moral exemplar plays. The tragedian artfully depicts the former through the vehicle of Neoptolemus' lying tale to Philoctetes as well as his final commentary on the tale. Sophocles furnishes us we have argued, through the gross fiction that Neoptolemus tells, with a kind of mirror of his own condition of having betrayed his moral identity. Sophocles, furthermore, makes Neoptolemus' perilous state shockingly clear in the brief commentary that the young man gives at the close of his story where, in Odyssean fashion, he lays responsibility for his own actions at someone else's feet (Phil. 6, 388). In this way Sophocles shows to us graphically that the son of Achilles' moral degradation has begun inasmuch as he is presented as imitating his wicked teacher. Sophocles demonstrates the crucial importance of the moral exemplar in the way that Philoctetes awakens in the young man the sense of shame that he said he would dismiss in

order to carry out Odysseus' scheme and in the way that he assists the son of Achilles in honoring his original moral principles (Phil. 86-95). Again, it is the distinct advantage of poetry to present and analyze universal themes (the moral perils to which youth and inexperience are vulnerable, the necessity of good moral guidance) through particulars. Because of its immediacy and emotional evocativeness, poetry is peculiarly suited to the moral education of the person. Sophocles does this for us in his dramatic poetry through the medium of characters in a play.

Aristotle's educator and lawmaker, I have argued, play much the same role with respect to the individual and the citizen body respectively as the tragedian depicts is the case between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus. Aristotle does not depict for us a particular relationship but, through the medium of philosophical discourse, argues for the central importance of the educator and the lawmaker with a view to the moral formation of individuals and the citizen body as a whole.

I have, in addition, proposed that Sophocles and Aristotle are in fundamental agreement with respect to the ultimate standard by which things in the human realm are to be judged. It is my contention that both Sophocles and Aristotle share a basic sense that the standard of value can only be truly found by appeal to the divine. In this way we see that for both the tragedian and the philosopher we do not

create our own good but actualize a purpose that is a part of our nature. The human good is not self-creative and so, according to this ancient conception, the divine is the ground of the very possibility of the objectivity of values.

We have spoken in this chapter about the importance of the role model and moral education. It is time now to turn to a consideration of <u>what</u> is to be educated in greater detail. Both Sophocles and Aristotle focus to a significant degree upon the emotions and the important role that they play with respect to moral education. Let us turn then to an analysis of the role of the emotions in moral education in Sophocles and Aristotle.

Chapter 3

THE EMOTIONS AND MORAL EDUCATION IN SOPHOCLES AND ARISTOTLE

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall explore the role which the emotions play with respect to moral education and virtue in Sophocles and Aristotle. Once again we can see that this ancient anthropology demonstrates a concern for the whole person. This is the case because the poet and philosopher both take the affective side of the human psyche seriously and appreciate that it has a crucial role to play in the process of the formation of the moral agent. According to the ancients, it is the emotions which need to be educated and brought in line with the dictates of reason. But the emotions are not simply irrational drives or impulses that are uneducable. Far from it. They are, themselves, cognitive in character and are capable of orienting us (however unthematically) toward the good that is to be done. They can do this by communicating to the individual who is experiencing them certain things about his character or by revealing the general contours of a moral situation. In this way, Sophocles and Aristotle see emotional response as a mode of initiation into the moral life. As corollary to this more robust anthropol-

ogy, I shall employ the poet to explore the emotional and concrete aspects of the moral life while the philosopher will be employed to furnish us with an explanatory logos of the phenomena that are presented by the dramatist. In this way we shall best be able to take into account both the diversity and unity of experience as well as the emotional and rational aspects of the human person.

Modern moral philosophy stemming from Kant either ignores the role of the emotions in the moral formation of the individual or is positively hostile to them. It shows no appreciation of the ways in which the emotions can assist us in living the good life and can, in fact, actually start us on our way to realizing that life. In this way it is operating from only a partial and impoverished conception of the moral person.

Sophocles will furnish us with a powerful example of the way in which the emotions can disclose aspects of character when he shows that Neoptolemus realizes what he is incapable of doing at the risk of violating his moral identity through the feelings of shame and compassion that Philoctetes arouses in him. By pointing to the cognitive nature of the emotions (most especially evident in his Rhetoric) Aristotle shows that the emotions are indeed capable of signifying something about the nature of the given situation and to assist the individual in the making of an appropriate or virtuous response. The philosopher's discourse on the nature of the emotions will

help us to understand that it is the cognitive component of the emotion which is the efficient cause of its arousal. He will show that the emotions cannot be ignored in the construction of the best polity and that they can furnish valuable information as to what a friendship should be like. He attempts in other words, to give an explanation of the nature of the emotions rather than to portray a particular feeling, what it may be like to feel it and what that feeling may do to a person. This sort of analysis is the chief strength of philosophy and what it can do.

In order to know what it may be like to feel an emotion or to see an emotion in action we must go to the poets. For poetry's chief virtue is the concrete and dramatic presentation of truth, in this case, a truth about the nature of human emotion and its function in the moral life. Thus, Sophocles points to the same truth as Aristotle, namely, that the emotions are capable of orienting us to the good, but he does this by presenting us with a character who feels various emotions which change him and lead him to take a different course of action. Both philosopher and tragedian point to the cognitive ground of the emotions. We see this in Aristotle's focus upon the cognitive element of the emotion as that which gives rise to emotional response and Sophocles' depiction of Neoptolemus coming to know himself through his feelings for Philoctetes and the gross injustice he has committed. Both philosopher and tragedian maintain that the emotions can

furnish a certain orientation to the good. Aristotle shows this in the way that the emotions furnish an intimation of what real friendship should be like and Sophocles in the way that Neoptolemus' feelings help bring about a moral transformation in him. But each, working in his respective media, has his own particular way of discussing the same issue and shedding different facets on the same truth.

3.2 The Character of Neoptolemus

In order to demonstrate that Sophocles presents the view of the emotions for which I am arguing I shall examine the rather extensive scene which occurs about mid-way in the drama just after Philoctetes suffers his attack of pain and the aftermath of that attack when Neoptolemus confesses to his role in Odysseus' scheme and Odysseus himself returns to the stage. I shall make references to other parts of the play but the central focus will be this important scene and how it shows that Neoptolemus' emotions provide the initial impetus to his later moral transformation at the end of the play.

Philoctetes has just suffered an attack of excruciating pain and will soon fall into unconsciousness. He calls upon death and wonders why it never comes to him (Phil. 797-798). He then calls upon the son of Achilles and requests that he burn him alive in the volcanic fire of Lemnos. He informs Neoptolemus that it was just for this deed (setting the funeral pyre ablaze for the suffering Heracles) that he won the bow with which the young man has recently been entrusted

(Phil. 801-803). The generous parallel that Philoctetes has drawn coupled with the request for suicide has clearly touched Neoptolemus and he is thrown into a reflective silence in which he is oblivious to Philoctetes' further questions:

> Burn me, my noble one, in this so called Lemnian fire! For I too deemed it worthy to do this to the child of Zeus for these very weapons which you now hold safe for me. What do you say child? Why are you silent? Where are you child? (Phil. 801-805.)

Sophocles shows us that Neoptolemus has been touched by Philoctetes' words when he answers by expressing the pain that has been in his heart for a long time over the sufferings of his friend (algo palai de tapi soi stenon kaka, Phil. 806).[1] Sophocles is showing us here that the young man's emotions are telling him that he is treating Philoctetes unjustly and that by doing so he is acting in violation of his very character. His grief for Philoctetes thus directs him toward moral change. We see this even more powerfully depicted as the scene progresses.

Philoctetes falls into a deep sleep from utter exhaustion and Neoptolemus, true to his word, remains by Philoctetes' side. When the son of Poeas awakens he can hardly believe his eyes and cries out:

> I would never have hoped child that you would so compassionately (eleinos) take my sufferings upon yourself and

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[1]The verbal parallel here is noteworthy. Neoptolemus first employs the verb algo when he expresses his distress about participating in Odysseus' unjust scheme in the opening of the play (Phil. 86). Sophocles' use of the verb here again furnishes us with the first clear sign that the son of Achilles is terribly shaken by his circumstances.

remain and help me (Phil. 869-871.)

He continually refers to Neoptolemus' nobility of nature and how he could never have expected such treatment from Odysseus and the Atreidae (Phil. 872-875). When Neoptolemus bids Philoctetes to lean against him and stand up Philoctetes tells the young man to take heart because his usual manner will set him upright once again (tharsei to toi sunethes orthosei m' ethos, Phil. 894). Sophocles shows himself to be master of both drama and irony in Neoptolemus' response to this seemingly innocent remark of Philoctetes. Neoptolemus cries out as if he were stabbed, "Papai! What should I do from here" (Phil. 895)? But why should Philoctetes' simple statement set off such an emotional response from Neoptolemus? It seems that it is because Sophocles, through Neoptolemus' reaction, means us to catch the double entendre of the phrase. The word that has been translated above as "manner" (ethos) has a variety of other meanings, among them being "custom, way or character." Neoptolemus has thus far in the play betrayed his usual character and it is to this that Sophocles is pointing in the cry which Neoptolemus utters.[2] Neoptolemus is led to ask himself, "Will my customary character, my true moral identity set me upright?" This is the ultimate question for Neoptolemus and is the question with which Sophocles is centrally

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[2]See Benardete, "Chre and Dei," 297; Nussbaum, "Consequences and Character," 46.

concerned in the play.[3]

Philoctetes is confused and concerned with Neoptolemus' outburst and wonders what is wrong. Neoptolemus expresses his distressed confusion when he says that he does not know which way to turn his powerless words (ouk oid' hopoi chre taporon trepein epos, Phil. 897) and that he is right now in the middle of an emotional perplexity which will not let him go (all' enthad' ede toude tou pathous kuro, Phil. 899). This is, indeed, the emotional counterpart to Socratic aporia.[4] When Philoctetes asks Neoptolemus whether it is disgust with

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[3]What we have in this brief but significant scene is an Aristotelian recognition (anagnorisis). Aristotle tells us that anagnorisis, as the name itself signifies, is a change from ignorance to knowledge and so involves a change to either friendship or enmity among those who are defined in their relation to good fortune or bad fortune (ex agnoias eis gnosin metabole, e eis philian e eis echthran, ton pros eutuchian e dustuchian horismenon, Poet. 1452a30-2). In this scene, Neoptolemus goes from ignorance to some kind of knowledge. He is painfully brought face to face again with himself and the incongruity that exists between the ethos that constitutes his moral identity and the ways that he has betrayed that identity. Furthermore, Neoptolemus' recognition brings him to the point of decision as to whether to treat Philoctetes as a friend or an enemy. Odysseus had taught Neoptolemus to treat Philoctetes with suspicion and to pose deceitfully as his friend. Now Neoptolemus is utterly perplexed (Phil. 896, 899) at which way to turn and how to procede in a scheme that he can no longer morally countenance. Neoptolemus' anagnorisis is accompanied by compassionate grief and terror (Poet. 1452a38-b1) because we deeply sympathize with Neoptolemus' situation and we are anxious that he make the right decision. We know that Neoptolemus has not heeded his moral feelings and intuitions in the past (Phil. 120) and so we both identify with him in his perplexity as well as hope that he will follow the dictates of his conscience and that ethos which will "set him straight."

[4]See Blundell, "The Phusis of Neoptolemus," 140.

his illness that is making him say these things (Phil. 900-901) the young man responds that everything is disgusting (hapanta duschereia, Phil. 902) when one acts out of character and does what is unseemly (Phil. 902-903). It is shame and emotional distress[5] which leads Neoptolemus to confess to Philoctetes the plot to take him to Troy (Phil. 906, 909, 912-913). The young man's confession, however, only leads him to deeper feelings of shame at what he has done and greater compassion for the broken man whom he has so wronged. When Philoctetes expresses his outrage at Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles can only look away in silence and disgrace (Phil. 935, 951). He is paralyzed at this point, unable to act upon the promptings of his feelings but equally unable to ignore them. He has not yet come to a decision and chosen what to do.[6] Neoptolemus confesses that a terrible feeling of compassion (oiktos deinos, Phil. 965; cf. also 1074) has come over him for Philoctetes and he knows (and we know) that he will be forced to come to terms with these feelings and be reconciled to them or renounce them once and for all.

Of course we know that when Neoptolemus re-enters the stage with Odysseus near the close of the play he has not renounced his feelings but has become reconciled to them

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[5]Neoptolemus employs the verb signifying strong grief and sorrow, aniaomai twice in a space of seven lines in this scene.

[6]We shall take up the issue of choice in the moral development of Neoptolemus in the next chapter.

(Phil. 1222-1263). He has followed the lead of their promptings. He proclaims to Odysseus that his former involvement in the plot was a disgrace (Phil. 1234, 1248) thus confirming the suspicions that his emotions had aroused. In our examination of this scene of the play I have shown that Neoptolemus' experiences of the emotions of shame, compassion and various feelings of extreme distress guide him and provide the impetus for a reconsideration of the justice of what he is doing. His emotions both check him and furnish a certain orientation to the good which, in the end, he chooses not to ignore. In this way then I have demonstrated that Sophocles is presenting us, through the central character of Neoptolemus, with the thesis that the emotions can guide and provide a certain direction to reasonable choice by orienting the individual to the good that is to be done. The emotions thus provide a kind of initiation into the moral life by disclosing to an individual who he is and what he is willing to do or unwilling to do at the risk of doing violence to his moral identity.

3.3 Two Examples Of Emotion From The Politics And Nicomachean Ethics

Aristotle like Sophocles showed sensitivity to the way in which the emotions can set the individual in the direction of leading the moral life. Through the medium of philosophical analysis he attempts to demonstrate the connection that exists between emotion and cognition. In the first example from Politics II Aristotle shows the way in which the emotions

delineate the proper bounds of what can reasonably be done by practical intelligence, thus indicating that the emotions can perform a certain limiting function on the proposals of reason. In the second example from Nicomachean Ethics VIII Aristotle shows that the emotions can also furnish positive direction to practical reason by defining in general outline the qualities or characteristics that should be part of the make-up of a particular virtue, in this case, the virtue of friendship.[7] Interestingly enough, in both of these examples Aristotle points to the primacy of familial feeling in directing action or placing limits upon what reason asserts should be done. Let us turn to a consideration of these texts.

In this first passage, Aristotle criticizes Plato's proposed communism of wives and children in Republic V:

> But speaking generally such a law is bound to bring about the opposite state of things to that which rightly enacted laws ought properly to cause and on account of which Socrates thinks it necessary to make these regulations about the children and women. For we think that friendship is the greatest of good things for the poleis (for it is in this way that there are the least political factions and revolutions) and the unity of the state, which Socrates praises most highly is that which he both thinks and asserts is the work of friendship, just as we know that Aristophanes in the discourses on love says that when lovers desire each other because of their extreme affection they want to be fused together and both become one from being two. In such a union, however, both would necessarily be destroyed or at least one, and in the polis friendship would inevitably become watery because of such

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[7]See Harold Baillie, "Learning the Emotions," The New Scholasticism, 62 (1988) 221-227. Both of these examples and the issues surrounding them are deeply indebted to Professor Baillie's analysis.

> an association, and [in such a polis] son could least of all say "my father" and father "my son." For just as a little sugar mixed in with a lot of water makes an imperceptible mixture, so it also must come about that the mutual relationship based on these names must become imperceptible, since in such a sort of republic their will be the least possible necessity for people to care for one another as father for sons or son for father or brothers for each other. For there are two things that most of all cause human beings to care for and to love each other, something being one's own and something being beloved to one, neither of which are able to exist with those who are so governed. (Politics 1262b3-25.)[8]

In this passage we can see that Aristotle holds the view that the nature of the emotional bonds which exist between kin provides an extremely important clue as to the kind of political arrangement that can or cannot be established. The emotional ties which bind father to son, mother to daughter, wife to husband can be ignored only at the cost of the very stability of the polis. Aristotle, like Plato, believes that unity is crucial to the existence of the state but the kind of unity which Plato seeks to establish in the Republic with his communism of wives and children does violence to the basic feelings that those who are akin have for each other. For Aristotle, these feelings have a prior claim to that of the unity of the state and cannot be simply forced into a political blue-print that does not take them into account. Plato's kallipolis so waters down friendship (en de te polei ten philian anankaion hudare ginesthai dia ten koinonian ten toiauten, Politics 1262b15-6) and the significant emotional

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[8]Aristotle, The Politics, translated by H. Rackham (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1932), pp. 80-83, adapted.

ties that bind people together that he actually ends by establishing the very conditions which make revolution and political faction possible. This is, of course, precisely what Plato sought to avoid, for he, like Aristotle, thinks that friendship is one of the greatest goods for the city and that it ensures that revolutions will be few (philian te gar oiometha megiston einai ton agathon tais polesin houto gar an hekista stasiazoien, Politics 1262b8-10).

In this way, then, we can see how Aristotle viewed the emotions as being capable of providing initial direction and guidance to reason. In this particular example, the emotions function more negatively, that is, they delineate the proper limits within which rationality may operate. As Harold Baillie puts it:

> In Aristotle's eyes, Plato's political reasoning, which ought to be the highest expression of practical intelligence, has suggested 'something fine but impractical.' That is, the program may appear rational, but is actually irrational. No matter how artful its principles may be, the position cannot succeed because it does not recognize human emotional reality and it chooses means outside the limits imposed on action by the emotions. ["Learning the Emotions," The New Scholasticism, 62 (1988) 225.]

Aristotle saw the emotions as capable of providing initial positive direction too. We have just seen above that Aristotle asserts that there are two things that most of all (malista) make people care for each other (kedesthai) and love each other (philein), namely, something being one's own (to idion) and something being beloved (to agapeton). In the passage from the Nicomachean Ethics we see that these two

things come directly into play. The example is rather unusual inasmuch as Aristotle takes his cue from women (not a sphere where he usually bothers to take much direction!) specifically, the relationship that mothers have with their children:

> But it [friendship] seems to consist more in loving than in being loved. A sign (semeion) of this is the way that mothers rejoice in loving their children. For some mothers give their own children away to be nursed[9] and, though knowing and loving them, do not seek to be loved in return (antiphileisthai d' ou zetousin) if both of these things are not possible but it is enough for them if they can only see them flourishing (eu prattontas); they retain their own love for them even though their children can give back (aponemosi) nothing of those things that are befitting to a mother because of their ignorance. (EN 1159a27-34.)[10]

The relationship between mother and child is a natural one while that of two friends is ethical inasmuch as it involves choice (prohairesis; cf. EN 1163a20f.). Still, Aristotle employs the natural and emotional bond between mother and child as the "pre-ethical" paradigm of the later ethical relationship of friendship. This natural, emotional bond of mother and child furnishes initial, positive direction to the character of the excellent friendship. If friendship is to be excellent, Aristotle is saying, then it should consist more in a willingness to give love than to receive it and this willingness is well-illustrated in the natural relation of mother to child where the mother, though she cannot hope to

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[9]The verb here, trephesthai is somewhat ambiguous. It can either mean to nurse or rear a child. In either case the mother is giving her child away to someone else to take care of for a time.

[10]Ostwald, p. 229, adapted.

be loved in return by her infant, is content only to know that her child is flourishing.

From an examination of both of the above passages, then, we see that Aristotle appreciates well the way in which the emotions are capable of guiding practical intelligence by providing it with a general orientation to the good which is to be done. Aristotle shows that the emotions orient us to the good by an analysis of specific emotions and the cause or causes for which they arise in his Rhetoric. Let us turn to a consideration of three different emotions which Aristotle discusses in order to see once again how the Stagirite connects emotional response to the good.

3.4 An Analysis of Emotions In Aristotle's Rhetoric

In this section we shall consider the emotions of shame, compassion and righteous indignation. These three are the best to examine inasmuch as they most clearly show that Aristotle holds that emotional response is oriented to the good. Before we analyze these emotions in their particularity, however, it will be helpful to set forth briefly the immediate background to Aristotle's discussion as well as his general understanding of the nature of rhetoric in its relationship to emotional response.

The immediate background to Aristotle's discussion of rhetoric and the emotions is Plato's analysis of the nature

of rhetoric in the Gorgias.[11] In this dialogue (often affirmed to be part of Plato's "middle period") Socrates asserts that rhetoric is a species of flattery (kolakeias men oun egoge eipon morion, Gorgias 466a1). According to Socrates there are four genuine arts that are concerned with the real care (therapeia) of the body and the soul. These four are medicine and gymnastic, justice and legislation respectively. The "art" of flattery divides herself into four and insinuating herself into each of these parts, pretends to be that genuine art into whose guise she has slipped (tetracha heauten dianeimasa hupodusa hupo hekaston ton morion prospoieitai einai touto hoper hupedu, Gorgias 464c8-10). Thus cookery assumes the form of medicine, cosmetics the form of gymnastic, sophistry the form of legislation and rhetoric that of justice. Each genuine art then has its sham counterpart (antistrophon, Gorgias 465d8) which stems from the "art" of flattery (he kolakeutike, Gorgias 464c7). In this way, Socrates argues that rhetoric is a mere semblance of a part of politics (politikes moriou eidolon , Gorgias 463d2) which shamefully aims not at what is best but only at what is pleasant (hoti tou hedeos stochazetai aneu tou beltistou, Gorgias 465a1-2, see also 462c8, 462e1). It is the counterpart of cookery in the soul, acting in the soul as the latter does on the body (antistrophon opsopoiias en psuche hos ekeino

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[11]The Gorgias is subtitled "Or On Rhetoric; Refutative" (e peri retorikes anatreptikos.)

en somati, Gorgias 465d8-9). He denies that rhetoric is a genuine art (techne) since he holds that it cannot give an account of the real nature of the things it applies and thus is incapable of telling the cause of any of them (Gorgias 465a1f.). He refuses, he says, to call anything a genuine art (techne) which is fundamentally irrational (ego de technen ou kalo ho an e alogon pragma, Gorgias 465a6-7).

In the Gorgias then, Plato's verdict is that rhetoric (at least as practiced by his contemporaries) is nothing but a shameful and ignorant knack (empeiria, Gorgias 465a4) which, by pandering to the emotions and desires of an audience, aims only at their gratification and not at what is truly best for them (Gorgias 502e3ff.). There is, clearly, for Plato such a thing as a legitimate form of rhetoric (Gorgias 503d6ff.). But it appears to be only practiced by Socrates and not by any of his contemporaries (Gorgias 521d6ff.). Socrates practices this true form of rhetoric because he does not aim at emotional or psychological gratification but only at the inculcation of justice and the removal of injustice from the souls of his fellow citizens.[12]

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[12]In the peroration of his defence Socrates makes known to the jury his deliberate refusal to appeal to crying and bringing up his children to the bench in order that he might move the jury to take pity on him (hina hoti malista eleetheie, Apology of Socrates 34c4). For a defendant to seek acquittal by appealing to such "pitiful dramatics" (ta eleina tauta dramata, Apology of Socrates 35b7) is, according to Socrates, an invitation to the jury to perjure themselves (oukoun chre oute hemas ethizein humas epiorkein outh' humas ethizesthai, Apology of Socrates 35c5-6). In similar fashion, Socrates rejects appeal to the emotions in his parting words

In response to Plato's rather damning critique of rhetoric (or at least the rhetorical practice of his generation) Aristotle attempts something of a rehabilitation. For my purposes, I shall focus upon the way in which Aristotle attempts this rehabilitation through a brief consideration of his understanding of the nature of rhetoric and especially the view of the emotions which emerges in the course of his discussion. It will be my contention that the role of cognition in emotional response which Aristotle delineates in Rhetoric II skirts the Platonic critique of rhetoric in the Gorgias as an art which appeals only to the irrational part of the human soul. It is precisely because Aristotle presupposes this cognitive element present in the emotions that he holds that rhetorical appeal to the emotions is not an appeal to the irrational but is founded upon an apprehension of the good latent in emotional response which can legitimately be elicited by the rhetorician in his audience. Again, such elicitation of emotions in an audience is not base pandering to the irrational inasmuch as Aristotle maintains that the emotions are connected, however unthematically, with the real.

