

## ***Parrhesia* before Παρρησία : Emerging Political Culture in *The Iliad* and Origins of the License to Speak Freely**

In analyzing the grammatical nuances of *parrhesia* in the plays of Euripides, orations of Demonsthenes and Isocrates, and even in the dialogues of Plato, it is striking that the term, though often translated as ‘frankness’ or ‘speaking frankly’ is actually often a direct object of exchange. It is found most frequently in the accusative after verbs such as δίδωμι [to give, grant] or ἔχω [to have, hold], or in the genitive following μέτα [with], or in the dative of instrument/manner. One does not normally think of *fearless speech* as something given, held or granted like a physical object, and yet in the text this is specifically the manner it is figured.<sup>1</sup> For example in *Electra*: μέμνησο, μήτηρ, οὐς ἔλεξας ὑστάτους / λόγους, διδοῦσα πρὸς σέ μοι παρρησίαν.<sup>2</sup> Electra reminds her mother, Clytemnestra, that she agreed to give her *parrhesia*. This leads to the conclusion that *parrhesia* does not simply mean ‘all-speaking’ as ‘παν-ρησία’ would suggest but as a direct object of a verb like δίδωμι it implied a license to speak everything.<sup>3</sup> While, this remains generally accurate in Athenian context, the view of *parrhesia* as a license neither shows the whole picture, nor reveals its possible origins. Since *parrhesia* first appears in Euripides, and other associated terms such as *isegoria* and *isonomia* are not significantly older,<sup>4</sup> in understanding the origins of *parrhesia* and frank speech we’re left looking for signs of *proto-parrhesia*.

*Parrhesia* certainly did not exist in the Homeric society. *Parrhesia* is founded on a very specific political relationship, which only began to emerge along with the Greek *polis*. Nonetheless, we can see in the Homeric society of the *Iliad* the immanence of this emerging political culture through the manifestations and symptoms of complex civic and political relationships, and the uniquely political frictions that accompany these emerging relationships. *Parrhesia*, or rather, *proto-parrhesia* is but one of these unique political frictions that begins to manifest itself in Homeric society. It will serve here as a synecdoche for the larger emerging politics. We might characterize this ‘Homeric society’ as the “network of social institutions, relations, and norms of the human groups

<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault is largely credited for the surge in contemporary interest in *parrhesia* following his lecture series now publicized under the title ‘Fearless Speech.’ Foucault, Michel. *Fearless Speech*. Ed. Joseph Pearson. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Eur. *El.* 1055-6. “Remember, mother, that you said, in your / last remark, that you’re giving me liberty to speak freely against you.” All translations are by the author unless otherwise noted

<sup>3</sup> The meaning does seem to later take on a more abstract adverbial meaning in the Greco-Roman period, especially with the introduction of the verbal form παρρησιάζομαι

<sup>4</sup> The first occurrence of *isegoria* for example is in Herodotus 5.78. See Frederick Ahl. “The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome.” *The American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 105 (1984), 174

depicted in the Homeric epics,” which is internally consistent and coherent in its social and political patterns.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, while ‘Homeric Society’ may not be an accurate ‘historical’ representation of Greek culture at any point in time, it does preserve aspects of its development.<sup>6</sup> *Proto-parrhesia* shows that the scepter, or *skeptron* [σκήπτρον], in Homeric society does not simply represent authority and the attending privilege to speak, as it is commonly imagined,<sup>7</sup> but as a sacred object it also creates a sacred space. Moreover in the political realm, that sacred space becomes a *public* space. The *skeptron* creates an agora *topos*. Additionally the *skeptron*, as an item that passes from hand to hand thereby granting the privilege to address the assembly, bears similarities to the manner *parrhesia* is exchanged in speech. Not only can *parrhesia* expand our understanding of emerging Greek political culture as it occurs in the *Iliad*, but analyzing the *grammar of exchange* associated with the *skeptron* also explains the concrete origins of the abstract concept of *parrhesia*. In this paper ‘grammar of exchange’ does not refer to sentence structure in the *Iliad* that describes the exchange of the *skeptron*, but instead suggests that the social ritual of passing the *skeptron* involves a specific grammar of performance, unspoken but which nonetheless maintains a consistent syntactic structure. This grammar of exchange might be situated diachronically as the antecedent and origin of the grammar of *parrhesia* that follows a very similar grammatical structure.<sup>8</sup> This explains why *parrhesia* is prefigured as an object of exchange, and why a person speaks *with parrhesia* [μέτα παρρησίας] rather than *boldly*