Aristotle makes known his opposition to the Platonic

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to the jury when he asserts that he was convicted because of his refusal to say what would have been most sweet for them to hear (tou me ethelein legein pros humas toiauta hoi' an humin men hedista en akouein, Apology of Socrates 38d7-8), namely, his lamentations and wailing (threnountos te mou kai oduromenou, Apology of Socrates 38d9). These are things, he says, which they have become accustomed to hear from others but he refuses to do it and considers it unworthy of him (anaxia emou, Apology of Socrates 38e1).

critique in the very opening lines of his Rhetoric where he echoes the Gorgias: rhetoric is no longer the "counterpart of cookery" (antistrophos opsopoiias, Gorgias 465d8) but the "counterpart of dialectic" (antistrophos te dialektike, Rhetoric 1354a1-2); again, it is no longer a "part of flattery" (kolakeias morion, Gorgias 466a1) but a "part of dialectic" (morion ti tes dialektikes, Rhetoric 1356a31) which legitimately "slips into the guise of politics" (hupoduetai hupo to schema to tes politikes he retorike, Rhetoric 1356a27ff.).[13] Rhetoric is a part or counterpart to dialectic inasmuch as rhetoric, like dialectic, is not a science that deals with the nature of any definite subject but, like dialectic, is a certain faculty for furnishing arguments (peri oudenos gar horismenou oudetera auton estin episteme pos echei alla dunameis tines tou porisai logous, Rhetoric 1356a37-39). It furnishes arguments to those who are in a position of making judgments (Rhetoric 1391b1ff.) with respect to the contingent and changing world of human existence.[14] In short, it is the art of rational discourse which seeks to find in the subject matter that which is possibly persuasive (Rhetoric 1355b10-11) to those who are in the process of deliberating with a view to choosing a particular course of action.

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[13]Note Aristotle's echo of Plato's use of the verb hupoduo in Gorgias 464c-d. See William M. A. Grimaldi, S.J., Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle's Rhetoric (Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1972), pp. 85-86.

[14]See Grimaldie, Aristotle's Rhetoric, pp. 26-27.

Grimaldie puts the matter well:

> [Aristotle] points out that the ultimate goal of rhetorical activity is the effort to perceive in a given subject, or problem, or situation, those elements in it which may effect persuasion. The act of rhetoric seeks out those factors which lead a reasonable mind to accept the subject or the problem (A 2, 55b8-14). This is the proper activity of rhetoric and there it rests. It does not effect persuasion as some of the technographers said (A 1, 55b 10; Topics 101b5-10), nor does it, as far as Aristotle is concerned, make persuasion in the same sense as the artist makes his object. Rather it creates an attitude in another's mind, a sense of the reasonableness of the position proposed, whereby the auditor may make his own decision. The art, or technique, of rhetoric is the ability to perceive and to present evidence which makes decision, and a definite decision, possible; but to stop with the presentation.[15]

There are two things to note thus far: rhetoric is an affair of the "logistic" part of the soul inasmuch as it deals with the contingent (EN 1139a1ff.) and more importantly, for our purposes, it addresses itself to those who are in the process of deliberating with a view to making a choice. Choice (prohairesis), according to Aristotle, is an activity that involves both reason and appetition inasmuch as he defines it as a kind of deliberative desire (bouleutike orexis, EN 1113a11, cf. also 1139a32-33) and thus choice is connected with that part of the soul which has to do with our desires and emotions.

According to Aristotle, rhetoric can legitimately appeal to the desiderative and emotional part of the human psyche inasmuch as this is the part of the soul which brings about personal conviction and motivates action for, as he states,

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[15]Grimaldie, Aristotle's Rhetoric, p. 27.

reason by itself will not cause action (EN 1139a35-36). But this appeal to the desires and emotions is not a mere stirring up of irrational drives and forces which impel individuals to act but is based, as Aristotle sees it, upon some apprehension or cognition that is latent in emotional response.[16] It is my contention that this cognitive component of the emotions orients the individual to the good that is to be done either for himself or for another. Let us take a closer look at how Aristotle views the emotions and how emotional response can orient an individual to the good.

Aristotle gives his general definition of the emotions at the beginning of Rhetoric II:

> The emotions (ta pathe) are all those feelings on account of which men undergoing a change (di' hosa metaballontes), differ (diapherousi) with respect to their judgments (pros tas kriseis), and are accompanied by pain and pleasure, for example, anger, compassion, fear and as many other sorts of feelngs that there are as well as the opposite of these feelings. (Rhetoric 1378a24-27.)[17]

The central thing to note in this definition is the cognitive character of emotional response. The emotions are not simply "blind promptings and urgings that merely happen to us,"[18]

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[16]See Grimaldie, Commentary, p. 16: "I agree with Fortenbaugh's thesis on the role of cognition in these Aristotelian emotions (see his Aristotle on Emotion), and view it as further confirmation that in the Rhetoric A. is analyzing the fundamental nature of human discourse as reasoned and reasonable."

[17]Aristotle, The Art of Rhetoric, trans. by John Henry Freese (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926) p. 173, adapted.

[18]See Nancy Sherman, The Fabric of Character (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 169.

inasmuch as their arousal implies some kind of cognitive perception however indistinct or unthematic. The cognitive component of the emotion is the efficient cause of its arousal and serves also to delineate the essential features of each emotion.[19] For example, in Rhetoric II.2 Aristotle defines anger as a desire (orexis) for revenge that is accompanied by pain (meta lupes) on account of an apparent slight (dia phainomenen oligorian)[20] to oneself or one's own, when the slight is unjustified (me prosekontos). We see the cognitive

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[19]On the cognitive element of emotion as efficient cause see Fortenbaugh, Aristotle on Emotion, pp. 10-16. See also Grimaldie, Commentary p. 17: "When A. decides to study the emotions . . . he is engaged with the causality of the emotions and with varying aspects of the four causes. For example, when he considers the disposition of the person experiencing the emotion, he is in effect taking up an analysis which can be specific only by way of determining in this particular instance material, efficient, formal, and final causes of the emotion. In the same way, when he considers the persons toward whom one experiences the emotion, he is coping with efficient and final causes, and again with efficient causes when he takes up the things which bring about the emotion."

[20]Note how Aristotle employs the preposition dia here to express causal efficacy in exactly the same way that he does in his general definition of the emotions given above. Fortenbaugh, Aristotle on Emotion, pp. 10-12, points out that Aristotle is in part, engaged in an attempt to clarify Plato's efforts at showing the relationship between emotion and cognition in his Philebus. Fortenbaugh argues that Plato did indeed see their connection but employed the unhappy preposition "with" (meta, Philebus 37e10) to express their relationship instead of "on account of" or "because" (dia). The former signifies according to Fortenbaugh, a misleading sense of "simple concurrence" in which emotion just happens to accompany a thought or opinion rather than the causal efficacy that is signified by the preposition dia. It is because Aristotle was the first to employ the preposition dia to express the causal nexus of emotion and cognition that Fortenbaugh credits the Stagirite with making an advance on Plato's discussion.

element present in Aristotle's conception of the emotion of anger in that it is the perception of being slighted which is the efficient cause of the emotion arising. The same structure will be implicitly operative in Aristotle's analysis of the emotions of shame, compassion and righteous indignation.

Aristotle defines shame as a kind of pain or disturbance (lupe tis e tarache, Rhetoric 1383b15) with respect to misdeeds, whether of past, present or future, that tend to bring dishonor. He states that if this definition of shame is correct then we ought to feel shame as a result of misdeeds which bring disgrace to ourselves or to those for whom we care (ei de estin aischune he horistheisa ananke aischunesthai epi tois toioutois ton kakon hosa aischra dokei einai e auto e hon phrontizei, Rhetoric 1383b18-21). Aristotle then proceeds to catalogue an impressive variety of situations and scenarios in which a feeling of shame would predictably arise. He is aware that these situations will not induce shame in everyone. The shameless will not experience this disturbance or pain because, as Aristotle contends, it is characteristic of shamelessness to feel contempt or indifference when engaging in such disgraceful deeds (oligoria tis kai apatheia peri ta auta tauta, Rhetoric 1383b17-18). But for Aristotle, when one is involved in actions such as the following, one ought to feel the uneasiness and pain of shame.

Thus, deserting one's fellows in battle by taking flight warrants feeling shame because it stems from cowardice (apo

deilias gar, Rhetoric 1383b23); similarly withholding a deposit, for this is due to injustice (ap' adikias gar, Rhetoric 1383b24); making a profit out of the poor or the dead, because this shows base love of gain and stinginess (apo aischrokerdeias gar kai aneleutherias, Rhetoric 1383b29-30); overpraising a person's good qualities and playing down his bad, for this is a sign of flattery (kolakeias gar semeia, Rhetoric 1383b39-40); speaking at great length about oneself, making all kinds of professions and taking the credit for what another has done, because this is a sign of boastful charlatanery (alazoneias gar, Rhetoric 1384a7). Feelings of shame or disgrace arise as a result of involvement in such scenarios as are depicted above. Shame alerts the individual to a certain range of vices having to do with misdeeds which bring dishonor and thus assists in directing the individual away from such vices and toward the good. In this way then the emotion of shame orients the individual toward the good by preventing him from engaging in vicious acts with psychological impunity. Shame, which would normally accompany such acts, goads the individual to change her ways and act more in accord with what is good or just.

The emotions of compassion (eleos) and righteous indignation (nemesis) are also oriented to the good though in a different fashion from the emotion of shame. While shame serves to check someone who is engaged in something disgraceful these two emotions alert the individual to the good by

sympathetic identification with another's sufferings. Thus Aristotle defines compassion as a kind of pain that is excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful, which happens to someone who does not deserve it (tou anaxiou tunchanein, Rhetoric 1385b16). Significant for our purposes is the fact that this feeling is aroused as a sympathetic response to someone suffering undeservedly. In this way compassion has a moral dimension inasmuch as implicit in feeling this emotion is a judgment that an individual is suffering something which they ought not to be suffering. The efficient cause of the feeling is precisely this perception of another's undeserved suffering. Righteous indignation, in similar fashion, is being pained at the undeserved good fortune of another (to gar lupeisthai epi tais anaxiais kakopragiais, Rhetoric 1386b11-12). According to Aristotle, both of these emotions (eleos and nemesis) show good character (ampho ta pathe ethous chrestou, Rhetoric 1386b14-15) and they imply each other, for if we sympathize with and feel compassion for those who suffer undeservedly then we ought to be indignant with those who prosper undeservedly (dei gar epi men tois anaxios prattousi kakos sunachthesthai kai eleein tois de eu nemesan, Rhetoric 1386b15-16).

From this brief analysis of Aristotle's discussion of the emotions in the Rhetoric we can see that Aristotle supports the view of the emotions that is dramatically depicted in Sophocles' drama, namely, that the emotions

provide a kind of initial direction or orientation to the good. We have seen this to be the case in the emotions that we have considered. Our analysis of shame shows that this emotion directs the individual to the good by the experience of pain and uneasiness which accompanies acts which are disgraceful. The emotional distress of shame points to an individual's engagement in actions and situations which ought to be avoided. Compassion and righteous indignation also furnish this initial orientation to the good by sensitizing a person to the injustice of undeserved suffering as well as the injustice of undeserved prosperity. In this way then we can see how for Aristotle the emotions are capable of orienting the individual to the general moral contours of a given state of affairs. And thus, the rhetorician's appeal to the emotions in his audience are not, as Plato claims in the Gorgias, a pandering to the irrational, but an appeal to the whole person (as reasoning, desiring and feeling) as she deliberates with a view to choosing a course of action.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that the fuller anthropology of Aristotle and Sophocles has allowed them to recognize and appreciate the role of the emotions in the process of becoming a moral person. According to this ancient anthropology the emotions are not simply non-rational impulses but are, as we have seen, cognitive in character and capable of furnishing a certain impetus to the good. They are educable

and able to be informed in such a way that they come to be aligned with the rational element. In this way we have seen that the emotions are capable of initiating us into leading the good life by the orientation to the good which they provide. We have also seen how this anthropology and concern for the whole person is in marked contrast with more modern developments, especially those stemming from the Kantian tradition. For Kant, the emotions play no role in the constitution of the moral agent or the moral worth of actions. If the emotions play any role at all, it is only as needing to be suppressed or overcome by reason in the interests of carrying out one's duty. In this way it has been my claim that Kant's conception of the moral agent is truncated and impoverished when seen in the light of this more robust and fuller anthropology which takes into account a wider range of the elements of the human psyche.

As a corollary to this fuller anthropology I have maintained that, given the nature of the poet's art, it is appropriate to appeal to the poet to present human experience in its more immediate and emotionally evocative aspects. And again, given the nature of the philosopher's art, I have contended that it is appropriate to appeal to the philosopher to furnish us with a <u>logos</u> that explains and provides some kind of unity to the multiplicity of the phenomena that are presented by the dramatist.

The tragedian presents his position on the emotions

dramatically through the character of Neoptolemus and the way in which his feelings communicate to him the violence that he is doing to his moral identity as well as the injustice of his involvement in Odysseus' scheme to steal Philoctetes' bow. The medium of dramatic poetry is ideally suited to the task of an exploration of the emotions inasmuch as it is capable of presenting a character on stage who experiences various emotions and who is in a situation which invites us to identify with him and feel with him the emotions that are portrayed. There is thus an immediacy that poetry furnishes that cannot be found in philosophical discourse. Sophocles most especially employs the full force of his medium in setting forth his thesis on the orientation of the emotions to the good in the brilliant "recognition" scene where Neoptolemus echoes Philoctetes' former screams of pain. This scene is particularly noteworthy in the way that Sophocles so skillfully links Neoptolemus' feelings of anguish with the question of whether he will discover his true moral identity through the surprising and memorable vehicle of parallelism and <u>double entendre</u>.

For Aristotle, too, the emotions have a cognitive aspect and manifest a certain orientation to the good. Philosophical discourse is not as suitable a medium for a discussion of the emotions as poetry inasmuch as philosophical analysis does not help us to feel the emotions as poetry does. And it may very well be the case that the only way to understand the nature

of the emotions and emotional response is to feel them the way that a tragedian can make us feel them through the depiction of characters in a concrete situation. Still, Aristotle's analysis has its place in our discussion of the nature of the emotions. What we come to understand through the philosopher's work is the precise relationship between cognition and emotion, namely, that the perception of a certain state of affairs (e.g. outrage) is the efficient cause of emotional response (anger). This insight helps us to see how the emotions can be oriented to the good in such feelings as compassion where a sympathetic response is aroused on account of the perception of another's undeserved suffering or in a feeling like righteous indignation where pain is felt on account of another's undeserved good fortune. Aristotle helps us to understand the relationship of cognition and emotion by showing their connection in terms of efficient causality. Aristotle also helpfully points to the way in which the emotions can put a limit on the proposals of reason (as in his critique of Plato's kallipolis) and to the way in which they can furnish positive direction to the character of what a virtue such as friendship should be. In this way too he shows that the emotions provide this impetus or orientation to the good for which I have argued in this chapter. In the next chapter we shall focus on choice and responsibility and examine the relationship of the emotions to reason in order to understand how their integration is related to moral

maturity and the making of a choice.

Chapter 4

CHOICE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN SOPHOCLES AND ARISTOTLE: THE CHARACTER OF ODYSSEUS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall attempt to assess the moral character of Odysseus through a consideration of the nature of choice and responsibility with respect to both tragedian and philosopher. The performing of these two tasks is related inasmuch as I shall employ the notions of choice and responsibility as a way of revealing the kind of character that Odysseus is. Our analysis of the character of Odysseus is in keeping with this ancient anthropology that we are attempting to flesh out. For the ancients ethics was a practical discipline in which the central question was the concrete issue of character and not, as in more recent developments, the construction of a correct decision-procedure or the formulation of an abstract, exceptionless law. Because character was seen as of central importance, the use of examples, both good and corrupt, were also seen as playing a central role in the moral formation of the individual.[1] This

[1]Even Plato, who chastises the poets in the Republic for presenting corrupt characters to Athenian audiences, filled his dialogues with such fools as Euthyphro and Meno and such cynics as Polus, Callicles and Thrasymachus.

ancient appreciation of the vital importance that role models or examples play in the education of the moral agent has been devalued or forgotten. It seems that this phenomenon in modern moral philosophy could very well be traced back to the influence of Kant inasmuch as he argued that examples were useless as far as contributing to our understanding of the moral law. Again this was the case for Kant because he held that nothing empirical could contribute to the principle of morality.

Our consideration of the character of Odysseus will serve as a kind of anti-type. We shall be witnessing vice in action and shall note a number of things about it. First, we shall see how vice produces enmity and disrupts the establishment of genuine friendship among the three characters. Second, Odysseus' corrupting influence upon the young and impressionable Neoptolemus will be noted. The son of Laertes teaches Neoptolemus in the ways of injustice and deceit. Thirdly, we shall see that Odysseus practices moral subterfuge through the various ways in which he attempts to eschew moral responsibility and choice. Fourthly, it will be seen that Odysseus' vicious character distorts his ability to deliberate soundly inasmuch as we shall see that his ends are ignoble and the means that he sees as appropriate to those ends are skewed.

As a corollary to the ancient anthropology of Sophocles and Aristotle we shall appeal to the tragedian to present the

emotionally evocative and immediate aspects of human experience. The philosopher will be appealed to in order to provide us with an explanatory discourse on the phenomena that are presented by the poet. In this way we shall best be able to take into account the diversity and unity of experience as well as the emotional and rational elements of the human person.

It will be most instructive, in our analysis of the character of Odysseus, to turn to an examination of his language. Sophocles furnishes us with an important clue with respect to Odysseus' eschewing of personal responsibility and agency in his consistent use of the Greek dei as well as other adjectives signifying "external" or "objective" necessity. Noteworthy in this regard also is the interesting fact that Philoctetes, Neoptolemus and the man sent in disguise by Odysseus as a tradesman all refer to the son of Laertes as force (bia). Since Odysseus continuously eschews moral responsibility through his appeal to what must be done in the circumstances it is particularly appropriate that Sophocles has his characters refer to him as a kind of abstract force.

Continuing with our analysis of Odysseus' language I shall show that the son of Laertes employs moral language in an utterly inconsistent way. Time and again we see him saying whatever he needs to say in the interests of obtaining Philoctetes' bow. Although it can be quite easily shown that Odysseus manipulates moral language in the play, Sophocles

makes Odysseus' final goals more ambiguous and more difficult to discern. Is he acting as an instrument of the state in whose service he is willing so "selflessly" to compromise himself as to practice deceit and manipulate moral language or is he an utterly selfish individual who sees the entire situation as an opportunity for personal aggrandizement? I shall contend that Sophocles is showing us that Odysseus' overriding goals are selfish and that he is not placing himself in the service of the general good but is attempting to exploit a situation for his own prestige and honor. In this way I shall argue that the son of Laertes is precisely what Philoctetes says he is in the play, a panourgos, namely someone who is willing to do anything in order to achieve his own objectives. Odysseus is capable of acting justly and piously if this happens to be in line with his own goals but has absolutely no scruples in abandoning the norms of conventional morality if such norms will conflict with his own aims and purposes.[1] The incongruity of Odysseus' moral language seems to go hand in hand with his shunning of personal responsibility and lack of moral identity inasmuch as his own course of action (and indeed identity) is determined by what is most expedient and will bring success (Phil. 81, 109 and especially 1049-1052).

Aristotle has his own discussion of panourgia in Nicomachean Ethics VI.12. He juxtaposes his discussion of

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[1]See Blundell, "Odysseus in Philoctetes," 320-321.

this kind of criminal activity with the nature of cleverness and practical wisdom. Aristotle's analysis of panourgia will make a philosophical contribution to our understanding the kind of character which Sophocles is presenting in his play. Through the philosopher's analysis, it will be shown that Odysseus has the meritorious capacity of being able to determine the most efficient means to a given end but that he abuses and twists his ability by directing his efforts toward consistently wicked ends. Let us turn then to a consideration of the character of Odysseus.

4.2 Necessity And The Denial Of Responsibility

In an excellent article which examines the distinction between two common Greek verbs which express necessity Seth Benardete writes:

> In Sophocles' Philoctetes we can observe how an entire play can find its action reflected in the opposition of chre and dei.[2]

Benardete's statement will be born out in this chapter as I employ the distinction between chre and dei as an interpretive tool for demonstrating that Odysseus' language shows his hostility to assuming responsibility for his actions.

Dei essentially expresses the necessity that external circumstances impose upon an agent without there being any contribution on the part of the agent to the matter at hand. Chre, on the other hand, signifies a certain internal or

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[2]Benardete, "Chre and Dei," 297.

subjective necessity that an agent experiences for choosing a particular course of action over another.[3] In short, chre implies choice and the participation of the agent in determining his or her own destiny while dei implies simple submission to circumstances that do not admit of the possibility of choice. It will be my underlying claim throughout this analysis that Sophocles has the character of Odysseus consistently employ this term expressing external necessity (dei, as well as other impersonal verbs of necessity) as a way of signifying his denial of personal responsibility through the strategy of describing situations in such a way that he simply must submit to them.

From the very outset of the play we witness Odysseus' attempts at removing himself from responsibility for the actions which he performs. In his opening lines he informs Neoptolemus that he deserted the son of Poeas on the shores of Lemnos because he was ordered to do this by his superiors (tachtheis tod' erdein ton anassonton hupo, Phil. 6). This may in turn, be a subtle hint to the son of Achilles to do likewise because he soon orders the young man to carry out his commands in a similar, unquestioning fashion. The consistency with which Odysseus employs dei and other verbs expressing external necessity throughout the play is striking. He makes it clear to Neoptolemus that he is present as a subordinate officer (hos huperetes parei, Phil. 53) and that he must (dei,

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[3]Ibid., 285.

Phil. 50) be noble in the purpose for which he has come even if he hears that he must carry out things that are strange and new (kainon, Phil. 52). This latter, of course, is a euphemism for the deceitful plan to steal Philoctetes' bow which he will soon reveal. Philoctetes, he asserts, must (dei, Phil. 54) be taken by deception and duped with underhanded words (Phil. 55); the bow must be stolen (tod' ouchi klepteon, Phil. 57); the scheme must be carried out (dei sophisthenai, Phil. 77) in order that Neoptolemus can become the thief of the invincible weapon. Odysseus teaches the son of Achilles how to be irresponsible also. Just as he deferred to "those in power" (Phil. 6) as responsible for what he did so he also invites Neoptolemus to give himself over to him (dos moi seauton, Phil. 84) for shamelessness for the brief part of a day.[4]

According to the prophecy of Helenos (at least as reported by the tradesman) Philoctetes was to be persuaded to leave his island abode and to come to Troy willingly (ei me tonde peisantes logo/agointo nesou tesd' eph' hes naiei ta nun, Phil. 612-613). But Odysseus completely disregards the

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[4]It is interesting to note that the tradesman (one of Odysseus' men) whom the son of Laertes sends to further the progress of the scheme speaks in Odyssean fashion when he asserts that he will hold Neoptolemus responsible for the outcome of disclosing information that he thinks should remain hidden (se thesomai tond' aition, Phil. 590). Neoptolemus too (as we shall see) removes himself from responsibility for his actions (Phil. 385-388) in exactly the same way that Odysseus does at the very opening of the play (Phil. 6). Sophocles appears to be showing us that everyone connected with Odysseus is engaged in eschewing personal responsibility.

prophecy and employs this same impersonal language of necessity with Philoctetes.[5] When Neoptolemus has gained possession of Philoctetes' bow and Philoctetes is imploring the son of Laertes to return it to him Odysseus bursts onto the scene and declares that the young man will never return it even if he wants to. He proceeds to taunt Philoctetes saying that he must go with his men or they will escort him by force (alla kai se dei/steichein ham' autois e bia stelousi se, Phil. 982-983); Philoctetes must take Troy and raze it to the ground by force (Troian s' helein dei kai kataskapsai bia, Phil. 998); the son of Poeas must take this path (he d' hodos poreutea, Phil. 993); he must submit and obey (peisteon tade, Phil. 994). Again, Sophocles shows us with devastating clarity Odysseus' flight from responsibility by the way in which the latter describes every situation where there is a critical choice to be made as one in which the individual must simply submit to an anonymous force that is larger than

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[5]When Odysseus finally lays hold of Philoctetes' bow later in the play we see that he gives up on Philoctetes (and the prophecy) all together. He will assert that the bow is all that is needed (Phil. 1047ff). This is what he, in fact, hints at with Neoptolemus when he first describes the scheme to him at the beginning of the play. When the son of Achilles asks what profit it is to him that Philoctetes goes to Troy, Odysseus answers that the bow alone will capture the city (hairei ta toxa tauta ten Troian mona, Phil. 113). It seems somehow appropriate that Odysseus focuses, in the end, on the prized object rather than the man since he constantly employs impersonal verbs which appeal only to the necessity that a certain state of affairs be brought into being and not that an individual meaningfully participate (for example, through cooperation, negotiation or persuasion) in the bringing about of such a state of affairs. See Nussbaum, "Consequences and Character," 32.

himself. Swift and unthinking subordination is the only appropriate response when the reality of choice has been denied.

Sophocles further confirms Odysseus as an individual in flight from moral responsibility by having three different characters refer to him as force (bia) during the course of the play. Philoctetes refers to Odysseus as force (bia) when he angrily recounts to Neoptolemus how he has suffered at the hands of the Atreidae and Odysseus for the past ten years (Phil. 314). Neoptolemus, confirming Philoctetes' account, again calls Odysseus bia (Phil. 321). Finally, the spy sent by Odysseus in the guise of a tradesman also refers to Odysseus as bia when he tells Neoptolemus that he and his men are coming to take Philoctetes back to Troy (Phil. 592). We have already seen the way in which Odysseus refers to impersonal necessity and other forms of expediency in order to justify his actions. Sophocles, in a sense, indicates to us what the ultimate moral implications of Odysseus' position would be by having other characters in his play refer to the son of Laertes as an abstract force. Again, these references to Odysseus as force are in keeping with his own response to and description of moral situations, namely, that personal commitments and choices do not exist because submission to forces which dictate what one must do is the only reality. This is either what Odysseus actually believes or what he wants others to hold in the interests of justifying the kinds

of actions that he wants to take. The references to him as bia are perfectly in keeping with his character inasmuch as they point to the way in which Odysseus shuns responsibility for his own actions.[6] By means of these references to Odysseus as an abstract force scattered throughout the play Sophocles subtly acknowledges Odysseus' own appeal to force as a central category of his moral thought.

The passage which best sums up Odysseus' own moral position comes near the close of the play when Odysseus has won possession of the bow and realizes that he will not be able to persuade Philoctetes to sail to Troy. Sophocles has Odysseus reveal his identity (or lack thereof) in what he says here:

> I could say many things in response to Philoctetes here if he would permit me, but as it is now, I am master of one argument (logou). For where a certain kind of man is

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[6]Odysseus' denial of personal responsibility is interestingly illustrated near the close of the play in his heated exchange with Neoptolemus. When it becomes clear to Odysseus that Neoptolemus intends to return Philoctetes' bow, Odysseus tells the son of Achilles that there is someone who will prevent him from doing this (estin tis estin hos se kolusei to dran, Phil. 1241). When Neoptolemus asks who it is that will prevent him, Odysseus says that the entire unruly mob of Achaeans will, and that he is among them (xumpas Achaion laos en de tois ego, Phil. 1243). He reiterates his threat to Neoptolemus by referring to the army and the vengeance that they will exact for this betrayal (Phil. 1250, 1257). Sophocles shows us that even when Odysseus finds himself in a situation where personal and direct action can be taken he hides behind a collectivity. His reference to himself at 1243 is only as one among a threatening and impersonal mob ready to impose its collective will. In this way the tragedian indicates that Odysseus is the sort of individual who is incapable of seeing himself as a personal agent with the power of carrying out actions which he chooses.

> required I am that kind of man (hou gar toiouton dei toioutos eim' ego) and where there is the judgment of just and good men you couldn't find anyone more reverent than I. I am the sort whose nature it is to want to win in everything (nikan ge mentoi pantachou chrezon ephun, Phil. 1047-1052).

In this passage we see that Odysseus describes himself as a kind of moral cipher who, because he is without character or moral scruples, is capable of becoming whatever kind of person is required (dei) by the given situation. In this way Odysseus enunciates a position of radical moral irresponsibility as is evidenced by his use of the objective dei that we explored above.

4.3 Manipulation And Villainy

In addition to removing himself from responsibility for his own actions the son of Laertes twists and manipulates moral language to suit his own ends or to get others to do what he wants them to do. Sophocles is showing us, I maintain, that this kind of manipulation betrays Odysseus' cynicism regarding moral terms and simply being ethical at all.[7] We see the son of Laertes freely re-define moral terms or frankly place morally incompatible terms side by side in a completely irresponsible and cynical fashion. Again such disregard, I contend, is all in the service of his own questionable ends, because for Odysseus the end justifies any

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[7]See Blundell, "Odysseus in Philoctetes," 321.

means to that end.[8] A passage which is central for revealing Odysseus' willingness to employ his formidable rhetorical powers in the service of his ends comes at the beginning of the play in one of his avuncular lectures to Neoptolemus:

> Child of a noble father, even I myself, when I was once young, used to have a quiet tongue and a hand ready for action (glossan men argon cheira d' eichon ergatin) but now, having gone out into the testing ground of the real world (eis elenchon exion),[9] I see that it is the tongue, not deeds that governs all things (panth' hegoumenen, Phil. 96-99).

Sophocles is revealing to us here Odysseus' general mode of operation throughout the play. Odysseus proves time and again (at least initially) that it is the tongue which governs all things.[10] Sophocles thus portrays for us the terrible

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[8]I shall explore the questionableness of Odysseus' ends later in this chapter.

[9]See Jebb, Philoctetes, p. 68 for an excellent commentary on this particular phrase.

[10]In his emphasis on the transforming possibilities of the tongue Odysseus calls to mind the well-known Sophist, Gorgias. In the only complete work which has come down to us, the Encomium of Helen, Gorgias notoriously defends Helen on the ground that if she was persuaded to go with Paris she ought to be excused because the power of the word (logos dunastes megas estin, Encomium 8) is so great as to compel the soul to obey and approve of whatever is done (logos gar psuchen ho peisas hen epeisen enankase kai peithesthai tois legomenois kai sunainesai tois poioumenois, Encomium 12). Logoi he says, can drug and bewitch (exepharmakeusan kai egoeteusan, Encomium 14) the souls of its hearers.

In Plato's Gorgias, Gorgias, like Odysseus, praises the powers of the tongue (via rhetoric) to recast and manipulate reality. Gorgias contends that if a doctor and a rhetorician were to engage in a verbal bout with each other on the subject of who should be appointed physician, it would be the rhetorician who would be appointed over the medical doctor because of the former's facility with words (Gorgias 456b7-c1). There is, Gorgias asserts, no subject on which the rhetorician would fail to speak more persuasively than the very professional who

incoherence that moral language is liable to undergo when a character like Odysseus employs his considerable rhetorical powers for questionable purposes. I shall focus primarily on the beginning of the play where Odysseus employs moral terms inconsistently in order to get Neoptolemus to play a part in his scheme to steal Philoctetes' bow.

The first passage concerns the moral term noble (gennaios). Odysseus tells Neoptolemus that he must be noble (gennaion, Phil. 51) not only in physical prowess (me monon to somati, Phil. 51) but in the purpose for which he has come (eph' hois eleluthas, Phil. 50). Neoptolemus is the son of Achilles and is thus by birth of noble physical powers. But Odysseus is hinting at something else here which he will not come out and simply state. The sort of "nobility" which Odysseus is getting at seems to involve two things: a willingness unquestioningly to subordinate himself to the "something new" (ti kainon, Phil. 52) which Odysseus will soon reveal to be his scheme and to carry out that scheme successfully. In this way then Odysseus aligns nobility with subservience (all' en ti kainon hon prin ouk akekoas/klues hupourgein hos huperetes parei, Phil. 52-53) and with successfully executing

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has expert knowledge of that subject (Gorgias 456c4-6). Gorgias is quick to point out, however, that the teacher of rhetoric cannot be blamed if his art is put to bad use because he imparted the skill to be used justly (Gorgias 457b8-c1).

a clever and deceitful plan (sophisma).[11] It is not my contention that Odysseus himself believes that nobility is compatible with these things but he needs to cover over his own deeds with a word like gennaios in order to get the son of a noble father to cooperate with his designs.[12] In short, Odysseus does not really care about the substance of moral discourse unless it is useful to him.[13] Having initially couched the deed to be done in terms of nobility, Odysseus proceeds quickly to talk of the necessity of deceiving the soul of Philoctetes by means of words (Phil. 54-57). Neoptolemus is to play the part of a kind of surrogate Odysseus in that he too is to manipulate others by means of manipulating language.

We see this same kind of inconsistency in the use of moral terms and masking of wicked deeds in the language of nobility in what follows. Neoptolemus is to become a thief (klopeus, Phil. 77); to contrive evil deeds (technasthai kaka, Phil. 80) which are shameless (anaides, Phil. 83) and deceitful (dolo, Phil. 101) and is to be known through his involve-

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[11]See Knox, The Heroic Temper, p. 125.

[12]Odysseus demonstrates that he himself knows the true meaning of the word gennaios when he orders a remorseful Neoptolemus to go and because he is noble (gennaios) not to look at Philoctetes any longer lest he destroy their good fortune (Phil. 1068-1069). Odysseus is, of course, worried that because of Neoptolemus' noble nature (and the compassion that is part of such nobility) the young man will so regret the deceit that he has practiced that he will attempt to undo what he has wrought.

[13]See Blundell, "Odysseus in Philoctetes," 320.

ment in such an affair as just (dikaioi, Phil. 82), most revered of mortals (eusebestatos broton, Phil. 85), wise and good (sophos kagathos, Phil. 119). Again, it is not my contention that Odysseus believes that such contradictory moral terms as shamelessness and reverence are in fact compatible. He does not. What he does know with devastating clarity is that if one needs someone of noble character to carry out a deed of questionable moral integrity then one must couch the deed to be done in terms that are morally acceptable and even attractive to that individual. This is what we see Odysseus doing above. Sophocles shows us that Odysseus manipulates the son of Achilles in the very same way that the latter will soon take advantage of Philoctetes. The tragedian also portrays the moral cynicism of Odysseus who cares nothing for the substance of moral terms except as they may be useful to him in the achievement of his own goals.

As was mentioned in the introduction, it is not clear what Odysseus' final goals are. He claims to be the servant of Zeus and simply to be carrying out the god's will (Phil. 989-990). He appears to have the general welfare of the Greeks in mind when he says that Neoptolemus will cause suffering for all of the Greeks if he fails to carry out the scheme successfully (ei d' ergase/me tauta lupen pasin Argeiois baleis, Phil. 66-67). The Chorus defend Odysseus on these same grounds when they claim that the son of Laertes was given a command "as one from many" (keinos d' heis apo

pollon/tachtheis, Phil. 1143-1144) and at their mandate achieved a common benefit for his friends (tout' ephemosuna/koinan enusen es philous arogan, Phil. 1144-1145).[14] It is my opinion that Odysseus is not a selfless servant of the state but is driven fundamentally by the desire for personal honor, success and power and that he is willing to do or say anything in order to secure these things. In this way, then, he is the panourgos (criminal, "one who will do or say anything") that Philoctetes says that he is.

Odysseus' assertion that he is the servant of Zeus is but a convenient ploy for claiming that he has divine sanction for pursuing his own goals. Sophocles makes this quite clear in his depiction of Odysseus' utter willingness to disregard the prophecy of Helenus once Philoctetes' bow is in his

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[14]See Nussbaum, "Consequences and Character," 29-39. Nussbaum argues that Odysseus is a kind of selfless utilitarian who disregarding his own scruples, acts in the interests of the larger community. He is someone who "accords ultimate value to states of affairs," specifically that state of affairs which is "the greatest possible good of all citizens." Nussbaum further argues that it is Sophocles' purpose in the play to show the "initial attractiveness" of such a position and "its ultimate defectiveness." The ultimate defectiveness of Odysseus' position, according to Nussbaum, lies in the fact that his fixation on bringing about certain states of affairs leads him to accord no value to such things as friendship, justice and personal integrity.

I do not disagree with Nussbaum in her judgment that Sophocles shows us the moral bankruptcy of Odysseus' position but I disagree with her on the issue of Odysseus' ultimate motivation for his actions. It seems to me that Sophocles leaves us with enough evidence that Odysseus' real goal in getting Philoctetes' bow is the personal prestige and power that this will afford him among his peers and not, as Nussbaum would have it, bringing about the "greatest good for the greatest number" of those Greeks fighting at Troy.

possession (Phil. 1054-1062). The prophecy was that the bow and its owner Philoctetes would take Troy. But Sophocles shows us an Odysseus who is indifferent to the message of Zeus' prophets and hence as someone who cannot be viewed as seriously committed to his commands. In this way it is doubtful that Odysseus is doing anything but appropriating divine sanction for his own purposes.

Sophocles provides us with ample evidence that the son of Laertes is pursuing private and selfish goals even though in the play Odysseus portrays himself as an individual who is looking out for the general welfare. Victory and honor appear to be his overriding ends. It is for the sake of grasping a "sweet portion" of victory that Odysseus first bids Neoptolemus to throw off his sense of shame and become involved in the scheme (Phil. 80-82). The attainment of victory he says, will later make them appear just (Phil. 82). Before Neoptolemus sets off to find Philoctetes, Odysseus prays to Hermes, the sender of guile and to Athena Victory who, he claims, "always saves me" (Phil. 133-134). Sophocles shows us that indeed, Victory is Odysseus' salvation (Phil. 109) and final goal when later in the play, he declares that he is, by nature, the sort of man who wants to win in all circumstances (nikan ge mentoi pantachou chrezon ephun, Phil. 1052). This winning is defined both in terms of the success of his deceitful scheme and his aim to appropriate the honor that was due to Philoctetes in the battle at Troy. When

Odysseus has finally secured the bow through the assistance of Neoptolemus he declares that Philoctetes is now superfluous and that the gift of honor from the Greeks will now be apportioned to him (hemeis d' iomen kai tach' an to son geras/timen emoi neimeien, Phil. 1061-1062). Contrary to Neoptolemus who declares that he would rather fail acting nobly than win acting wickedly (Phil. 94-95), Odysseus declares that he must win in any and every circumstance whether it be by wicked or noble means.

It is very unlikely, it seems to me that Odysseus is really a public servant at all. Sophocles has Philoctetes reveal the damning evidence that Odysseus was unwilling to serve the Greeks at all by going to fight in their behalf at Troy.[15] Philoctetes bitterly expresses his outrage at having been dishonorably abandoned (atimon ebalon, Phil. 1028) by Odysseus and the Atreidae when he freely volunteered to fight and Odysseus had to be tricked and forced to go (klope te kananke zugeis/epleis ham' autois, Phil. 1025-1026).[16] In this way Sophocles shows us the hypocrisy of Odysseus who claims to be only serving the public interest through his scheme when, in fact, he was himself forced by deceit and necessity to go to Troy. Truly it was Philoctetes who was the public servant not Odysseus. The tragedian, furthermore, points to

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[15]According to legend Odysseus attempts to skirt fighting at Troy by feigning madness.

[16]See Rose, "Philoctetes and the Sophists," 93-94.

the irony of Odysseus' continual appeals to necessity and the use of deceit in order to secure Philoctetes' bow when it was precisely these two things which had to be used on Odysseus in order to get him to carry out his public duty to the Greeks. In this way I contend, Odysseus' pretensions to being a faithful, public servant appear to be dubious.

It is my opinion that Sophocles intends for us to view the son of Laertes as a panourgos, an individual who is willing to do and say whatever is necessary in order to achieve his own goals.[17] The true character of Odysseus is revealed through the figure of Philoctetes with whom the tragedian is in fundamental sympathy.[18] Upon hearing Neop-

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[17]See Knox, The Heroic Temper, pp. 124-125; H. D. F. Kitto, Form and Meaning in Drama (London, Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1956), pp. 108-109.

[18]It seems to me that it is possible to assert that the tragedian is in basic sympathy with the character of Philoctetes for a number of reasons. First, Sophocles shows us that it is Philoctetes who awakens the son of Achilles to a sense of his real moral identity by acting as a role model for the young man (see chapter 2). Second, Sophocles assigns to Philoctetes the final and devastating statement on the character of Odysseus when the latter is ignominiously run off the stage:

> You must know this much at any rate: these so-called foremost of the army are the Greeks' false heralds. They are bold with their words but cowards at the spear point (kakous/ontas pros aichmen en de tois logois thraseis, Phil. 1306-1307).

Once again, in this way Sophocles alludes to Odysseus' belief in and commitment to the power of words over deeds which the son of Laertes stated earlier (Phil. 96-99). Finally, Philoctetes' healing and reinstatement into society, in spite of his wildness (Phil. 1321) and unyielding nature (Phil. 1321-1323, 1343, 1352, 1386, 1388, 1392, 1393-1396) show Sophocles' fundamental sympathy with the suffering hero.

tolemus' tale,[19] Philoctetes proclaims:

> Yes, I know that he would attempt every wicked argument with his tongue and any form of criminality (panourgias) in which he would be willing to do everything unjust in order to attain his end (meden dikaion es telos melloi poein, Phil. 407-409).

Philoctetes gives voice to the very expediency which we have seen Odysseus exercise in the course of our discussion. According to Philoctetes, Odysseus is the sort of man for whom the end will justify any means to its attainment. Sophocles has Philoctetes point to the very etymology of the word panourgia in his mention of Odysseus' willingness to both do and say anything. This etymological reference is made in even more explicit terms in a later passage where Philoctetes describes Odysseus as, "the one who says all things and dares all things" (all' est' ekeino panta lekta panta de/tolmeta, Phil. 633-634).[20] Finally, Sophocles indicates a close connection between Odysseus and villainy when Philoctetes unleashes a torrent of abuse upon Neoptolemus for having

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[19]Philoctetes' mention of Odysseus' villainy and injustice is strategically placed here by Sophocles as a response to Neoptolemus' own lying tale about how he lost his patrimony to Odysseus. Thus, Philoctetes is making his statement to one who is actually in the grip of the very one being condemned. Sophocles' notorious irony is again at work. But the irony carries a point because it is this very panourgia (which Neoptolemus is practicing on Philoctetes through his lying tale) that will soon come down on the young man's own head in the form of harsh condemnation from Philoctetes (Phil. 927).

[20]See Blundell, "Odysseus in Philoctetes," 315-316. Blundell refers to the excellent passage (38d-39a) in Plato's Apology further to illustrate the meaning of panourgia.

deceived him. When Philoctetes begs Neoptolemus to give him his bow back and the young man refuses based upon a very Odyssean appeal to impersonal expediency and having to listen to "those in power," (Phil. 925-926) Philoctetes cries out, "You utter fire and terror, you hateful master work of terrible villainy" (panourgias/deines technem' echthiston, Phil. 927-928)! Philoctetes is condemning Neoptolemus for surpassing even Odysseus in his willingness to do or say anything in order to achieve his goal.

In summary then, I have argued in this section that the term which best suits Odysseus is panourgos inasmuch as he is willing to say or do anything in the interests of achieving his own goals. I have argued that the tragedian indicates that we are to understand Odysseus in this fashion in a number of different ways. First of all, Odysseus is characterized by this term on several occasions by Philoctetes with whom, I have argued, Sophocles is in fundamental sympathy. The tragedian identifies Odysseus with the works of a panourgos and shows that he is aware of the etymological meaning of the term in his drama. Second, Sophocles indicates Odysseus' basic irresponsibility through his consistent employment of the Greek dei which, as I have argued, signifies Odysseus' attempt to remove himself from moral responsibility through the subterfuge of appealing to impersonal necessities which simply dictate what he must do. Again, this is a strategy by which Odysseus seeks to accord himself free reign to do

whatever he wants to do. Third, Odysseus' inconsistent use of moral terms is indicative of a moral cynicism that points in the end, to panourgia. Finally, it has been my contention that the son of Laertes is driven fundamentally by selfish goals and not the general good of the community. This is shown by the way in which the tragedian reveals that Odysseus is really after victory (in any circumstance) and the desire to be given the gift of honor from the Greeks that should be given to Philoctetes. I have indicated that Sophocles furnishes us with further evidence that Odysseus is not motivated by serving the needs of the community through Philoctetes' damning revelation that the son of Laertes refused to go to Troy and had to be tricked and forced to go. In all of these ways then Sophocles presents us with an example of impoverished and defective human agency.

4.4 Aristotle On Cleverness, Practical Wisdom And Villainy

In this section I shall set forth Aristotle's own very brief discussion of villainy (panourgia) in Nicomachean Ethics VI.12. Aristotle's discussion of villainy is placed within a larger analysis of the nature of cleverness and practical wisdom. The distinctions that Aristotle draws between these three things will help us to understand philosophically the nature of villainy. Through his philosophical analysis, Aristotle will help us to understand two things about the character of Odysseus: first, that he employs a potentially good trait (i.e. the ability to determine and execute the most

efficient means to a given end) in the service of wicked goals and second that villainy is the sort of thing that is an habitual disposition. According to Aristotle, then, there is a certain incorrigibility that is attached to the notion of panourgia. Both of these aspects of Odysseus' character are brought out, in fact, in the play but the medium of philosophical discourse is more peculiarly suited to the analysis of these particular aspects of the character of Odysseus.

At Nicomachean Ethics VI.12 Aristotle talks of moral virtue and practical wisdom in terms of means and ends. He asserts that virtue makes the target correct (he men gar arete ton skopon poiei orthon, EN 1144a7-8) and practical wisdom makes us use the right means (he de phronesis ta pros touton, EN 1144a8-9). It is the presence of virtue, Aristotle says, which makes a person's choice right (EN 1144a20), but it is part of a different capacity to determine the steps which must be taken in order to implement that choice (EN 1144a22). It is at this point that Aristotle introduces his notion of cleverness, simultaneously defining and distinguishing it from practical wisdom (phronesis) and villainy (panourgia). Cleverness (deinotes) is an indeterminate capacity (dunamis)[21] to perform those steps which are conducive to a proposed target or goal and to attain that goal (haute d' esti toiaute hoste ta pros ton hupotethenta skopon sunteinonta dunasthai

[21]As opposed to a determinate disposition (hexis, cf. EN II.5) which is achieved through habituation.

tauta prattein kai tunchanein autou, EN 1144a24-26). As indeterminate it is a capacity or ability of oppposites.[22] If the target is noble, cleverness deserves praise (epainete, EN 1144a26), but if the target is worthless or base (phaulos, EN 1144a26) then cleverness is utter villainy or criminality (panourgia, EN 1144a26). It is because cleverness and practical wisdom resemble each other (in that both are concerned with determining and implementing the most effective means for achieving chosen ends) that Aristotle says that the practically wise are called clever and knavish (deinous kai panourgous, EN 1144a27-28).[23] Practical wisdom is not this capacity which he terms cleverness but it is also not without this capacity (EN 1144a28-29). It is only when this "eye of the soul" (deinotes) is coupled with virtue that it becomes the determinate disposition of practical wisdom (he d' hexis to ommati touto ginetai tes psuches ouk aneu aretes, EN 1144a29-30).[24] If deinotes is, on the other hand, coupled with viciousness it becomes villainy or that willingness to do anything which is panourgia. In this way Aristotle argues that the end which is best, whatever that may be, appears only to the good person (epeide toionde to telos kai to ariston hotidepote on touto d' ei me to agatho ou phainetai, EN

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[22]See J. A. Stewart, Notes, 2:214.

[23]Plato uses the term playfully in Meno 80b7.

[24]See Pierre Aubenque, La Prudence Chez Aristote (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), pp. 61-63.

1144a32-34). For it is she who, with the requisite moral virtues, is attracted to those ends which contribute to her own (and the wider community's) flourishing. Wickedness on the other hand, (mochtheria, EN 1144a35) twists and causes one to be utterly deceived about the first principles of action (diastrephei gar he mochtheria kai diapseudesthai poiei peri tas praktikas archas, EN 1144a34-36). In this way, Aristotle affirms that a character distorted by vice is incapable of rightly discerning and acting for his own good. Thus, according to Aristotle, it is impossible to be practically wise unless one is good.

From Aristotle's discussion thus far we can see that villainy or criminality is a kind of cleverness (deinotes) gone bad. This conception of villainy (panourgia) is in accord with Sophocles' depiction of the character of Odysseus. One of the traits that is actually admirable in him as a character is precisely his ability to be able to determine the most effective means to attaining his goal. His focus on efficiency is well displayed in the scheme which he devises to obtain Philoctetes' bow. He displays then, in some sense, what Aristotle calls cleverness (deinotes). But this admirable trait is invariably employed with a view to wicked ends and it is this which Aristotle (and Sophocles) term panourgia. Ultimately, Aristotle would understand Odysseus' practice of panourgia as a failure of moral virtue. His own wickedness distorts his perception concerning the fundamental

principles of action and so his admirable ability with respect to determining means to ends (what Aristotle calls the "eye of the soul" in EN 1144a30) is skewed and directed to ends of dubious moral rectitude.

While cleverness is an indeterminate capacity which can be used for good or evil, Aristotle sees practical wisdom and villainy as a determinate disposition which has come into being through repeated use.[25] Stewart puts the matter well:

> Cleverness is the power of discovering and employing the means which lead to any end which happens to be in view, no account being taken, so far as the notion of deinotes is concerned, of the morality of the end. Deinotes, of course, operates largely in non-moral fields, where it undergoes no transformation: but in the moral field, when it is habitually enlisted in the cause of a good end, it becomes the hexis of phronesis; when habitually enlisted in the cause of a bad end, the hexis of panourgia.[26]

In this way then Aristotle sees villainy as a settled disposition (hexis) in which an individual characteristically employs his talent with a view to vicious ends. Sophocles does not

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[25]The notion that certain traits develop in a person through repeated action is, of course, in accord with Aristotle's general understanding of the nature of moral virtue. He states this most succintly in Nicomachean Ethics II.1 where he says: "The same holds true of the virtues: in our transactions with other men it is by action that some become just and others unjust, and it is by acting in the face of danger and by developing the habit of feeling fear or confidence that some become brave men and others cowards. The same applies to the appetites and feelings of anger: by reacting in one way or in another to given circumstances some people become self-controlled and gentle, and others self-indulgent and short-tempered. In a word, characteristics (hexeis) develop from corresponding activities. For that reason, we must see to it that our activities are of a certain kind, since any variations in them will be reflected in our characteristics." (EN 1103b13-23, Ostwald, p. 34).

[26]Stewart, Notes, 2:101.

furnish us with a technical term such as Aristotle's hexis for signifying the perduring nature of Odysseus' vice. This is more part of the task of philosophy. But he confirms the incorrigible nature of panourgia in his drama through the character of Philoctetes. Sophocles calls attention to the fact that Odysseus has reached a settled disposition of moral viciousness when Philoctetes excuses Neoptolemus for his involvement in Odysseus' scheme and blames the young man's behavior on the nefarious influence of the son of Laertes (Phil. 961f., 984, 1369). Neoptolemus, he says, is unworthy of the likes of Odysseus (because of the former's moral superiority) and, since he did not know any better, he played the part of a kind of screen or front (problema, Phil. 1008) for Odysseus. Odysseus' wicked soul, he continues, was always peering through the recesses of the young man's mind in order to see how he could teach Neoptolemus to be clever at wickedness (en kakois einai sophon, Phil. 1015). Thus, Sophocles shows us, through the character of Philoctetes, that he is aware of the distinction between a wicked act (which Neoptolemus has committed) and a warped disposition in which the individual is characteristically involved in deeds that are morally reprehensible. Sophocles shows us his understanding of the nature of moral virtue through his depiction of Philoctetes' sensitivity to the moral significance of the pain that the young man feels from being involved in Odysseus'

scheme.[27] Since this pain and remorse are present, Philoctetes cannot unqualifiedly label Neoptolemus wicked (kakos) the way that he does Odysseus and the Atreidae (Phil. 984, 1369). In his discussion of the nature of panourgia, then, Aristotle confirms the perduring nature of the character flaw of the villain (panourgos) by designating his moral condition with the term hexis. In this way, he confirms what Sophocles is saying about the character of Odysseus when the son of Laertes is called panourgos during the course of the drama.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have maintained that the figure of Odysseus acts as a kind of anti-type and that, according to the ancient anthropology of Sophocles and Aristotle, there is a crucial place for the use of such examples in the positive formation of the moral agent. For the ancients, the witnessing of such a negative exemplar was viewed as an education in how one ought not to act and the kind of person that one ought not to become. I have also maintained that modern moral philosophy, stemming from Kant, has lost sight of the critical educational role that the exemplar plays in the moral education of the individual. This is, indeed, something that the ancients have to teach us.

I have argued in a number of ways that the character of Odysseus is basically that of a villain. I have explored his

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[27]See Blundell, "The Phusis of Neoptolemus," 141.

villainy mostly by way of an analysis of his refusal to accept responsibility for his own acts and his basic denial of the reality of choice. I have shown these things through an examination of his language (his consistent preference for dei over chre, his manipulation of moral terms) and through arguing that he is not motivated by a concern for the larger community in his pursuit of Philoctetes' bow, but for self-aggrandizement. Sophocles not only has Odysseus be called a panourgos in the course of the drama but demonstrates an awareness of the etymological roots of the term in its application to the character of Odysseus. In this way, the tragedian confirms the argument which I have been attempting to make with respect to Odysseus, namely, that he is the sort of person who is willing to do or say anything in order to achieve his own goals. Aristotle contributes to this chapter through his further analysis and illumination of the meaning of panourgia in philosophical terms. Aristotle helps us to see that Odysseus has a potentially valuable ability (i.e., that of being capable of determining the most efficient means to a given end and attaining it), but that because of a fundamental flaw in his character his otherwise excellent capacity is vitiated by being put to the service of wicked ends. In his discussion of the nature of panourgia, Aristotle also furnishes us with the philosophical term hexis which well describes the settled state of Odysseus' character defect depicted in the drama. In this way Aristotle confirms the

incorrigible nature of the character of Odysseus whom the tragedian depicts as invariably employing his formidable powers with a view to wicked ends. We shall see then that we must look to the son of Achilles for an example of a richer and more authentic paradigm of what it means to make a choice, take responsibility for that choice and exercise authentic human agency.

CHAPTER 5

CHOICE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN SOPHOCLES AND ARISTOTLE: THE CHARACTER OF NEOPTOLEMUS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw how the figure of Odysseus acted as a sort of anti-type, an example of inauthentic human agency. In this chapter we turn to the character of Neoptolemus as a fine example of excellent human agency. It is in the character of Neoptolemus that we can see that many of the themes of Sophocles' and Aristotle's anthropology come together and are brought to fruition in the profound choice which the son of Achilles makes. Thus, through the figure of Neoptolemus, we witness excellent deliberation that is directed toward a good end; a mature individual who assumes personal responsibility for his acts; and the integration of reason and emotion that results in excellent choice. Thus, Neoptolemus achieves the harmonious integration of the various elements of his psyche that we have been arguing is an essential ingredient to the attainment of authentic human agency.

Once again, the use of examples as a mode of moral education would be viewed by someone working in the Kantian tradition as of dubious worth. This is because of the

abstract nature of the Kantian conception of moral philosophy in which nothing empirical can contribute to an understanding of what our duty is. The demand for the sort of standard that admits of no exceptions is, it would seem to me, an unreasonable one and does not take into account, as the ancient view clearly does, the contingent character of ethics. The ancients had a healthy sense that things in the human realm held only "for the most part" and that, in this way, it would be entirely appropriate to appeal to a particular individual as a standard for living the moral life.

In addition, the Kantian conception of the moral agent would not see that the profound psychological integration that Neoptolemus achieves (and that is represented by Aristotle's prohairesis) would be of any significance with respect to his excellence as a moral agent. Kant shows his indifference to the moral significance of such integration in the way that he tends to accept the notion that reason and inclination are in conflict and that the latter will have to be overcome by the former in order that one's duty may be carried out. This is in marked contrast to the ideal of the well-integrated individual that we see in the ancient model. Thus, the ancient anthropology does more justice to the whole person by seeing such integration into an unconflicted whole as an excellence and understanding that the one who acts from this state has made a greater moral achievement than the one who must overcome himself.

As a corollary to this anthropology I have employed the poet to furnish us with the affective and immediate aspects of human experience, while the philosopher will provide us with a logos which will serve to explain and unify the various phenomena that the dramatist furnishes. Let us take a closer look at this before proceeding to our formal analysis.

Sophocles situates the son of Achilles in the interesting position at the mid-point between the character of Odysseus, who consistently uses the verb of external necessity, dei, and the character of Philoctetes, who consistently employs the verb of internal necessity, chre. Under the influence of Odysseus, Neoptolemus at first shuns personal responsibility and employs some of the very same language which Odysseus does throughout the play (dei, verbal adjectives of necessity), but, unlike Odysseus, he becomes painfully aware of the incongruity that exists between this irresponsibility and his own sense of personal integrity and justice. The great skill of the dramatist is revealed as Neoptolemus' moral awakening is signaled not only by how his actions change but also by the way that he rejects the characteristically Odyssean practice of hiding behind such vague abstractions as "necessity" and "expediency" or by denying personal responsibility through a lame appeal to one's superiors. Sophocles powerfully depicts the way in which Neoptolemus' moral bewilderment forces him into a long and wrenching silence in which he painfully deliberates about what he is to do. This

deliberation results in a profound decision to undo the wrong which he now knows and feels that he did by obtaining Philoctetes' bow by deception. His decision sets him at odds with his former "teacher" Odysseus, but he boldly opposes him armed with a new conception of what is just, wise and good (Phil. 1244-1251). Neoptolemus will no longer countenance Odysseus' justice of expediency and irresponsibility but acts now with a tremendous sense of moral responsibility and in accordance with a conception of justice which respects the integrity of Philoctetes. Sophocles shows us furthermore that the son of Achilles achieves a new and powerful sense of his own moral identity through the making of his decision. His former hesitation and uncertainty are gone and he acts with a refreshing sense of urgency and boldness. Whereas formerly he was in emotional turmoil, we see that now he has become reconciled to himself and is no longer a victim of his own remorse. We witness a young man who is now self-assured and no longer bullied by the force of Odysseus' personality or rhetorical finesse. He has literally grown up on stage.

It will be my contention in this chapter that Aristotle's concept of choice or deliberate decision (prohairesis) bears many resemblances to what Sophocles depicts through the character of Neoptolemus in his play. His searching analysis of the nature of prohairesis and its relationship to moral virtue will aid us in coming to a philosophical understanding of the choice which the character Neoptolemus makes. Most

notably in this connection we shall appreciate the role of deliberation, the moral maturity and responsibility that true decisions involve as well as how right decisions are motivated by emotion which is in harmony with reason (EN 1139a25f.). This latter is, for Aristotle and Sophocles, complete and authentic human agency. Neoptolemus struggles throughout much of the play to make a choice and to claim responsibility for both his choice and his moral identity. This is reflected in the emotional pain and shame that he feels for Philoctetes (Phil. 902-3) as well as in his struggle to employ the term chre, which, as we have argued above, is indicative of a person's choosing a certain course of action and identifying one's purposes with it as opposed to seeing a course of action as imposed upon one. By the close of the play Neoptolemus' earlier hesitancy is gone and Sophocles shows us that Neoptolemus' deliberate decision enables him to act boldly on behalf of justice and friendship in opposition to Odysseus' scheme of ethical expediency.

5.2 Claiming Responsibility And The Pain Of Deliberation

Sophocles graphically illustrates Neoptolemus' struggle to throw off the nefarious influence of Odysseus and to claim responsibility for his actions in the scene shortly after Philoctetes regains consciousness from his attack. It is here that he says that his usual way or manner (ethos) will "set him straight." Neoptolemus cries out in pain, "papai" and for the first time in the play uses chre, "I don't know which way

I should turn my faltering words" (ouk oid' hopoi chre taporon trepein epos, Phil. 897). He is on the verge of disclosing to Philoctetes the real story with regard to their destination and so is about to put an end to the use of deceit (dolos) in favor of employing persuasion (peitho). In short, he is attempting to take some measure of responsibility for what he intends to do with Philoctetes. But he is in terrible pain (tout' aniomai palai, Phil. 906, 913), is utterly ashamed of himself (aischros phanoumai, Phil. 906) and cannot determine which course of action to take (oh Zeu ti draso;, Phil. 908). At last he determines that he will no longer hide the truth from Philoctetes (ouden se krupso, Phil. 915) but he couches the entire revelation in characteristically Odyssean terms of external necessity: Philoctetes must sail to Troy (dei gar es Troian se plein, Phil. 915); a Great Necessity ordains that these things happen (polle kratei/ touton ananke, Phil. 921-22). When Philoctetes demands his bow back from Neoptolemus with whom he has entrusted it, he is met with these harsh words:

> It is not possible to do so, for justice and expediency make me listen to those who are in power (all' ouch hoion te ton gar en telei kluein/ to t' endikon me kai to sumpheron poei, Phil. 925-6).[1]

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[1]It is interesting to see Neoptolemus using the language of Thrasymachus in Republic I in order to justify his actions. According to Thrasymachus, justice is whatever is expedient (to sumpheron) for the stronger. But Neoptolemus is clearly no Thrasymachus in character. Whatever he may say at this point is not at all in accord with what he is feeling. It seems to me that he is employing this kind of language as a kind of shield against the persistent feelings that he is

These appeals to necessity are as we have seen, characteristic of Odysseus and his way of describing moral situations.

The present passage is interesting in the way that it echoes 385-388. We argued that the earlier passage represented Neoptolemus' covert attempt to excuse not Odysseus but himself from culpability in what he was doing. He says that he does not lay the blame so much upon Odysseus as those in power (hos tous en telei, Phil. 385) inasmuch as the entire polis is under their jurisdiction and thus, he concludes, the unruly (hoi akosmountes, Phil. 387) are wicked because of the instruction of their teachers. In this way Neoptolemus, under the guise of exonerating Odysseus, frees himself from responsibility. Presently, we see Neoptolemus doing practically the same thing with the significant difference of being all but incapable of maintaining the lie. We can tell that this is so inasmuch as in the former passage Sophocles has Neoptolemus procede blithely from his lying tale to a covert justification of his action by means of exculpating Odysseus. In the present passage Sophocles precedes Neoptolemus' appeals to these Odyssean abstractions of necessity with a declaration of disgust at himself for having abandoned his nature in order to become engaged in a scheme which does violence to his moral identity (hapanta duschereia ten hautou phusin/hotan lipon tis

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having for Philoctetes which are interfering with his ability to carry out Odysseus' scheme. He is trying to maintain Odyssean "objectivity" even as his desire to maintain this position is faltering and will (eventually) prove to be untenable.

dra ta me proseikota, Phil. 902-903). In this way, the tragedian shows us that the son of Achilles is at the breaking point and his appeals to such Odyssean standards as necessity and expediency are a last ditch effort to avoid facing himself and, ultimately, the broken man whom he has betrayed (Phil. 923-924).

It is during Neoptolemus' painful silences that he is deliberating upon the fundamental change of purpose which he will make at the close of the play. Sophocles indicates this effectively through the way in which Neoptolemus' silences are punctuated with sudden exclamations of bewilderment as to what he should do (Phil. 908, 969, 974). Neoptolemus is pondering over his course of action in a very complex situation and Sophocles shows us that this sort of soul searching evokes pain, confusion and silence. When Philoctetes begs Neoptolemus not to take away the bow which sustains him, he groans in despair because the son of Achilles will no longer speak to him but looks away as if the young man will never give it up (all' oude prosphonei m' eti/ all' hos metheson mepoth' hod' hora palin, Phil. 934-5, cf. also 950-1). Philoctetes imploringly commands Neoptolemus to become himself again (alla nun et' en sautou genou, Phil. 950) but, receiving no answer (ti phes; siopas, Phil. 951), sinks into despair (ouden eim' ho dusmoros, Phil. 951). The Chorus, too, is in a state of confusion (aporia) and asserts that everything, its sailing off or acceding to Philoctetes' pleas, is up to

Neoptolemus (en soi, Phil. 963). Neoptolemus is beginning to see that he can no longer continue to make empty appeals to Necessity (Phil. 921-922) or expediency (Phil. 926) in order to excuse himself from making a responsible decision. The simplistic, non-commital, amoral stance of the son of Laertes has become untenable. In one of the most moving lines of the play, Neoptolemus cries out (in the grammatical form of unattainable wish) that he is so distressed with the situation he is in that he wishes he had never left his home in Scyros (oimoi ti draso; me pot' ophelon lipein/ ten Skuron houto tois parousin achthomai, Phil. 969-70). In this way Sophocles points to the fact that Neoptolemus knows that he must make a fundamental decision and in his confusion and pain he expresses the nostalgic wish that he had never left Scyros, had morally speaking never been confronted with the need to make the sort of painful, adult decision that is part of being morally responsible.[2] Regarding the decision which he knows he must make very seriously, Neoptolemus utters the painful question, "What do we do men?" (ti dromen andres;, Phil. 974), and then falls into silence for the next one hundred lines of the play, one of the most anguished and significant silences in all of Greek tragedy.[3]

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[2]See Blundell, "The Phusis of Neoptolemus," 141.

[3]See Kitto, Form and Meaning, pp. 123-124. Kitto makes the excellent suggestion that Neoptolemus should be placed at center stage with the bow in his hand for the hundred lines in which he is silent. By being placed strategically between Odysseus and Philoctetes like this, the pain of Neoptolemus'

The response of Philoctetes at this point in the play is interesting and instructive with regard to the issues of choice, responsibility and moral virtue. It may be the last thing that Neoptolemus should hear now (inasmuch as he is struggling to take personal responsibility for his actions), but Philoctetes does not blame the young man for what he has done, but blames Odysseus. Because of Neoptolemus' hesitancy and pain Philoctetes knows that the son of Achilles has not acted wickedly from a settled disposition. He is sensitive to the fact that the young man is still, as it were, in the process of formation and so retains faith in his fundamental goodness of character. He says to Neoptolemus:

> You are not wicked, but you seem to have come [here] having learned disgraceful things at the hands of wicked men. But now, having given shameful things to others to whom it belongs, sail away. (ouk ei kakos su pros kakon d' andron mathon/ eoikas hekein aischra. nun d' alloisi dous/ hoi' eikos ekplei, Phil. 971-973.)

Though Philoctetes knows that Neoptolemus has done shameful things, he still affirms that the young man is unworthy of the likes of Odysseus (anaxion men sou, Phil. 1009). Similarly, he hesitates to curse the young man with destruction (oloio me po, Phil. 961), as he does continually of Odysseus and the Atreidae, because he still retains the hope that Neoptolemus will change his mind and repent (gnomen metoiseis, Phil. 962, both notions are contained in this expression).

By having Philoctetes distinguish a particular action

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deliberations, the urgency of making a choice and the pathos of his situation will be most effectively brought forth.

which an agent may perform from his general moral make-up Sophocles demonstrates a profound understanding of the nature of moral virtue. What he is pointing to here is the notion that the virtues are certain qualitative dispositions which cannot be destroyed (or even fully disclosed) through a single action but are developed and revealed through the kinds of choices, actions and commitments that an individual characteristically makes. In this way, Philoctetes not only understands and legitimately excuses Neoptolemus' behavior, he focuses upon the significant choice which the son of Achilles has yet to make inasmuch as he points to the promise that has not yet been extinguished in the character of Neoptolemus by the wicked actions he has committed.[4] He understands that those actions have not yet taken up permanent residence in the soul of Neoptolemus. It is to that choice that we shall now turn.

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[4]Philoctetes, who has an adamantine sense of self, is completely in character by calling attention to the choice which the son of Achilles has yet to make. If Odysseus seeks to hide from himself and Neoptolemus is seeking to define himself, Philoctetes boldly asserts himself and the direction of his will, even when there are no options left to him. In complete opposition to Odysseus he almost always (excepting those times when it is not grammatically feasible) employs chre over dei. When he realizes that he has been duped by Neoptolemus and that the son of Achilles will not return his bow, he cries out, "What should I do?" (ti chre me dran;, Phil. 949) as if he still retained some sort of say in the matter. The most striking instance of his use of chre comes in his response to Odysseus at line 999. Odysseus has just told Philoctetes that he must (dei) capture Troy and raze it to the ground by force, and Philoctetes responds that he will never do so not even if he must (chre) suffer death (oudepote g' oud' en chre me pan pathein kakon).

5.3 Neoptolemus' Choice

Although Sophocles never actually portrays Neoptolemus making his decision it is clear that he has made a profound choice when he returns to the stage with Odysseus. Odysseus refers to Neoptolemus deliberating about something new (mon ti bouleue neon;, Phil. 1229), but it is quite apparent that whatever deliberating there has been has already taken place. Neoptolemus has made a fundamental choice and this has come as a result of the lonely and agonizing deliberation which preceded his decision (Phil. 897, 906, 908, 913). We sense, too, that something has happened to Neoptolemus. He is much more assured of himself. He knows his mind and his earlier hesitancy has vanished. Somehow, through the prior struggle and the deliberate decision which has issued forth from that struggle, the son of Achilles has achieved a certain coherence of character which he formerly lacked. In this final scene of the Philoctetes we witness both how Neoptolemus' decision has shaped who he is, or perhaps better, who he has become and we see how this very decision has put an end to the confusion and inner division that has plagued him ever since he encountered Philoctetes. Neoptolemus is no longer victimized by his own inner discord (Phil. 897, 902-903, 969-970, 1011-1012), but has, through the purposeful choice that he has resolved upon, brought about an inner reconciliation and concord where formerly, there was only strife and discord.

The profundity and moral maturity of the choice that has

been made are brilliantly depicted by Sophocles through the evident reversal of role that has taken place between Odysseus and Neoptolemus.[5] It was formerly Odysseus who initiated action and utterly dominated the young man (Phil. 50-57, 77-85, 96-99, 111), but now Neoptolemus holds the reins and Odysseus breathlessly tries to keep pace with him wondering anxiously what the son of Achilles will do next (Phil. 1222-1223, 1229). Neoptolemus asserts that by returning the bow he will undo (luson, Phil. 1224) the unjust and disgraceful harm (Phil. 1234) that he has committed against Philoctetes (Phil. 1232). Odysseus, who is morally incapable of understanding Neoptolemus' motives, asks whether the young man is mocking him by saying these things (Phil. 1235). Neoptolemus elegantly responds, "Yes, if to speak the truth is mockery" (ei kertomesis esti talethe legein, Phil. 1236). Nowhere is the complete moral turn around[6] of Neoptolemus more finely

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[5]See Kamerbeek, The Plays of Sophocles, p. 166. Kamerbeek's comments on this passage (Phil. 1225-28, 1230-33) are relevant in showing how Sophocles heightens the sense of haste and moral urgency by his use of stichomythia: "Instance of syntactically closely knit stichomythia. Again 1230-1233. Hamartia picks up exemarton, hen picks up hamartia and is internal accusative with pithomenos, here the omitted main verb in the first person is replaced by the second person in Odysseus' line 1227 with its object ergon poion, and in Neoptolemus' 1228 helon is predicative adjunct with either <exemarton> or (better) <epraxa ergon hon ou moi prepon>."

[6]Note the powerful metaphorical resonance of Odysseus calling Neoptolemus' return to Philoctetes a "back-turning path" (palintropos keleuthon, Phil. 1222-1223). In this way Sophocles indicates that the path that the son of Achilles is taking is one in which he will attempt to undo the harm and error that he has committed by getting himself involved in Odysseus' scheme (luson hos' exemarton en to prin chrono,

depicted than in the sureness and finesse of this simple response. Neoptolemus asserts that the truth has been spoken and the real story has finally come out (Phil. 1240).[7] The son of Achilles is now a man of bold words as well as bold action. When Odysseus threatens to prevent him with the force of the entire Achaean army, he taunts the son of Laertes (renowned, of course, for his cleverness) for the foolishness of his words (Phil. 1244). Through the newly achieved discovery of his moral identity and the fundamental choice concomitant with that discovery Neoptolemus clearly sees that the claims of justice are more powerful than the clever and manipulative schemes of Odysseus (all' ei dikaia ton sophon kreisso tade, Phil. 1246). The kind of justice that Neoptolemus is appealing to here is clearly quite different from the sort of expediency which Odysseus earlier urged Neoptolemus to pursue by grasping for a "sweet portion of victory" (Phil. 81). With true justice on his side, that is, with a conception of justice which respects the dignity of persons, Neoptolemus proclaims that he does not fear Odysseus and the Greek army but is prepared for whatever the future may bring

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Phil. 1224).

[7]Whereas formerly each time the "whole story" was said to be told or heard it was preface to a lie about to be said or one which had already been spoken (241, 389, 620), now the real "whole story" comes out and it is the logos of Neoptolemus' discovery of his moral identity, his making reparation to Philoctetes for his hamartia and his restoration to the latter's friendship.

(Phil. 1254).[8]

The wisdom and justice that Neoptolemus has achieved through his suffering and fundamental decision is further shown by Sophocles in the way that Neoptolemus completely rejects the former use of deceit (dolos) and force (bia) and turns now to persuasion (peitho) in order to get Philoctetes to leave Lemnos and come to Troy.[9] When Neoptolemus seeks out Philoctetes to return his bow to him he goes bearing words which he demands that Philoctetes hear (logous d' akouson hous heko pheron, Phil. 1267). He claims that Philoctetes has become wild and intractable (egriosai, Phil. 1321) and so rejects and treats as an enemy anyone who may admonish him with even his own best interests in mind (ean te nouthete tis eunoia legon/stugeis polemion dusmene th' hehoumenos, Phil. 1322-1323).

Neoptolemus proceeds to explain to Philoctetes the substance of Helenos' prophecy including the crucial element

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[8]Neoptolemus' remark here, at 1254, esto to mellon, "Let come what may!" is a verbal clue to the moral discovery that has come in and through his struggle and subsequent choice. This phrase seems to be a kind of response to his earlier ito (Phil. 120) which he utters right at the crucial juncture of determining that he would, in fact, give himself over to Odysseus (Phil. 84) and get involved in his scheme to capture Philoctetes' bow through deceit.

[9]The only time that Neoptolemus uses force with Philoctetes is when he physically prevents the latter from killing Odysseus with one of his deadly arrows. Neoptolemus' profound sense of justice is illustrated in this scene when he tells Philoctetes that he prevented him from killing his mortal enemy (Phil. 1302-1303) because it would not be noble for either of them (all' out' emoi tout' estin oute soi kalon, Phil. 1304).

that has up till now been left out, namely, that Philoctetes is not only to win renown on the battlefields of Troy but is to be healed of his terrible illness (nosou bareias, Phil. 1320) by the sons of Asclepius (Phil. 1333-1335). These prophecies were uttered by Helenos, Neoptolemus says, under pain of death (didos' hekon/kteinein heauton en tade pseusthe legon, Phil. 1341-1342). Philoctetes is clearly moved and at the same time distressed by Neoptolemus' sincere appeal. Sophocles indicates that Neoptolemus' discourse, informed by both wisdom and a sense of justice may in fact have won the suffering Philoctetes over if it had been employed from the very beginning. He cries out, "What shall I do?" in exactly the same way that Neoptolemus did earlier when he was in anguish and confusion (Phil. 1350). He wonders how he will be able to refuse to comply with the words of someone who has clearly offered his good will and friendship (Phil. 1350-1351). Sophocles portrays the suffering hero on the very brink of yielding (all' eikatho det';, Phil. 1352) to Neoptolemus' arguments and then putting up an adamantine resistance which Neoptolemus will be incapable of penetrating. Philoctetes asserts that Neoptolemus is trying to hand him over to his enemies (Phil. 1386) and kill him with his arguments (Phil. 1388). The son of Achilles knows now that arguments are futile and that Philoctetes must simply be left to live without the salvation (soteria, Phil. 1396) that could

be his.[10] Philoctetes appeals to Neoptolemus to fulfill the oath he made to him earlier and to take him to his home at Oeta. Neoptolemus consents with the simple words, "If that is what you have decided, let us go" (ei dokei steichomen, Phil. 1402). It is at this moment that Heracles appears.

Neoptolemus shows himself in the end as willing to sacrifice personal martial glory (time) in order to remain true to himself and his suppliant-friend, Philoctetes (Phil. 1397-1402). Although he begins as a naive and impressionable youth who is ready to please even the unscrupulous Odysseus (Phil. 93-94), Neoptolemus goes through the agony of a violated conscience (Phil. 902-903) and achieves his moral identity through a profound decision which reorients his moral horizons. The son of Achilles has literally grown up on stage during the course of the play.

5.4 Choice And Responsibility In Aristotle

In this section I shall set forth a general account of Aristotle's conception of choice (prohairesis) in its relation to moral virtue in order to demonstrate the fundamental similarity between what the Stagirite calls prohairesis and the decision which Neoptolemus makes in the play. I shall

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[10]Again, Sophocles points to the disastrous effects of having used deceit instead of persuasion from the very beginning when we see that Neoptolemus is betrayed by the very lie which he told to Philoctetes earlier. Philoctetes asserts that he cannot understand how Neoptolemus could ask that he fight on behalf of those who robbed him of his father's ancestral gift of honor (hemas t' apeirgein hoi ge sou kathubrisan/patros geras sulontes, Phil. 1364-1365).

focus upon choice, with a briefer discussion of responsibility, because the former concept is more important within the scheme of Aristotle's moral thought and because Aristotle seems to view responsibility as a necessary corollary to his notion of choice. Furnishing a general account of Aristotle's conception of choice is something of a piece-meal undertaking inasmuch as Aristotle scatters his comments about choice throughout the Nicomachean Ethics (with one brief mention of choice in the Poetics). I shall attempt to bring the disparate pieces of his theory together and show how they will furnish us with a philosophical understanding of the choice which the son of Achilles makes near the close of the play.

In close connection with the concept of choice is the emotional and intellectual integration that Aristotle perceives to be operative in the individual who deliberates, chooses and acts well. Thus I shall also discuss in this section the role that Aristotle assigns to practical wisdom in the achievement of this integration of the emotional with the rational half of the psyche. Again it is my contention that tragedian and philosopher are in fundamental agreement that such integration is necessary to excellent choice and the excellent employment of practical intelligence.

The first thing to note about choice is that Aristotle views it as intimately connected with moral virtue.[11] He tells us in Nicomachean Ethics II.5 that the virtues are some kind

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[11]See Sherman, The Fabric of Character, pp. 106-117.

of choice or do not exist without choice (hai d' aretai proaireseis tines e ouk aneu proaireseos, EN 1106a3-4, cf. also EN 1111b5-6). In his comprehensive definition of arete in Book II.6 (EN 1106b36, cf. also EN 1139a22-23), he defines virtue as a hexis prohairetike, a determinate disposition to make deliberate choices or decisions. The ability to make informed and deliberate choices is then, for Aristotle, a sign of maturity and moral virtue. Making choices is an adult affair; it is not for children (EN 1111b8-10). But this is predicated upon the prior admission that virtue or excellence as well as vice depend upon ourselves and that we are responsible for the kind of persons that we are becoming through our actions.[12] Aristotle puts the matter this way:

> Virtue is in our power (eph' hemin, EN 1113b6) and likewise vice. For where it is in our power to act, it is also in our power not to act, and where we can say "no," we can also say "yes." Therefore, if we have the power to act where it is noble to act, we also have the power not to act where not to act is base; and conversely, if we have the power not to act where inaction is noble, we also have the power to act where action is base. But if we have the power to act nobly or basely, and likewise the power not to act, and if such action or inaction constitutes our being good and evil, we must conclude that it depends on us whether we are decent or worthless individuals . . . . If we do not accept that, we must contradict the conclusions at which we have just arrived, and must deny that man is the source and begetter of his actions as a father is of his children. (EN 1113b6-19.)[13]

The person who chooses is fully aware that he is responsible

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[12]As we have already seen, this is precisely what the character of Odysseus implicitly denies, namely, that he is a responsible agent.

[13]Ostwald, p. 65.

for the characteristics (hexeis) which he is developing within himself as a result of his actions. He knows that he is, as Aristotle puts it, the source and begetter of his actions (cf. also EE 1223a2-19).

The issue of personal responsibility is closely linked to another central aspect of making a choice for Aristotle and that is personally identifying oneself with what one has chosen.[14] Aristotle mentions this twice in his discussion of the nature of moral virtue at EN II.4 and VI.12. In both places he states that it is a critical part of what it means to be morally virtuous that we choose to act the way that we do and choose that course of action for its own intrinsic nobility (houtos hos eoiken esti to pos echonta prattein hekasta host' einai agathon lego d' hoion dia proairesin kai auton heneka ton prattomenon, EN 1144a17-20).[15] Thus choice, for Aristotle, involves the presence of moral virtue inasmuch as it implies centrally a morally responsible agent who claims responsibility for who she is becoming through the actions which she performs as well as someone who personally identifies herself with the actions or endeavors which she chooses. In this way then character, as Aristotle tells us,

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[14]This is especially important with respect to understanding what an agent's real motive or intention is. It is because of this personal identification of the agent with the the action chosen that Aristotle says that choice is a more reliable criterion for judging character than actions are (EN 1111b6).

[15]See Stewart, Notes, 2:224-225.

is revealed by the choices we make (estin de ethos men to toiouton ho deloi ten proairesin, Poetics, 1450b8-9) and is, in turn, formed and further articulated by those very choices (EN 1112a1-3).

Since choice entails determining the course of action which will best promote one's own (and the community's) flourishing as well as taking full responsibility for that which has been chosen it involves some form of reflective deliberation antecedent to the making of such a decision. Hence Aristotle states that choice is the result of preceding deliberation (to probebouleumenon, EN 1112a15, literally, "the having been deliberated upon beforehand" from the perfect passive participle). While choice is the result of preceding deliberation, deliberation is not the only factor, but also desire (orexis bouleutike, EN 1113a9).[16] As such it "is on the borderline between the intellectual and passional, partaking of both natures: it can be described as either desiderative deliberation or deliberative desire."[17] Aristotle states this again in a different form in Nicomachean Ethics VI.2 where he states that choice is either desiring intellect or intellectual desire (dio e orektikos nous he proairesis e orexis dianoetike, EN 1139b4-5). In choices that are good, reason must be true and desire correct (dei dia tauta men ton

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[16]See H. H. Joachim, The Nicomachean Ethics (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 101.

[17]See Nussbaum, Fragility of Goodness, pp. 307-308.

te logon alethe einai kai ten orexin orthen eiper he proairesis spoudaia, EN 1139a23-25); that is, reason must affirm and desire pursue the same things.[18] Good choices then arise within the person of whom the emotional and desiderative elements are in harmony with the rational part of his psyche. This is, in effect, what Aristotle was getting at when he stated in Nicomachean Ethics I.13 that, for the virtuous person, all things speak with the same voice as that of reason (panta gar homophonei to logo, EN 1102b28). Let us take a more detailed look at Aristotle's conception of the role of reason in the achievement of virtue in order that we may come to a better understanding of the kind of integration of the emotional and desiderative elements with the rational that are part of choosing, feeling and acting in accordance with virtue.

5.5 Practical Reason, Emotion And Action In Aristotle

When Aristotle takes up the definition of virtue in its genus at Nicomachean Ethics II.5, he proposes three different things present in the soul as possible candidates: emotions (pathe), capacities (dunameis) and characteristics (hexeis). By emotions he means such things as anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy and so on (EN 1105b22). A capacity Aristotle defines as that by which we are said to be affected by such emotions as listed above, i.e., the potentiality to feel anger

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[18]See Stewart, Notes, 2:24-25.

or fear or joy (EN 1105b23-24). Characteristics are the condition, either good or bad, in which we are in relation to our emotions (kath' has pros ta pathe echomen eu e kakos, EN 1105b25-26). Aristotle rejects the raw emotion as a candidate for virtue because a person is neither praised nor blamed, he says, for expressing fear or anger pure and simple (ho haplos orgizomenos, EN 1105b33-1106a1), but only for expressing such emotions in a certain way (all' ho pos, EN 1106a1). Furthermore, he says, in the case of the emotions we are said to be moved (kata men ta pathe kineisthai legometha, EN 1106a4-5), but with respect to our virtues and vices we are not said to be moved but to be disposed in a certain way (ou kineisthai alla diakeisthai pos, EN 1106a6). Aristotle also rejects the capacity to feel emotions as a candidate for virtue because he asserts again that we are neither praised nor blamed for our capacity to feel certain emotions but only for a certain developed disposition with respect to our emotional life (EN 1106a6-9). He states, furthermore, that our capacities have been given to us by nature and that we do not develop by nature into good or bad people but only through moral education. In this way then Aristotle is left with virtue being a characteristic (hexis), namely, a certain determinate disposition with respect to one's emotional life.[19] Now that he has defined virtue in general terms as a qualitative disposition with respect to our emotions (and actions),

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[19]Ibid., 1:187-188.

Aristotle proceeds to specify what sort of characteristic this is. It is here that we shall see more clearly how reason conditions and directs emotional response.

When Aristotle stated earlier that we are praised and blamed for expressing emotion in a certain way (EN 1106a1) and that virtues and vices are being disposed in a certain way with respect to our emotions (EN 1106a6), he provided an important clue as to the specific kind of characteristic a virtue is. We are disposed poorly toward the emotion of anger if we express this feeling either too violently or too timidly in accordance with the situation (ei men sphodros e aneimenos kakos echomen, EN 1105b27). We are disposed well with respect to anger if we respond with appropriate intensity given both the context of the situation and our own temperamental makeup (EN 1105b27-28). The latter point is what it means to achieve the relative mean with respect to emotion (to de meson zetei kai touth haireitai meson de ou to tou pragmatos alla to pros hemas, EN 1106b6-7). Thus Aristotle says that it is possible to experience fear, confidence, anger and many other kinds of emotions in an inappropriate fashion given both the context and our temperament, but to experience all this:

> . . . at the right time, toward the right objects, toward the right people, for the right reason, and in the right manner--that is the median and the best course, the course that is a mark of virtue. (EN 1106b21-24.)[20]

Thus virtue, according to Aristotle, is a determinate disposi-

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[20]Ostwald, p. 43.

tion to feel (and to act) in such a way as is fitting to the situation given both the context and our own temperament (hitting the relative mean, EN 1107a1). This excellent expression of feeling and action is determined by reason or in whatever way the practically wise person would determine it (horismene logo kai ho an ho phronimos horiseien, EN 1107a1-2). In this way then we can see that there is an intimate connection between the role of reason and the achieving of the relative mean in feeling and action.

Thus, Aristotle holds that the emotional and desiderative part of the soul requires the assistance and guidance of reason in order that feelings and desires may be expressed appropriately and the good carried out excellently in the ever-varying situations of human life.[21] It is the role of practical wisdom (phronesis or orthos logos) to perceive the salient features of a given situation and to determine the appropriate emotional response as well as the most fitting action given the context and the individual's temperamental

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[21]See Yves Simon, The Definition of Moral Virtue (New York, Fordham University Press, 1986), pp. 96-98. Simon sees that it is the special capacity of practical wisdom to determine the appropriate course of action no matter how unprecedented the circumstances or unique the situation.

Neoptolemus' deliberate decision to oppose Odysseus and return Philoctetes' bow and his election to persuade Philoctetes to come to Troy (having finally rejected the use of deceit and violence) can be seen as an excellent exercising of his practical intelligence inasmuch as he is acting and feeling in accordance with virtue in what is surely for him a unique and unprecedented circumstance.

makeup.[22]

Aristotle further emphasizes the centrality of the role of practical wisdom in the attainment of moral virtue in Nicomachean Ethics VI.13. In the previous chapter he shows that without moral virtue practical wisdom would be nothing more than a "certain cunning capacity for linking means to any end rather than to those ends which are genuine goods for man."[23] In this chapter he shows what would happen to moral virtue if it lacked the assistance of this "eye of the soul," practical wisdom (EN 1144a29-30). And just as in the previous chapter he compared practical wisdom to the "cunning capacity" of cleverness (deinotes, EN 1144a24-25), so also in this chapter he compares natural virtue to virtue in the full sense.[24] Aristotle states that various kinds of character inhere in all of us in a certain way by nature (huparchein phusei pos, EN 1144b4-5). Thus, we have a certain tendency to be just, temperate and courageous from birth (euthus ek genetes, EN 1144b6). Still he insists, we seek something more, that is, the good in a more authoritative sense and the

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[22]See Nussbaum, Fragility of Goodness, pp. 290-317.

[23]MacIntyre, After Virtue, p. 154.

[24]The overall scheme of both chapters is to show the interdependence of the two, namely, how practical wisdom requires the virtues in order to be itself and not the counterfeit form of practical wisdom which Aristotle names cleverness. Similarly, virtue in the full and authoritative (kurios) sense requires practical wisdom in order to be itself and not the mere unanchored proclivity toward appropriate action and passion which he terms natural virtue.

possession of these character traits in another way (all' homos zetoumen heteron ti to kurios agathon kai ta toiauta allon tropon huparchein, EN 1144b6-8). Aristotle notes that children and beasts have these natural qualities but without intelligence they can be harmful (all' aneu nou blaberai phainontai ousai, EN 1144b9). Thus natural virtue without the assistance of practical wisdom is like a powerful body which because it moves without sight is bound to be tripped up and to come down with a mighty fall because of its lack of vision (hosper somati ischuro aneu opseos kinoumeno sumbainei sphallesthai ischuros dia to me echein opsin houto kai entautha, EN 1144b10-12).[25] The presence of intelligence, however, makes all the difference with respect to action and transforms the natural characteristic into that virtue in the full and authoritative sense which it formerly only resembled (EN 1144b13-14).[26] In this way then Aristotle argues most

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[25]It is interesting to note here Aristotle's use of the verb sphallo, a term regularly used of wrestlers who attempt to throw each other down by tripping. Anyone who has wrestled knows that success is not only a matter of innate strength but requires excellent judgment as to when and how to pursue and avoid (to put it in Aristotelian terms). Failure to develop and exercise this kind of perception will inevitably end in a serious fall.

[26]See MacIntyre, After Virtue, p. 154: "As we transform our initial naturally given dispositions into virtues of character, we do so by gradually coming to exercise those dispositions kata ton orthon logon. The exercise of intelligence is what makes the crucial difference between a natural disposition of a certain kind and the corresponding virtue."
My position with regard to the relationship of practical wisdom to moral virtue is in agreement with MacIntyre (cited above), Richard Sorabji, "Aristotle on the Role of Intellect

explicitly that complete virtue is not possible without the assistance of practical wisdom (houto kai epi tou ethikou duo esti to men arete phusike to d' he kuria kai touton he kuria ou ginetai aneu phroneseos, EN 1144b15-17). Practical wisdom is thus a kind of practical seeing or sight without which we cannot hit the median in feelings and action in any consistent or reliable sort of way. It is only in cooperation with this "eye of the soul" that the moral virtues will be exercised in an effective way.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that the figure of Neop-

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in Virtue" in Essays On Aristotle's Ethics, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1980) pp. 210-218 and Stewart, Notes, 2:107-110 who are all in agreement that moral virtue in the complete sense cannot be achieved without the assistance of practical wisdom. The position here defended is in opposition to the view of Fortenbaugh, Aristotle on Emotion, pp. 70-75, who holds that certain virtues (in the full sense) can be attained without the vision which practical wisdom provides. Fortenbaugh rests his case (too heavily it seems to me) upon the consideration of a peculiar case with respect to the virtue of courage. He argues that it is Aristotle's position that excellent (i.e. courageous) response to sudden dangers does not require deliberation but can be referred wholly to the "stochastic perfection" of the "alogical half of the soul." It seems to me that Fortenbaugh underestimates the interdependence of practical wisdom and moral virtue which Aristotle sees as ultimately enmeshed or co-implicated in each other (cf. especially EN VI.12 and 13). Furthermore, it seems to me that it is possible to deny that every action needs to be immediately preceded by deliberation without asserting that such an action stems wholly from the excellence of the alogical half of the soul. MacIntyre suggests that rational action (e.g., courageous response to sudden dangers) may be based upon "long previous deliberation." See MacIntyre, Whose Justice, p. 135.

tolemus achieves authentic human agency through assuming mature responsibility for his own actions and making a choice which gives evidence of excellent deliberation and the attainment of psychic harmony. In this way, it has been my contention that the character of Neoptolemus is an excellent expression of the ancient anthropology which we have been exploring. We not only see operative all of the various elements of the human psyche which the ancients saw as part of the moral agent but we see how they can constitute a harmonious whole as they are exercised by the virtuous person. I have also noted the way in which modern moral philosophy in the Kantian tradition disparages the employment of examples as a form of moral education and devalues the moral significance of the achievement of such psychological integration in action. Again, this I would say is due to its wrongheaded predeliction for the abstract over the concrete and its truncated conception of the moral agent in which the significance of the other elements of the psyche (besides reason) to the formation of the moral agent are ignored.

Though the poet and the philosopher are in fundamental agreement with respect to their conception of the moral person each employs his own particular medium for exploring this issue in a way that enriches the other's insights. This is a corollary of the thesis that I have been developing. They see the same truths but as refracted through two different lenses, the one through poetry and the other through philo-

sophy. The philosopher furnishes us with a technical vocabulary through which he describes the process and the components of decision-making. In addition, he furnishes us (in his discussion of choice) with a nuanced and subtle moral psychology in which excellent choice is seen as grounded in the complete integration of the emotional and desiderative elements of the soul with the rational part. This unconflicted and integrated psyche is, for Aristotle, characteristic of moral virtue in general. It is this person whose emotions and desires are most in accord with the dictates of reason. While Aristotle, as a philosopher, furnishes us with an analysis of these topics, Sophocles, the poet, shows us through the medium of character what making a choice and taking responsibility for that decision might look and feel like. In this way the poet does not give us analysis but a moving portrayal of the phenomena. One of the things which the poet makes very clear is that the process of deliberation and the actual making of a choice is (or at least can be) a very painful process. This is something which Aristotle does not sufficiently emphasize and which may be the peculiar part of a tragic poet to reveal. Sophocles' powerful portrayal of the character of Neoptolemus shows us a young man who is in the throes of agony as a result of trying to discern what to do and to embrace his decision. Both philosopher and tragedian are in close agreement that the emotions and reason are not fundamentally at odds with each other but are capable of

working together in harmony with a view to achieving the good. But the poet is peculiarly suited to show the power of this thesis inasmuch he portrays a character who suffers internal discord and then achieves a remarkable resolution in and through the choice that he makes. In this way we witness both the confusion and paralysis of Neoptolemus' psychic civil war and the boldness and wisdom of words and deeds that stem from a man who has now become profoundly at one with himself. Sophocles shows us what excellent and mature human agency is all about through the depiction of his character Neoptolemus. When we look to the character of Neoptolemus we can fully understand why Aristotle asserts that the making of a choice is not for children but is an adult affair.

CHAPTER 6

FRIENDSHIP AND THE MORAL LIFE IN SOPHOCLES AND ARISTOTLE

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall argue that Sophocles and Aristotle share a fundamental sense that the moral life is not something that can be achieved alone. Both poet and philosopher show us that the life of virtue is not a solitary enterprise but involves the presence of friendships that are based upon shared values and a mutual sympathy and care for the friend for his own sake. The ancients viewed friendship as an essential part of ethics because they were fundamentally pre-occupied with the issue of character and understood that the sort of person one would become is closely connected with those with whom one associated. They clearly appreciated the way in which friends are both an expression of one's character and have a formative influence upon one's character. Since the question of character was viewed as intimately connected with the issue of happiness, the ancients rightly understood friends to be an important element in whether one led a fulfilled or frustrated life.

Modern moral philosophy stemming from Kant, on the other hand, shows scant appreciation of the social character of an individual's growth into personhood. This is so because of

Kant's pre-occupation with establishing the moral autonomy of the person and the illegitimacy of being governed by any other principle in the fulfillment of one's duty. Given this focus upon autonomy as the only viable mode of acting morally it is no wonder that Kant has so little room for the vital role of the other in his conception of moral philosophy. It would seem to me that the ancients would have viewed this as a peculiarly abstract and untenable position that simply ignores the very real way in which friends have a formative influence upon who we are and the quality of the lives that we lead.

Sophocles will present his case for the centrality of what I shall call friendship of character in his presentation of the perilous and uncertain course of the relationship between Neoptolemus and Philoctetes. In this regard, the poet employs Philoctetes' bow as the central symbol which mirrors the state of their relationship. At the very beginning of the play, Sophocles shows us the shallow nature of Neoptolemus' stance toward the suffering hero when the young man's interest in Philoctetes is nothing more than a means to the end of getting his bow. He is, of course, at this time under the guidance and tutelage of the wily Odysseus. By means of deceit, the son of Achilles enters into a friendship with Philoctetes and is even entrusted with the sacred bow which he received from Heracles.

It is evident, however, that the basis of their friendship is a sham and is doomed to be exposed and break apart.

The basis of this relationship must be changed and placed upon a foundation of mutual trust if it is ever to bear fruit. This is precisely what Sophocles shows us in the course of the play. Through his compassion and friendship for Philoctetes the son of Achilles determines, heroically, to return the bow which he stole from his friend. As a result, he earns for himself the opposition of Odysseus and the potential wrath of the entire Greek army. By having the son of Achilles return the bow to its rightful owner Sophocles now makes it possible for a true and genuine friendship to be established between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus. Neoptolemus' use of persuasion instead of deceit in his attempts to convince Philoctetes to go to Troy and fight on behalf of the Greeks signifies that the son of Achilles is attempting to initiate a different kind of relationship with Philoctetes, one that will be based upon openness and mutual respect. But Philoctetes' suspicions and (most especially) his hatred of the Greeks has not subsided and thus Sophocles appeals to a friend whose words the broken hero will find irresistable: that friend is none other than Heracles.

Through the epiphany of Heracles, Sophocles ratifies the friendship between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus by showing that they are to share a common destiny. In Heracles the relationship between the bow as the symbol of the friendship between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus comes full circle and is referred back to its origin in the act of friendship for which Philoc-

tetes first received the bow from the hero. It is through the theophany of Heracles that Sophocles shows us that true friendship must be based upon mutual trust and understanding and that such a friendship, alone, can serve as the basis of the heroic destiny which Neoptolemus and Philoctetes will share. Thus, the openness and friendship that was begun by Neoptolemus is sanctioned by the god-friend Heracles. And it is in this way that the tragedian indicates that true friendship is that which is based upon a love of and a concern for the character of the beloved. This kind of friendship can have nothing to do with the deceit, secrecy and treachery which Neoptolemus practiced upon Philoctetes. The god comes to show that it is only in friendship that is founded upon fidelity to and a genuine concern for the other that great things can be accomplished.

Aristotle, also, deeply shares a sense of the centrality of friendship in living the good life. He holds that friendship is most necessary to life and that no one could bear to live without friends even if she had all other external goods. Of the three different kinds of friendship discussed (based on use, pleasure or good character), Aristotle repeatedly stresses the importance of friendship based upon love of the other's character as critical to a flourishing life. It is this form of friendship that Aristotle understands to be the central case or instance of what it means to be a friend.

Here, friendship becomes a "moral enterprise"[1] inasmuch as it is only in this kind of relationship that the character of the other is the ground of the friendship and continuous activity in accordance with virtue is the fruit and sustenance of the friends' love for each other. Aristotle holds, in fact, that we cannot become good without these kinds of friendships in our lives and that we cannot hope to achieve any adequate understanding of ourselves without this highest and best kind of relationship.

Once again, we shall see that it is the great strength and peculiar contribution of the poet to furnish a dramatic presentation of the theme which is under discussion. He shows us characters who are in a particular relationship with each other and how that relationship is shattered by the revelation of Neoptolemus' deceit and then re-established upon foundations where authentic friendship may truly flourish. Sophocles shows us how Neoptolemus originally treats Philoctetes as a mere means to another end, but then, when his friendship with the son of Poeas has become authentic, how he is willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of his friend. Sophocles further exalts friendship when Philoctetes' intransigence to the appeals of his human friend, Neoptolemus, gives way to the words of his divine friend, Heracles.

In this way, Sophocles furnishes us with the phenomena,

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[1]See Paul J. Wadell, C.P. Friendship and the Moral Life (Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 62.

that is, what friendship may look like and feel like in the concrete. Aristotle, on the other hand, furnishes us with a detailed, analytical discussion of the nature and character of friendship. It is precisely for this kind of analysis, this furnishing of a logos for the phenomena, that we turn to the words of a philosopher. Hence, Aristotle discusses the various kinds of friendship and their different bases. He states explicitly why the friendship of character is superior and enumerates the various contributions to human flourishing which this kind of friendship, alone, can furnish. Both poet and philosopher illuminate the reality of friendship in their respective ways and so they each have a claim upon our attention. Let us turn then to a consideration of Sophocles' treatment of friendship.

6.2 Neoptolemus, Philoctetes and Friendship

In one of the opening scenes of the play, Sophocles shows us how, under the tutelage of Odysseus, the son of Achilles is led to focus on the bow of Heracles and to ignore its owner:

> OD: It's not right to have scruples about something when you do it for profit (kerdos)
> NE: But what profit (kerdos) is it to me that Philoctetes come to Troy?
> OD: The bow alone (mona) will take Troy.
> NE: Wasn't I the one who was to sack the city, as it was said?
> OD: Neither you without the bow nor the bow without you.
> NE: Well then, if that's the case, it must be hunted down (therate', Phil. 111-116.)

In this brief exchange we can see that Odysseus leads Neop-

tolemus to believe that it is the possession of the bow alone which will be sufficient to capture Troy. Odysseus instructs the son of Achilles to focus on the thing to be captured and to disregard how it is captured and the person to whom it belongs. Implicit in this instruction is the message that Neoptolemus is not to enter into any real relationship with Philoctetes but is simply to treat him as a means of obtaining that alone without which the fall of Troy cannot take place. Odysseus' obsession with the bow to the exclusion of the man is, of course, in direct opposition with the prophecy of Helenos. This is, indeed, strange (though not out of line with his character) inasmuch as he claims to be the servant of Zeus and to be doing nothing but carrying out his will (Phil. 989-990).

The prophecy of Helenos, in this drama, is somewhat enigmatic. Correct discernment of its import comes gradually and is only revealed in its fullness with the theophany of Heracles.[2] One thing, however, that comes forth clearly from

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[2]This is the case, I would argue, not only because of the enigmatic nature of the prophecy itself but because of Odysseus' misguided focus on the bow to the exclusion of the man. It is precisely this focus on the object to be obtained and its concomitant denial of the personhood of Philoctetes that, at the very beginning of the play, leads him to argue in favor of the use of deceit (Phil. 100-109). If the only important thing is the bow then the man who owns it must be treated as a means to it and manipulated in such a way that it is yielded up.

It seems to me, furthermore, that Odysseus' pre-occupation with an object to the exclusion of the personal is a part of his general moral and personal make-up in the play. We have already seen this to be the case in the way that he shuns personal responsibility for his own actions and defers to

the prophecy is that the bow alone is not sufficient to bring about the fall of Troy. The bow and the man, alone, will be sufficient and the latter must come willingly, by persuasion. In both passages of the play where the prophecy is related at any length Philoctetes, not the bow, is the focus of attention. According to the merchant, Helenos prophesied that unless Philoctetes were persuaded by argument (ei me tonde peisantes logo, Phil. 612) to leave Lemnos and come to Troy that the citadel of that great city would never fall to the Greeks. Neoptolemus confirms (and expands) the account of the merchant when he states that Philoctetes will never receive relief from his terrible illness until he willingly (hekon, Phil. 1332) goes to the plains of Troy and meets up with the sons of Asclepius. There he will receive healing and will go on, with his bow, to win martial glory on the battlefield in the eyes of all the Greeks (Phil. 1334-1335).

Under the guidance of Odysseus, Neoptolemus, at first, initiates a friendship with the son of Poeas that is nothing but a sham inasmuch as it is based upon lies and deception motivated by the "profit" which he mentions above (kerdos, Phil. 112). The elaborate deceit which the son of Achilles practices upon Philoctetes is solely aimed at getting the latter's bow and ignores the relational aspect of the prophecy of Helenos. The prophecy mentioned the necessity of Philoc-

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certain vague and impersonal necessities to which he must submit without thought or question (see above, 4.2).

tetes' willing compliance which, in turn, implies some kind of friendly relationship that is based upon openness, respect and trust. Deceit and then force will both be tried and found wanting during the course of the drama. It is only the son of Achilles' use of persuasion that will be seen to be in line with the sort of respect for Philoctetes which the prophecy implies. Neoptolemus will only gradually come to understand the real import of Helenos' prophecy and the grounds of an authentic friendship. Sophocles traces this development by means of the central symbol of the bow, which mirrors the relationship of Philoctetes and Neoptolemus.[3]

At the mid-point of the play Sophocles focuses our attention on the bow as that which represents the character of the friendship between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus. In this section the tragedian shows us that the friendship between the two is, as it were, ratified by the son of Poeas who allows Neoptolemus first to touch the bow and then actually entrusts the young man with it as the broken hero suffers one of his attacks of excruciating pain. Sophocles never tires of showing us, in this section, the incongruity of what is said about their friendship and the actual state of affairs that exists between these two men.

When Neoptolemus asks if it is permissible (themis, Phil. 661) for him to touch Philoctetes' bow the son of Poeas generously responds:

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[3]See Blundell, Helping Friends, pp. 204-205.

> You speak holy things. It is permissible for you, child. For you alone have given me the chance to see this light of the sun, my homeland at Oeta, my old father, my friends. You alone, though I was in the power of my enemies, stood me up over them. Be confident! You may touch it and give it back, boasting that you alone of mortals touched it because of your virtue. For even I myself acquired it by helping someone (Phil. 662-670.)

Neoptolemus answers:

> I am not distressed that I have met you and taken you as my friend. For whoever knows how to do a good turn after receiving one (eu dran eu pathon epistatai) would become a friend better than any possession (Phil. 671-673.)

In this scene Sophocles shows us that Philoctetes formally confirms Neoptolemus as his friend through the outward ritual of permitting the son of Achilles to handle his bow. He grants this friendship to Neoptolemus because of the latter's promise to deliver Philoctetes from his fate on Lemnos and on account of a shared sense of the importance of virtue and friendship which the bow itself symbolizes. Philoctetes refers to the way that friendship and virtuous action come together, symbolically, in the bow when he says that he, too, acquired the bow by doing a good deed. He is, of course, referring to lighting the funeral pyre of Heracles when the hero was suffering on his death bed. At the time no one who was present was willing to step forward and perform such an awesome deed. Philoctetes, alone, mustered sufficient courage to oblige Heracles and end his sufferings. By calling attention to Heracles in this instance Philoctetes is drawing a parallel between the friendship that exists between him and Heracles and the friendship that he is now enjoying with

Neoptolemus. Both sets of friendships arose out of the performance of a noble deed.

Once again, Sophocles shows himself to be a master of irony in Neoptolemus' response to the ritual sealing of his friendship with Philoctetes. The son of Achilles states that he has no cause to regret (ouk achthomai, Phil. 671) having met up with Philoctetes and taking him as a friend when barely one hundred and fifty lines later he will say that he has been greatly distressed and has been suffering over Philoctetes' terrible fate for a long time (Phil. 806). More significantly, however, we see that Sophocles has Neoptolemus accept Philoctetes' offer of friendship with an accompanying moral maxim that he is in the very process of violating.[4] It is in this way that the tragedian reminds us, within this scene of apparent trust and friendship, that the relationship of Neoptolemus and Philoctetes has, in reality, been established upon the shaky ground of deception and distrust. Neoptolemus' little maxim expresses praise for Philoctetes as a friend inasmuch as he "knows how to do a good turn" (allow Neoptolemus to handle his bow) after he has received one (the promise of Neoptolemus' help in getting home). As such a friend Neoptolemus asserts that Philoctetes is "worth more than any possession." Again, the devastating irony here is that even as he praises Philoctetes as a friend who is worth more than any possession, it is precisely (and only) what

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[4]See Blundell, Helping Friends, p. 204

Philoctetes possesses that is the real ground at that moment of Neoptolemus' interest in Philoctetes as a friend.[5] In this way, Sophocles shows how the bow operates as a complex symbol which mirrors the state of the relationship of Philoctetes and Neoptolemus. In this case, it is a sign of reciprocal friendship and trust that conceals the betrayal which is festering at the heart of their relationship. Sophocles will show us that it is this betrayal and deceit that must be revealed and removed in order that the friendship of Neoptolemus and Philoctetes may be placed on the firm footing of genuine trust and concern for the other, the only basis upon which their friendship will be capable of bearing any fruit.

Sophocles again points to the ambiguity of the relationship between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus in the scene where Philoctetes entrusts Neoptolemus with his bow while he is overcome with sleep. As Philoctetes is handing the bow over to the son of Achilles he utters the ominous words:

> Here it is, child, take it! But avert the envy of the gods (ton phthonon de proskuson) lest you, too, have great sufferings as both I and the one who acquired it before me have had. (Phil. 776-778.)

Neoptolemus is in a most unhappy situation here. As in the previous scene, he is being allowed by Philoctetes to handle the bow. The significant difference here is that its owner

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[5]If I am not going too far with the irony, there even appears to be a kind of ironic play upon Philoctetes' name in this passage. Neoptolemus says that Philoctetes (the roots of whose name are philos and ktaomai or ktema, literally, "love of possessing") will be a friend better than any possession (ktematos kreisson philos, Phil. 673).

is going to be unconscious and so this act on the part of Philoctetes demonstrates even greater trust in Neoptolemus. Philoctetes' words, however, can only make Neoptolemus uneasy because he knows that he is only being permitted to handle the bow on the grounds of his supposed friendship for Philoctetes. And yet it is under the very inauspicious conditions of receiving the bow through deceit that Philoctetes utters his prayer that misfortune not come to Neoptolemus because of the gods' envy. Sophocles is, thus, showing us the true status of the friendship between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus through the symbol of the bow. Through the prophecy of Helenos we know that the war at Troy cannot be won without Philoctetes and his bow. We know, furthermore, that the bow was given to the son of Poeas by Heracles as a token of appreciation and friendship for Philoctetes' act of kindness when the great hero lay vulnerable and on his death bed. This time it is Philoctetes who is about to be rendered unconscious and vulnerable from his terrible wound. He, like Heracles, will entrust another with the bow which was originally given out of love and need. By drawing an implicit parallel between these two scenes Sophocles points both to the way in which the bow symbolizes one friend's need of another as well as the authenticity of the first friendship in poignant contrast with the second. The tragedian, thus, shows that the bow signifies the two men's need of each other as well as the necessity that their friendship be based upon a genuine foundation if it is

ever to lead to the heroic destiny about which Helenos prophesied.[6]

Sophocles shows us that the false basis of the relationship between Neoptolemus and Philoctetes must be revealed in order that their friendship may come to be established upon a more genuine foundation. Thus we witness the breakdown of their relationship when Neoptolemus confesses that Philoctetes is to set sail for Troy and not Oeta (Phil. 915). In this scene Philoctetes tellingly addresses Neoptolemus with the icy word, "stranger" (oh xene, Phil. 923).[7] Betrayed by the only friend he thought he had, Philoctetes turns to "dialogue" with the landscape (Phil. 936-940) during which time he addresses the bow that has been forced from his hands as his only true friend (oh toxon philon oh philon/cheiron ekbebiasmenon, Phil. 1128-1129). There is a touch of irony here inasmuch as Philoctetes addresses as his only friend the very thing which has made of Neoptolemus a faux ami.

The son of Achilles is utterly anguished and confused by the pain which he has caused Philoctetes and falls into a long silence (Phil. 974-1074). It is through this powerfully dramatic silence of Neoptolemus that Sophocles marks the crucial transition that the son of Achilles makes from being a liar to a truth-teller, from practicing deceit (dolos) to

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[6]See Blundell, Helping Friends, p. 205.

[7]See P. E. Easterling, "Character in Sophocles," Greece and Rome, 24 (1977) 129.

the employment of persuasion (peitho).[8] When he reappears with Odysseus at line 1222 Sophocles shows us that he has not only chosen a new course of action (as I have argued above in section 5.3) but that he has also made a fundamental decision with respect to whom he will befriend. Neoptolemus rejects the tutelage and friendship of Odysseus and now seeks to establish a friendship with Philoctetes upon a more genuine foundation.[9]

Neoptolemus does everything in his power to communicate his willingness to repair the damage that he has done and to be a true friend to Philoctetes. He begins by asking for forgiveness from the son of Poeas (Phil. 1270). He then, straightway, shows his good will by bidding Philoctetes to stretch forth his right hand and be master of his bow (Phil. 1292). Deceit and violence have been tried and found wanting. Persuasion, the only mode of approach actually in line with the prophecy of Helenos (Phil. 612) is, at last, employed. Persuasion is, furthermore, the only way that is in accord with the openness and care for Philoctetes as a person that

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[8]See R. G. A. Buxton, Persuasion in Greek Tragedy: A Study of Peitho (Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 122-123.

[9]The tragedian is, furthermore, indicating that a significant moral discovery about oneself is often attended by a re-evaluation of the kind of person that one is capable of befriending or, as in this case, of continuing to call one's friend. We are shown that Neoptolemus' choice of a radically different conception of justice from that of Odysseus' expediency involves also a new conception of whom he can call his friend.

is the mark of genuine friendship. Sophocles indicates Philoctetes' acceptance of Neoptolemus' overtures of friendship when he resumes calling the young man "friend" and "child" (Phil. 1290, 1295, 1301, 1310), but it remains to be seen whether Neoptolemus' friendly employment of persuasion will bring Philoctetes to Troy.

What, in fact, Sophocles presents to us is something of a reversal of our expectations. Neoptolemus tries mightily to persuade Philoctetes to go to Troy but, in the end, is persuaded by Philoctetes to take him to his home at Oeta (Phil. 1402). Philoctetes' persuasion of Neoptolemus has come as a result of each hearing the other out in a spirit of mutual respect and concern for the genuine good of the other.[10] Neoptolemus' sympathetic response to and persuasion by the words of his friend, in a sense, prefigure Philoctetes' own sympathetic response to the persuasive words of his divine friend, Heracles.

Sophocles makes it known from the outset that Heracles intervenes not only as a god but also as a friend. He addresses Philoctetes with the endearing epithet of "child" (pai Poiantos, Phil. 1410) which Philoctetes himself has employed throughout the play with Neoptolemus. Through this

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[10]See Buxton, Persuasion in Greek Tragedy, p. 124. The author rightly points out the contrasting parallel between Neoptolemus' use of the hortatory subjunctive when inviting Philoctetes to leave Lemnos under false pretences (Phil. 526, 645) and his use of the same verbal formula when he acquiesces to Philoctetes' wishes through truthful and friendly exchange.

same address the tragedian makes explicit the parallel between the friendship of Philoctetes and Neoptolemus and that of Heracles and Philoctetes. Philoctetes had referred to this parallel, implicitly, in two previous passages (Phil. 670, 778). In addition, Heracles says that he has left his heavenly seat for Philoctetes' own sake (ten sen d' heko charin ouranias hedras prolipon, Phil. 1413-1414). He informs Philoctetes that his sufferings have not been in vain but will earn for him a glorious life (ek ton ponon tond' euklea thesthai bion, Phil. 1422) just as his own labors have resulted in the possession of immortal excellence (hosous ponesas kai diexelthon ponous/athanaton areten eschon, Phil. 1420). The condition upon which such a reknowned life rests, however, is his friendship with the son of Achilles (Phil. 1423). Heracles makes the interwoven destinies of Philoctetes and Neoptolemus explicit in the following lines:

> For neither will you, Philoctetes, be strong enough to take the plains of Troy without this young man here nor will he be strong enough without you. But you are to watch over each other as two grazing lions (Phil. 1434-1437.)

These lines are striking not only for the way in which they speak of the new friends' common destiny but also for the way in which they parallel and respond to Odysseus' earlier words regarding the importance of the bow. Odysseus had earlier said to Neoptolemus that the bow and the bow alone was necessary to take Troy (out' an su keinon choris out' ekeina sou, Phil. 115). His emphasis, as we stated, was solely upon

the object to be obtained in complete disregard for the person who owned the bow and how he might be related (as the prophecy of Helenos indicated) to the destiny of the Greeks fighting at Troy. Heracles corrects Odysseus[11] by replacing the pursuit of some object to be obtained with a relationship to be sustained, that is, the friendship of Philoctetes and Neoptolemus. It is no longer to be an object, the bow, that will be the basis of heroic action but a friendship founded upon mutual trust, openness and understanding.[12] Thus, through the theophany of the god-friend, Heracles, Sophocles makes it explicit that heroic and virtuous activity requires the existence of deep and lasting friendships that are based upon openness and fidelity to the person of the beloved. This is, perhaps, the ultimate meaning of the prophecy of Helenos.[13] Neoptolemus is slow to understand this, but Sophocles shows us that as he grows in moral maturity in the course of the play he comes to understand the meaning of the bow in its connection to genuine friendship and the divine friend who gave it to Philoctetes. This is confirmed and fully revealed by the intervention of Heracles who shows that it is in and through philia that salvation lies (Phil. 1396).

Having discussed the position of the tragedian on this

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[11]Note the striking, exact parallel of both oute . . . oute clauses at Phil. 115 and 1434-1435.

[12]See Christopher Gill, "Bow, Oracle, and Epiphany in Sophocles' Philoctetes," Greece and Rome, 27 (1980) 144.

[13]Ibid., 143-144.

topic it is now time to turn to the reflections of the philosopher.

6.3 Aristotle on Friendship and the Moral Life

Just as the tragedian argues that heroic activity is based upon the sort of friendship that is founded upon love and care for the person of the beloved, so also the philosopher holds that friendships of character are a necessary part of a flourishing human life. Aristotle does not furnish us with the sort of dramatic development of a particular relationship as the tragedian presents. What he, as a philosopher, furnishes is a logos of the phenomena of friendship. In the previous section I argued that the character of Neoptolemus makes a certain transition in his relationship with Philoctetes. He goes from pursuing a relationship with the son of Poeas for the sake of what he can get from him to befriending Philoctetes for who he is. It is the latter sort of relationship, I argued, that Sophocles is proposing as normative with respect to the true meaning of friendship as well as the necessary prerequisite to heroic virtue. In his logos of friendship Aristotle also furnishes us with several different manifestations of friendship (one of which is based upon something that one wants from one's friend) and he, too, holds that the central case of friendship is precisely this love of the other for the sake of who he is rather than for what one can get from him. It is only in the experience of this kind of friendship, according to Aristotle, that human

life may be said to be complete. Let us turn to a closer analysis of Aristotle's discussion of friendship.

According to Aristotle friendship is some kind of virtue or involves virtue (arete tis e met' aretes, EN 1155a2).[14] It is, furthermore, most necessary to human life (anankaiotaton eis ton bion, EN 1155a2-3) inasmuch as no one, he says, would choose to live without friends even if he had all other good things in life (EN 1155a5-6). This, as we shall see, is most especially true with respect to friendships that are based upon the character of the beloved.

According to Aristotle, there are three different kinds of friendship that are differentiated by the motive upon which their affection is based (hoi de philountes allelous boulontai tagatha allelois taute he philousin, EN 1156a9-10). Friends, Aristotle says, can have affection for each other that is based upon mutual usefulness, pleasure or good character. Friends motivated by utility or pleasure do not love each other for themselves (ou kath' hautous philousin, EN 1156a11) but for some other good. (all' he givetai ti autois par' allelon agathon, EN 1156a11-12). Aristotle states that these two kinds are friendships only incidentally (kata sumbebekos te de hai philiai hautai eisin, EN 1156a16-17) because the

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[14]A friendship that is based upon virtue must, by definition, involve choice (EN 1106a3-4, 1106b36, 1111b5-6, 1139a22-23). But as we shall see, Aristotle will reserve the element of choice to only the central case of friendship, namely, that which is based upon character. We shall discuss this later in the section.

ground of the relationship is not the friend himself but some use or pleasure which the other may provide (EN 1156a17-18). These sorts of friendships, according to Aristotle, are most easily dissolved (eudialutoi, EN 1156a19) when the partners do not maintain the same stance toward each other. For, as soon as they are no longer useful or pleasant to each other, they cease to be friends (EN 1156a20-21). By recognizing the incidental nature of the friendships that are based upon usefulness or pleasure Aristotle by no means seeks to denigrate them. They are both in line with Aristotle's broad definition of friendship as a reciprocal stance of good will of which both parties are aware (dei ara eunoein allelois kai boulesthai tagatha me lanthanontas, EN 1156a3-4). It is simply that these kinds of relationships are not representative of all that friendship can be.[15] In order to know the full reality of friendship in all of its possibilities we need to look to the friendship of character.

Aristotle states that this form of friendship is perfect or the most fully realized (teleia, EN 1156b7) inasmuch as it is the sort of friendship which exists between those who are

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[15]Aristotle does, at one point, demean the value of use-based friendship when he says that it is "characteristic of petty traffickers" (he de dia to chresimon agoraion, EN 1158a21). Given the context of this particular discussion of the three types of friendship it appears that Aristotle is directing his derisive remarks not at the nature of this sort of friendship itself (though it is, admittedly, limited) but toward those who are incapable of forming a relationship with another except with something useful to be obtained as its basis (cf. also EN 1157a19-20).

good and alike in virtue. Friends in this kind of relationship wish for each other's good inasmuch as they are good (ekeinou heneka, EN 1156b10) and their goodness is something intrinsic not incidental to their character (agathoi d'eisi kath' hautous, EN 1156b9).[16] In other words, the foundation upon which the friendship exists is not something external to who the beloved is (such as usefulness or pleasure) but is the beloved herself inasmuch as she is the instantiation of moral

[16]See John M. Cooper, "Aristotle on Friendship," in Essays on Aristotle's Ethics, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley, California, University of California Press, 1980), pp. 303-308. I agree with Cooper's interpretation that friendship based upon character is said to be perfect inasmuch as it takes place between those who are good without this implying that only those who are perfectly good or "moral heroes" are capable of having such friendships. While I find this to be true it seems to me that this is understood as part of Aristotle's general conception of friendship (and happiness) and goes without saying. Aristotle maintains that friendship is a characteristic or lasting disposition (hexis) that must, like any other virtue, be continually brought into actualization in order to be maintained and to flourish. Thus, Aristotle asserts that if distance or absence of greeting (aprosegoria) interrupts the activity of friendship for too long, the friendship will be dissolved (EN 1157b5-13). Again, friendship, like courage or justice, must be continually practiced in order to remain in existence and grow. The Stagirite states, repeatedly, that happiness, too, is an activity (EN 1169b31-32). The point here is that since friendship must repeatedly be brought into actualization it is not to be understood as static and hence it does not preclude the notion of development even within the friendship that Aristotle characterizes as perfect (that which is based upon character or the good). In this way Cooper's point, while valid, becomes superfluous inasmuch as Aristotle's dynamic and developmental conception of friendship already implies that those who have this kind of friendship with each other are not, in fact, moral paragons.

goodness.[17] According to Aristotle, this sort of friendship is the most lasting (EN 1156b11) precisely because it is founded upon the beloved herself rather than upon incidental considerations. In addition, it is only this kind of friend-

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[17]See Paul J. Wadell, C.P., Friendship and the Moral Life (Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) p. 63. Wadell correctly emphasizes that, for Aristotle, the focus in friendship of character is the person of the beloved not solely her qualities, "The bond in character friendship is a love for virtue, but this is no impersonal, abstract good; rather, it is an embodied good, a good friends see taken to heart and enfleshed in the life of another. What attracts us to our friends is exactly how the good has taken root in them." Cf. Ferdinand Schoeman, "Aristotle on the Good of Friendship," Australasian Journal of Philosophy, 63, (1985) 273-274. Schoeman considers Aristotle's treatment of when and whether friendships should be dissolved. He accuses Aristotle of typically conflating persons with their moral qualities when the Stagirite maintains that we cannot have affection for a friend who has become wicked because only the good and never evil can be an object of affection. Thus, Schoeman asserts that Aristotle's discussion of friendship is inadequate because it "mischaracterises loyalty to a person as involving a commitment to that person's motivating principles."

I do not think, first of all, that the term, "character" can be used interchangeably (as Schoeman employs it) with the term, "motivating principles." When Aristotle talks about character it seems to me that he means, pretty much, what we mean when we talk about an individual's personality or personality traits. This would include the individual's motivating principles but is a more inclusive notion than the other, more abstract, term. In this way, when Aristotle advises us to break off a friendship on the ground that our friend has become wicked it is not because of something as impersonal as their motivating principles (although this would be part of it) but because of who our friend has become as a person. In fact, Aristotle's position is more tolerant than this. If our friend has fallen into wicked ways he says that we ought to come to his aid and try to straighten him out (EN 1165b19) but that if he becomes incurably wicked (aniatois, EN 1165b18), and it is evident that it is impossible to save him, then and only then is it necessary to sever our ties with him. Thus, loyalty to a friend or the severing of ties is, for Aristotle, grounded in who the person is and not in qualities considered in abstraction from the one in whom they may inhere.

ship that is proof against slander (kai mone de he ton agathon philia adiabletos estin, EN 1157a20-21). Here, friends have tried and tested each other over a long period of time (EN 1157a22). They know and trust each other and hence are not likely to believe the words of simply anyone who attempts to undermine their friend's character. Friendship of character is, furthermore, the most complete in that it includes or takes up into itself the other two kinds of friendship. Thus, every such friend will also, according to Aristotle, be a useful and pleasurable companion. Finally, Aristotle maintains that it is only the friendship of character that transcends the (often) petty, contractual nature of the other two types of relationships.

Friendships based upon pleasure and (most especially) usefulness tend to be quid pro quo arrangements in which what is given and received is clearly defined and carefully scrutinized by both parties (EN 1162b26-28). The material advantage that accrues to the recipient serves as the measure of what is given in these kinds of relationships (EN 1163a16-17). Friendship of character, however, is not founded upon such fixed conditions (EN 1162b31) and thus it is not the material advantage to the recipient which serves as the measure of what is given but the moral purpose or choice of the giver (metro d' eoiken he tou drasantos proairesis, EN 1163a22). This is so, as Aristotle states, because the governing factor for virtue and character lies in moral choice

(tes aretes gar kai tou ethous en te proairesei to kurion, EN 1163a22-23). It is important to note, then, that Aristotle holds that it is friendship of character alone which has within it the element of choice so crucial to the definition of moral virtue. Here, friendship arises not so much as a result of external circumstances but from the choice of friends who love each other for their character and "how the good has taken root in them."[18] Thus far we have discussed the three different kinds of friendship and the superiority of the friendship of character to relationships that are only pleasurable or useful. We have also explored a number of reasons why Aristotle accords friendship of character a central place in his schema. It is now time to turn to a consideration of Aristotle's position with respect to friendship and happiness in order to see that the philosopher fundamentally understands human flourishing to be a community affair.

Aristotle addresses the question of whether a happy person will need friends at EN IX.9. He asserts that it is said that the happy or blessed person (tois makariois, EN 1169b4-5) will not need friends since she already has all the good things of life (huparchein gar autois tagatha, EN 1169b5). Those who are happy, it is argued, are self-sufficient and have no need of anyone or anything else (autarkeis oun ontas oudenos prosdeisthai, EN 1169b5-6). In this view

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[18]Wadell, Friendship and the Moral Life, p. 63.

we only need a friend, who is another self (heteron auton, EN 1169b6-7), to provide those things which we are unable to furnish for ourselves and it is for this reason, Aristotle states, that there is the verse, "When fortune gives favorably, what need is there of friends?" On the other hand, it would be strange (atopos, EN 1169b8), the Stagirite argues, to accord all good things to a happy person while excluding friends, who are thought to be the greatest of external goods (EN 1169b9-10). It would, furthermore, be strange (atopon, EN 1169b16) to make a happy person live his life as a loner and in isolation, for Aristotle asserts that a human being is, by nature, political and social (literally, "naturally lives with others," suzen pephukos, EN 1169b18-19). This passage echoes Aristotle's earlier discussion of self-sufficiency and happiness in Nicomachean Ethics I where he states:

> The perfect and most complete good seems to be self-sufficient. But by self-sufficient we do not mean for an individual who is living a solitary existence by himself but for someone who lives with his parents, children, wife and, in general, with friends and fellow citizens since a human being is, by nature, a political being (EN 1097b8-11.)[19]

In this way it is quite clear that Aristotle does not understand the self-sufficiency that is part of human happiness as a non-relational sort of autonomy but as one implying life within a community.[20]

Aristotle asserts that those who argue that the happy

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[19]Ostwald, p. 15.

[20]See Sherman, The Fabric of Character, p. 128.

person will not require friends speak the truth after a fashion (pe aletheuousin, EN 1169b23) inasmuch as most people (hoi polloi, EN 1169b23) understand by friends those who are useful. It is certainly true that a happy person will not need friends of this sort since he already has the good things of life. Nor, according to Aristotle, will he need a friend for the pleasantness of his companionship since his own life is already quite complete with respect to pleasure. It is in this way that those who think that a happy person does not require useful or pleasant friends argue that he does not need any friends at all.

While it is true that a happy person does not need the sort of friendships that are based upon usefulness or pleasure,[21] it is not at all true that he will not need any friends whatsoever. Aristotle affirms that a happy person will need friends of character and he links this, directly, with the happy person's very ability to achieve (and maintain) his happiness. First of all, Aristotle recapitulates his previous discussion and states that happiness is an activity (EN 1169b29, cf. also 1098a8, 16, 1098b31-1099a7) and that the activity of a good person is in itself both good and pleasant

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[21]When I say that a happy person does not need friendships based upon utility or pleasure I mean that they are not sufficient for happiness. These sorts of friendships are, most certainly, necessary to the happy person's life (in terms of the goods of pleasure and use) but they will never be sufficient for happiness. The only kind of friendship, according to Aristotle, that is both necessary and sufficient to a flourishing life is the friendship of character.

(tou d'agathou he energeia spoudaia kai hedeia kath' hauten, EN 1169b31-32, cf. also 1099a14-15, 21). This implies that a happy person's life ought to be both active and pleasant. Aristotle asserts, therefore, that a happy person will need friends because a solitary existence is difficult (chalepos, EN 1170a5) and it will not be easy for him to be continuously active outside of the company of friends (ou gar radion kath' hauton energein sunechos meth'heteron de kai pros allous raon, EN 1170a5-6). Furthermore, because such friends delight in virtuous activity and are displeased with vice they can be said to form a kind of school of virtue from their life together (EN 1170a11-12). Each friend is able to encourage and give pleasure to the other through the excellence of his own actions. For, according to Aristotle, it is part of the moral purpose or choice (prohaireitai, EN 1170a2-3) of a happy person to contemplate (theorein, EN 1170a2) actions which are good and are the sort of actions that he may want to call his own. Thus, friends will delight in observing each other's excellent actions (EN 1170a2-4).[22] Paul Wadell puts the matter very well:

> This is where the connection between friendship and eudaimonia is made. Eudaimonia is life lived according to virtue, but to live according to virtue is to live in the company of friends. Friendship is a practical implication of what the moral life requires. Aristotle

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[22]Aristotle further supports his position with regard to the pleasant and educative function of contemplating our friends' actions with the psychologically acute statement that we are better able to observe our neighbors than ourselves and their actions better than our own (EN 1169b33-35).

> has already told us that eudaimonia describes the complete and fulsome life, and he has identified eudaimonia as the life of virtue, the ongoing growth of a person in goodness. Now Aristotle inquires into what training in virtue involves, and sees it centered in friendship. He bases this conclusion on his earlier argument that 'happiness is some kind of activity,' specifically the activity of virtue, and now suggests that since the 'activity of a good man' is the doing of good with and for others, 'it follows that a supremely happy man will need friends of this kind.' In other words, eudaimonia is life constituted by virtue friendships.[23]

Aristotle emphasizes the intimacy of the bond that exists in friendships based on character when he asserts that the stance or attitude of a friend in this sort of relationship is the same toward his friend as toward himself (EN 1170b5-6). This is so inasmuch as Aristotle is so bold as to say that the friend is another self (heteros gar autos ho philos estin, EN 1170b6-7). Because the friend is understood to be another self, Aristotle claims that the friend's existence and flourishing is affirmed to be just as choiceworthy (or nearly so)[24] as one's own existence and flourishing (kathaper oun to auton einai haireton estin hekasto houto kai to ton philon e paraplesios, EN 1170b7-8). Consequently, a friend in this kind of relationship must make his friend's existence a part of his own consciousness (sunaisthanesthai ara dei kai tou philou hoti esti, EN 1170b10-11). This,

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[23]Wadell, Friendship and the Moral Life, p. 64.

[24]The quibble, I suspect, is due to Aristotle's position that self-love is the basis and condition of love of another. Thus, he qualifies somewhat his simple assertion that the friend's existence is just as choiceworthy as one's own existence.

Aristotle asserts, can only come about by living together with one's friend and by sharing each other's words and thoughts (touto de ginoit' an en to suzen kai koinonein logon kai dianoias, EN 1170b11-12).[25] Because a character friend's existence and flourishing is almost as desirable to a happy person as his own fulsome life, it follows that the happy individual will need morally good friends (EN 1170b18-19). In this way, Aristotle affirms the indispensability of life with others as a condition of the ongoing pursuit of a virtuous and flourishing existence.

6.4 Conclusion

We have seen, in this chapter, that both tragedian and philosopher hold the view that friendship is an indispensable part of living well. I have argued, furthermore, that Sophocles and Aristotle do not uphold simply any kind of association or relationship (e.g. an alliance of expediency) as a necessary element in living the good life but only the sort of relationship in which one's friend is loved for who he is and one wishes his good for his own sake. This is the case for the ancients because we have seen that they understand that the issue of personal character is intimately bound up with the kinds of people with whom one shares one's life.

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[25]See Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness, p. 358 for an interesting discussion of how "living together" is not meant to be interpreted as merely "regular social visiting" but a more robust life of daily, shared activity in the spheres of work and play.

Friends are, then, closely connected with one's happiness precisely because they are instrumental in the formation of one's character. It is in this way that the ancients fully appreciated the social character of growth in the moral life. Modern moral philosophy in the Kantian tradition, on the other hand, has proved deficient in its lack of appreciation for the social nature of becoming a moral person. I have argued that this is the case because of its pre-occupation with establishing the autonomy of the willing subject in such a way that eclipses the possibility of others' having a vital role to play in the formation of the moral person. By contrast, the ancients fully appreciated the way in which lasting friendships based upon love of a friend's character can play a decisive role in the formation of one's character and in living the good life.

Sophocles shows us this in dramatic form in the way that Neoptolemus moves beyond his former relationship with Philoctetes where the latter was simply a means to the end of obtaining the bow. The tragedian reveals, both through Neoptolemus' own insights and the final revelation of Heracles, that true friendship must be based upon mutual trust, openness and care for the other. It is only this kind of friendship, Sophocles is saying, that can be the basis of heroic action.

Aristotle, for his part, furnishes a <u>logos</u> of that which is presented dramatically by the tragedian. The philosopher,

also, presents to us inferior kinds of friendships (such as those of pleasure and of utility) and shows us that these sorts of relationships are inferior because they are not grounded upon love of the person for who he is but upon some kind of incidental consideration. The central case of friendship for the philosopher is that in which the person is loved for who he is and the good is wished for him for his own sake. Aristotle argues that it is only in this sort of friendship that we find a stable and reliable ground for the pursuit of the virtuous life. This is so since it is only in friendships founded upon character that we seek the good together and make each other good.[26]

In this way both philosopher and tragedian affirm, each in his own way, that the life of virtue (or heroic action) is not a solitary affair but is founded upon and mediated by the sort of friends who help us to sustain virtuous activity and who guide us in the living of the best life because they exemplify, as our "other selves," the kind of life that we ourselves would want to live.

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[26]See Wadell, Friendship and the Moral Life, p.66.

CONCLUSION

Our study in the moral anthropology of Sophocles and Aristotle has proved to be richly rewarding. It has been my position that the poet and the philosopher hold a fundamentally similar conception of the nature of the moral person and the good life and that this understanding of ethics is, in many respects, superior to more recent developments in moral philosophy, especially those in the Kantian tradition. First, we have seen how the ancients show a great appreciation of the concrete character of ethics. They fully understand that the point of ethics is not to construct a moral theory or to formulate a decision-procedure (as is characteristic of the abstractions of modern moral philosophy) but to become a particular kind of person and to live a particular kind of life. In this way we see that they are fundamentally preoccupied with the question of character and what constitutes its excellence.

The question of character is, as they see it, related to the prior question of human nature and the relationship that such a nature has to the development of the virtues. Once again we can see that they begin with the concrete and develop their understanding of what constitutes the moral person from their consideration of the phenomena. Sophocles

and Aristotle understand that a human being is a complex of reason, emotions and desires and that these three stand in need of some kind of organization and integration if psychic health, virtue and human fulfillment is to be achieved. It is their position that such an integration of these elements of the psyche is not given to us by nature and that education is necessary in order that excellent organization of these elements can be realized.

Once again, it has been my position that this ancient anthropology is superior to more recent developments in the Kantian tradition because of its taking into account the whole person: the rational, emotional and desiderative elements. Moral philosophy after Kant shows little interest in the role that the emotions and desires play or in the significance that their integration with reason may have in the formation of the moral agent. In the ancient conception of the person the emotions are not hopelessly irrational drives that must be suppressed or overcome by reason (as in Kant) but are, instead, highly educable, semi-rational impulses capable of being aligned with the rational part in such a way that excellent moral agency results. In this way the ancients not only realize the important place that the emotions have in the moral development of the person but they also appreciate the central role that achieving psychological harmony plays with respect to authentic human agency. Moral philosophy in the Kantian tradition not only does not take the emotions serious-

ly as having a part to play in the constitution of the moral person but it is positively hostile to them. We can see this in the way that Kant tends to view reason and inclination as opposed and how reason needs to overcome inclination in order that one's duty may be carried out. In this way, too, we can see that this model for moral agency is consonant with the notion of inner conflict as an unavoidable condition of human agency as opposed to the possibility of integration which we find in the ancient model. It has been my contention that the ancient model is preferable because of the way in which the entire person is taken into account and because inner harmony among the various parts of the psyche is preferable to psychological civil war. We have, in fact, seen in the play that Neoptolemus is incapable of acting authentically so long as he is in this conflicted state and achieves excellent moral agency when the strife that has been raging within him has been resolved. The recognition of nature's insufficiency for virtue and the need for a teacher points to the ancients' recognition of the social character of growth in the moral life. This is demonstrated, too, in the privileged place that they accord friendship. Sophocles and Aristotle both show a profound appreciation of the role that others play in our becoming moral persons. They fully understand that becoming a moral person is a process that is mediated through our relationship with friends and teachers who act as moral guides or examples throughout our lives. The social character of

moral education is not sufficiently appreciated at all by moral philosophy in the tradition of Kant and this is so, as we have suggested, because of its pre-occupation with securing the rational autonomy of the agent. In this conception of morals there is an unfortunate disparagement of the role that moral examples play because they tend to viewed as a sort of illegitimate form of heteronomy in which the ground for the determination of the agent's will is no longer the moral law alone. This is unfortunate since it seeks for too rigid a standard and hence rejects the very real role that others can play in our lives as moral guides and exemplars. The legitimacy of the use of moral examples, both good and bad, in the formation of the moral agent was the basis of our consideration of the characters of Odysseus and Neoptolemus as both anti-type and authentic agent, respectively.

As a corollary and secondary theme of this thesis I have maintained that the employment of philosophy and literature is appropriate to this fuller anthropology which realizes the importance of both the emotional and rational aspects of moral personhood. As we have seen, the ancients viewed ethics as an eminently practical and concrete affair and they also appreciated the central role that the emotions play in the formation of the moral agent. Correlative to this, I have employed the poetry of Sophocles' drama because poetry excels in the presentation of the concrete and particular situation as well as for its emotionally evocative power. Through the

medium of the poet we are presented with a particular, emotionally-charged situation in which we, too, as viewers are summoned to feel with and for the characters on the stage. We have especially witnessed this in the moving and dramatic way that Sophocles portrays Neoptolemus going through the agonies of deliberation in which he attempts to resolve his moral dilemma. Because of poetry's peculiar powers to portray the particular and to evoke the emotions it seems to me to be entirely appropriate to employ it as representative of one side of the ancient anthropology that we are attempting to flesh out.

We have employed the philosopher, on the other hand, as representative of the rational element of our anthropology not, of course, because he does not recognize the role of the emotions, but because the strengths that are especially peculiar to philosophy are those of analysis and explanation. We have, in addition, turned to the philosopher in order to furnish us with a more unified picture of the disparate phenomena that are given by the poet. In this way we have looked to the philosopher for a <u>logos</u> that both explains and provides a more synthetic whole. We have seen this analytic rigor operative in the way that Aristotle has furnished us with certain moral concepts or terms which help to give a rational account of the phenomena which the tragedian has presented in his drama. Thus, Aristotle's discussion of the nature of <u>panourgia</u> (in conjunction with his analysis of

cleverness and practical wisdom) has furnished us with a logos of the character of Odysseus. By means of Aristotle's analysis we have come to understand that Odysseus' potentially admirable ability of efficiently linking means to ends (deinotes) is vitiated by his wicked character into the willingness to do or say anything to achieve any end that is characteristic of criminality (panourgia). In this way we gain insight into the nature of Odysseus' wickedness because we now understand that his viciousness distorts his perception of the fundamental principles of action such that his admirable ability is skewed and directed to ends of dubious moral rectitude.

Aristotle's term prohairesis has also proved to be of enormous benefit in both helping us to understand the nature of the choice which Neoptolemus makes in the play and furnishing a unified account of the disparate phenomena that are a part of this complex moral act. Through the notion of prohairesis we are capable of understanding Neoptolemus' act as constituted by four things: (1) deliberation (2) maturity (3) responsibility (4) integration of the emotional with the rational. Thus, we see that Neoptolemus first goes through the agonies of deliberation, after which he comes to a mature decision in which he ceases to eschew personal responsibility for his actions. It is through this very decision, furthermore, that he achieves an integration of his emotions with his reason as is evidenced by the fact that his hesitation and

self-doubt is gone and he now acts with bold resolution. Again, we can see here that Aristotle's term helps to unify and explain the phenomena which is presented by the dramatist.

We have seen the excellence of philosophy operative in the way in which Aristotle furnishes an account of the nature of emotional response. Sophocles furnishes us a phenomenal account of the emotions through the characters of his drama. It is here that we see that Neoptolemus' emotions lead him to question the justice of his actions. Aristotle, for his part, provides us with an explanation, a rational account of the nature of emotional response that helps us to see why Neoptolemus' emotions are able to do what they do in the play. Thus, through Aristotle's analysis of the relationship of reason and emotional response in terms of efficient causality, we come to understand the cognitive character of the emotions. Through his analysis of the emotions of shame, compassion and righteous indignation we are able, furthermore, to see that this very cognitive component of emotional response is capable of orienting the individual to the good that is to be done for himself or for another. In this way, we are enabled better to understand how the emotions operate in the character of Neoptolemus as he attempts to understand what he is to do.

APPENDIX

THE EDUCATIVE ROLE OF THE EMOTIONS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF TRAGIC CATHARSIS

We have already seen how compassion, shame and various other emotions played a central role in the moral education of the character of Neoptolemus. We saw also the various ways in which the Sophoclean and Aristotelian conceptions of the role of the emotions in moral discernment are in fundamental agreement. Both philosopher and tragedian do not see the emotions and reason as at odds with each other but as capable of successful integration and able to supplement each other's vision of the good. In this section I wish simply to amplify the way in which Aristotle supports and develops the Sophoclean position regarding the cognitive role of the emotions in moral judgment by a consideration of the role of the emotions in relation to katharsis in the Poetics and Politics.

In his Poetics Aristotle states that there are two things responsible for (aitiai, Poetics 1448b4) the origin of poetry as a whole and that both of these things are natural causes (phusikai, Poetics 1448b5). The first cause is that representation is connatural to human beings from childhood inasmuch

as human beings are the most prone towards representation of all other animals (ton allon zoon hoti mimetikotaton esti, Poetics 1448b7). It is in this way, Aristotle says, that we learn our first lessons. The second thing responsible for the origin of poetry is that everyone not only engages in representation but delights in it (to chairein tois mimemasi pantas, Poetics 1448b9). Aristotle says the reason we delight in representation is that it is pleasurable to discern the likeness (eikonas, Poetics 1448b11) that exists between the thing itself and the thing represented (manthanein kai sullogizesthai ti hekaston hoion hoti houtos ekeinos, Poetics 1448b16-17). An indication of this is that things which we would normally view in themselves with pain, we delight in when they have been represented with the greatest exactitude and care (ha gar auta luperos horomen touton tas eikonas tas malista ekribomenas chairomen theorountes, Poetics 1448b10-11). We delight in representations, then, because we take pleasure in learning (manthanein ou monon tois philosophois hediston alla kai tois allois homoios, Poetics 1448b13-14). Thus, viewing representations (whether they be through drama or music, through painting or sculpture) is an intellectual process and entails some kind of sensitive judgment on the part of the viewer because it involves an apprehension of the connection between reality and representation. This understanding of representational art as an intellectual process that involves judgment is built right into Aristotle's notion

of plot.

According to Aristotle, plot or plot-structure (muthos) is the soul of tragedy (Poetics 1450a39-b1). It is the business of the poet whose field of representation is human agents and actions (Poetics 1448a1, 1448a27-28) to compose a plot where events happen from necessity or probability, because of each other rather than merely after one another (Poetics 1452a5, 1452a20-21). In this way, then, it is up to the poet so to arrange the events of his plot that the intelligible structure of the story is made manifest to the audience. This is why, for Aristotle, poetry is more serious and more philosophical than history (Poetics 1451b5ff.). The historian relates only the things that have happened. He is not necessarily concerned to persuade an audience of the intelligibility of the events that have occurred as simply to present those events. The poet, on the other hand, must show the intelligible nexus of the events that make up his story (according to probability or necessity) if he is to evoke a sympathetic response from his audience. The poet, then, is not concerned so much with what happens (ta genomena, Poetics as with what could happen (hoia an genoito, Poetics 1451b5). In this way, unlike the historian who deals with particulars, the poet is dealing with types of events or types of characters that are universal to human experience. As Aristotle puts it, poetry speaks of universals, history of particulars (Poetics 1451b7-8).

Poetry, then, speaks in terms of "literary universals"[1] wherein the nature of human experience is revealed (through action and character) by means of representation. The excellence of these literary universals, however, is precisely their ability to arouse the peculiarly tragic emotions of compassion and terror (Poetics 1449b27-28, 1452b1). It is the feeling of these two emotions that comprises the particular pleasure that is characteristic of the experience of tragedy (Poetics 1453b10-12). Other kinds of painful emotions can be evoked but these are not peculiar to tragedy and will not elicit catharsis, the central element to the experience of tragedy for Aristotle (Poetics 1449b29). (Aristotle appears, in fact, to link the experience of catharsis with the feeling of these two peculiarly tragic emotions, cf. Politics, 1342a7ff.). For example, it is possible for a poet to represent on stage the change from good to bad fortune of good and decent men (tous epieikeis andras, Poetics 1452b34), but this, Aristotle says, will not elicit terror and compassion because it is revolting (miaron, Poetics 1452b36).[2]

It is the job of the poet, then, to construct the sort

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[1]See Norman Gulley, "Aristotle on the Purposes of Literature," in Articles on Aristotle, ed. Jonathan Barnes, (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1978), p. 171.

[2]Richard Janko (Aristotle on Comedy, London, Duckworth, 1984, 142) perceptively points out the relevant opposition of this word, miaron (which literally means "polluted," "unclean"), to the word that signifies one of the central experiences of excellent tragedy (for Aristotle) as "cleansing" or "purifying," namely, catharsis.

of plot which elicits these peculiarly tragic emotions. The evocation of compassion and terror (leading, in turn, to catharsis) is the test case of whether the tragic poet has successfully composed an excellent tragedy. These particular emotions can be predictably aroused by the excellent tragic poet because of Aristotle's implicit belief in the inherent connection of emotional response to the cognitive process of understanding the play.[3] If the poet has composed well, according to Aristotle, compassion and terror will be appropriate responses to the events depicted on the stage. In this way we see that Aristotle's poetic theory supports his ethical theory because in both we see him acknowledging the interconnection between the rational and emotional spheres. The excellent and successful poet will engage us both intellectually and (perhaps especially) emotionally by calling forth from us terror and compassion toward the events depicted on stage, emotions which will inevitably lead to the emotional and psychological release that is catharsis. These emotions are not irrational or unpredictable impulses but are an intelligent response to a well-structured plot (according to probability or necessity) in which events are so arranged and characters so depicted as intelligibly to evince terror and compassion:

> To feel an emotion consequent on the representation of an action that contains the object of that emotion, the

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[3]Aristotle is not talking about the understanding of a literary critic but that of the audience.

> fearful and pitiable for instance, is not to feel it simply, but to see, at the same time, those objects in their causes, to see how they follow, in all likelihood or of necessity, from certain actions that precede them. It is also, and this is important, to feel the emotion about the causes. In the case of tragedy, for instance, the causes of things pitiable and fearful are themselves made to appear pitiable and fearful, for what makes the tragic action, when constructed best, so pitiable and fearful, is that the fearful and pitiable things are shown arising out of something unexpected and apparently harmless, and to someone who is like us, neither extremely bad nor extremely good. The fearfulness of the consequences is thrown back onto the cause, so that that too becomes fearful, and all the more so the more vividly this is done.[4]

In this way then we can see how Aristotle maintains the centrality of emotional response in the understanding of tragic drama. It is time now to turn to a consideration of the educational role that the emotions of compassion and terror have (those emotions which Aristotle sees as peculiar to tragedy) with respect to the experience of catharsis.

It is not my purpose in this discussion to give anything on the order of a history of the interpretation of Aristotle's intentions in his use of the term catharsis. That would require a book unto itself. Suffice it to say that this particular interpretation of the term and its meaning is controversial and is so of necessity because of the scantiness and inconclusiveness of the evidence. It does, however, seem to me that this interpretation does the most justice to what Aristotle was getting at in his discussion of the meaning and function of catharsis in the experience of tragedy.

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[4]Peter Simpson, "Aristotle on Poetry and Imitation," Hermes, 116 (1988) 289.

Former interpretations (mostly in the nineteenth century) of the meaning of catharsis focused on the medical aspects of the term and favored a conception of catharsis as a kind of physiological and psychological purgation.[5] A growing number of recent commentators, however, have been challenging the purgation model of catharsis as inconsistent with Aristotle's conception of the necessary and beneficial role of the emotions in living the good life.[6] Catharsis is, surely, some kind of purgation or relieving of an excess but it is not the total sort of evacuation that former commentators have made it out to be. These more recent commentators argue that the educative function of catharsis has largely been neglected in a consideration of the meaning of this term.

As we have already seen, Aristotle maintains that moral virtue is comprised as much by what we feel when we act as by our action itself. The pleasure or pain that we we feel in accompaniment with our actions is a sign (semeion, EN 1104b4)

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[5]See Stephen Halliwell, Aristotle's Poetics (London, Duckworth, 1986), pp. 184-201; Richard Janko, Aristotle on Comedy (London, Duckworth, 1984), pp. 136-51.

[6]See Humphrey House, Aristotle's Poetics (Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, Publishers 1956), pp. 108-11; Carnes Lord, Education and Culture in the Political Thought of Aristotle (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 135-38, 152, 159, 164; Kathy Eden, Poetic and Legal Fiction in the Aristotelian Tradition (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 25-61; Richard Janko, Poetics I with Tractatus Coislinianus (Indianapolis and Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), pp. 141-42; Norman Gulley, "Aristotle on the Purposes of Literature," in Articles on Aristotle, ed. Jonathan Barnes, (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1978), p. 171, pp. 175-76.

of the state of our character-disposition; correct education (orthe paideia, EN 1104b13) is delighting in and being pained at those things which we ought to be; a person is not good or just if he does not take delight in noble or just actions (EN 1099a17-20). In addition to his assertions on the importance of feeling correctly with respect to good character, Aristotle explicitly repudiates the notion that virtue consists in some kind of "exorcism" of the emotions.

In a very significant passage (for our purposes) in Nicomachean Ethics II.3 Aristotle says that some define the virtues as a kind of absence of feeling and quietude (apatheias tinas kai eremias, EN 1104b24-25),[7] because many people become morally worthless (phauloi, EN 1104b21) as a result of dealing poorly with pleasure and pain. But this is an incorrect definition of virtue (ouk eu de [horizontai], EN 1104b25), Aristotle says, because those who define it in this way speak without making the due qualifications of time, place, manner and all the other modes and manners in which feeling will be appropriately expressed. Virtue does not consist in exorcism of the emotions but in the proper integration of emotional response to the various circumstances and situations that we find ourselves in. In this way, then, it would be utterly unlike Aristotle to argue that the purpose of the experience of tragic catharsis is the complete purgation

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[7]The second term, eremias, has its etymological roots in the Greek word for 'desert,' eremos.

of the emotions.[8] In what follows I shall explain how catharsis is both a partial purgation and the vehicle by which the audience appreciates tragedy emotionally (through compassion and terror) and is educated in and through the experience of those emotions.

We have already seen that, for Aristotle, the experience of tragedy is both a cognitive and an emotional one. The origins of poetry are our natural propensity to learn in and through representation as well as the delight we take in understanding that "this is that" (hoti houtos ekeinos, Poetics 1448b17) by means of representations. But the purpose of tragic representation is the arousal of compassion and terror as an appropriate emotional response to what is witnessed on the stage. It is the particular task of the tragic poet to furnish the audience the pleasure that is

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[8]See Lord, Education and Culture, pp. 136-37. Lord quotes the testimony of both Seneca and Cicero on the Aristotelian position with respect to the emotions. Seneca writes: "Aristotle stands as a defender of anger and forbids it to be cut out of us" (stat Aristoteles defensor irae et vetat illam nobis exsecari); "Aristotle says that certain passions can serve as arms if one uses them well" (Aristoteles ait affectus quosdam si quis illis bene utatur pro armis esse) (On Anger III.3.1, I.17.1). Cicero says, "the Peripatetics say that those perturbations which we think should be eliminated are not only natural but provided by nature to be useful, and they say that the other sorts of passions are useful as well. Pity is useful for getting us to render assistance and alleviate the misfortunes that men suffer undeservedly; if one were to remove fear, all carefulness in life, which is greatest among those who fear the laws, the magistrates, poverty, ignominy, death, or pain, would be eliminated. In arguing thus they admit that these passions need to be pruned back, but assert that they neither can nor need be uprooted entirely, and suppose that in almost all things a mean is best" (Tusculan Disputations IV. 19-20).

peculiar to tragedy, namely, catharsis of compassion and terror (ten apo eleou kai phobou dia mimeseos dei hedonen paraskeuazein ton poieten, Poetics 1453b12-3). This is done, however, by an appeal to the emotions as cognitive because, as we have seen, the experience of the downfall of the good man is rejected as inappropriate to the arousal of compassion and terror because it will only stir up feelings of revulsion (to miaron, Poetics 1452b36).

The experience of tragedy, we shall argue then, brings about the alignment of our emotions with the moral and aesthetic judgments that we make about the world because the experience of catharsis validates the tragic poet's plot as worthily and properly eliciting the experience of catharsis through the emotions of compassion and terror. The successful tragic poet will then evoke both a cognitive and emotional response from his audience by representing through his plot-structure the sorts of generalizations universal to the human condition that call for a response of compassion and terror.[9]

This confirmation of feeling appropriately through tragic catharsis will educate the viewer of the play to understand what it means to feel and act appropriately in actual life situations. Aristotle states this explicitly at Politics 1340a23f. In this passage, Aristotle holds that those who have been habituated to feel pain and delight with

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[9]See Peter Simpson, "Aristotle on Poetry and Imitation," Hermes, 116 (1988) 289-290.

respect to things that are like the true or actual case are close to being in the same state with regard to the actual case itself (ho d'en tois homoiois ethismos tou lupeisthai kai chairein eggus esti to pros ten aletheian ton auton echein tropon, Politics 1340a23-25). He says that if a person delights in looking upon (theomenos, from theaomai, used often of the spectator in a theatre) the image (eikona, Politics 1340a26) of someone for no other reason than the form itself (ten morphen auten, Politics 1340a27) of the one represented, then that person will, of necessity, experience pleasure at the actual sight of the person whose image he took delight in (anankaion touto kai auten ekeinen ten theorian hou ten eikona theorei hedeian einai, Politics 1340a27-9). In this way, then, we see how the experience of tragedy is a form of moral education. When we become habituated to feeling emotions appropriately with regard to representations (and again it is the task of the poet to confirm the intelligibility of our emotional response through the evocation of that pleasure which is peculiar to tragedy), then we are well on our way to feeling emotions appropriately in real life situations. It is, as Aristotle says, precisely this feeling delight and pain at what we ought which constitutes correct education (orthe paideia, EN 1104b14).

Through the experience of catharsis our feelings are not only "worked through and made comprehensible,"[10] they are also

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[10]See Janko, Poetics I, p. 142.

regulated. The experience of catharsis is, after all, some kind of release or relieving of the emotions. Aristotle calls it a "lightening" of the emotions (perhaps from pent-up emotional tensions that have no place for release?) that is accompanied by pleasure (kouphizesthai meth' hedones, Politics 1342a15). Tragedy provides the place for the release of emotional tensions which will regulate our emotions in such a way that we are more apt to achieve the mean in the expression of our feelings in actual life situations. In a fascinating passage of his Tractatus Coislinianus[11] (section III, cf. also section IX), Aristotle says that tragedy takes away some of the terrifying emotions of the soul (huphairei ta phobera pathemata tes psuches) through compassion and terror and that it aims to have a due proportion of terror (summetrian thelei echein tou phobou). This conception of the due measure or proportion of emotional expression accords well with Aristotle's conception of virtue as lying in a mean disposition (mesotes) of emotion (and action) in Nicomachean Ethics II and IV. In this way, then, we can see that Aristotle sees the emotions as intimately involved in the process of understanding tragedy as well as being, in turn, educated by it. The emotions (as we have been arguing is the case for both Aristotle and Sophocles) are not at odds with reason but confirm (and even assist) reason in its moral judgments about

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[11]Argued by Janko to be a kind of summary of Aristotle's lost treatise on comedy.

the world. The tragic poet, if he is to be successful, must structure his plot and develop his characters in such a way that compassion and terror are intelligible responses to the events depicted on stage. These emotions, if appropriately aroused will lead to what Aristotle argues is the peculiar pleasure of tragedy, namely, catharsis. The experience of catharsis is both an aligning of the emotions with the judgments of reason as well as a release of emotional tension that will make us better able to hit the mean in the expression of our feelings in real life situations. Thus, Aristotle and Sophocles confirm one another in their assessment of the central role that the emotions play in living the good life. Our emotions are not in opposition to reason but are capable of being integrated with reason because of their cognitive component. This excellent dove-tailing of the powers of reason and emotion with respect to moral discernment is correct education (orthe paideia).

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