<sup>5</sup> Walter Donlan, “Reciprocities in Homer.” *The Classical World* 75 (1982), 137

<sup>6</sup> Drawing on the reverberations of the work of Milman Parry this paper presupposes that a) *The Iliad* is a work of the oral tradition of many ‘poets’ over the course of a number of a few centuries (Foley 6). b) Insofar as the *Iliad* is the product of an oral tradition it preserves sociological traits from different periods in the development of pre-classical Greece. c) The *Iliad* ‘crystalized’ roughly into its presents state sometime in or after the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE at a critical juncture in the emergence of the Greek *polis* and with the application of alphabetic writing. d) While *The Iliad* represents aspects of both 8<sup>th</sup> century Greece and the centuries prior, and although it is difficult or impossible to distinguish what aspects come from what period, the *Iliad* maintains within itself and internal consistency that we may characterize as ‘Homeric Society.’

<sup>7</sup> Frederick M. Combellask. “Speakers and Scepters in Homer.” *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 43 (1948), 209

<sup>8</sup> In his article “Etymology in the semantic reconstruction of early Greek words:” Michael Clark acknowledges Saussures’ formulation and Lyon’s ‘the etymological fallacy,’ that “a word’s origin says nothing about its active meaning for a given speaker.” But he also explains that “the situation is different when we turn to a language like ancient Greek.” “Etymology in the semantic reconstruction of early Greek words: the case of ἄνθος”: see Michael Clarke, *Hermathena*, No. 179, (2005), 13-37. The semantics of ancient languages are often a mystery to us. Through close introspection of etymologies, however, we might “uncover the semantic structures behind ancient communication.” (Clarke 13-14). *Parrhesia*’s etymology from παν and ῥησία is evident enough, but this does not account for its unique usage, therefore I suggest we can trace its diachrony out of spoken language into the grammar of exchange found in the *Iliad*.

in the adverbial.<sup>9</sup> However, just as speaking boldly-with-*parrhesia* does not guarantee obedience, nor does holding a *skeptron*. The licensing of speech present in both the granting of *parrhesia* and the exchange of the *skeptron* does not open new possibilities of speaking, quite the opposite. Licensing of speech in any form is naturally an attempt to limit freedom of speech to those with *euboulia* [good counsel]. The question of “who should readily speak” is a prime concern in any system of counsel from Homeric society to the Athenian assembly: δίδου παρρησίαν τοῖς εὖ φρονούσιν, ἵνα περὶ ὧν ἂν ἀμφιγνοῆς, ἔχῃς τοὺς συνδοκιμάσοντας, διόρα καὶ τοὺς τέχνη κολακεύοντας καὶ τοὺς μετ’ εὐνοίας θεραπεύοντας, ἵνα μὴ πλέον οἱ πονηροί.<sup>10</sup> Instead of a discussion of *euboulia* and *kakaboulia*, however, I will discuss the emerging political systems as they manifest through structures of counsel and assembly, and the correspondent licensing/censoring of speech.

### *Parrhesia, Isegoria, and Isonomia*

In the Athenian assembly each meeting began with the customary, ritualistic, invitation: τίς ἀγορεύειν βούλεται;<sup>11</sup> Theoretically, anyone in the assembly could step forward to raise or address an issue, and from this the term *isegoria* is understood as ‘freedom of speech,’ though in fact it probably suggests the equal opportunity to speak before the assembly. Likewise, *isonomia*, while suggesting “the equality of the distribution of political rights,” in practice the assembly likely was dominated by the elite.<sup>12</sup> Democracy, even in Athens, was only ever an ideal, and the advent of democracy was in no way revolutionary, but rather an expansion of these privileges to speak in the assembly to a larger portion of the population. *Isonomia* after all initially means “equality of distribution,” and only later in the context of Athenian democratic assembly receives the addition of “political opportunity.” The presence of such a concern for the equality of distribution of war-spoils in the *Iliad*

<sup>9</sup> Many translators will translate *parrhesia* as ‘speaking boldly,’ regardless of the case it appears in, though especially in the construction [μέτα παρρησίας] and in the dative. While this often serves the translator’s purpose, it fails to do justice to the nuances of the world *parrhesia*. Furthermore, *parrhesia* in the dative should be understood as speaking-by-means-of-*parrhesia*, adative of instrument.

<sup>10</sup> Isoc. 2.28. “Give freedom of speech to those with good judgment, so that when you are in doubt you may have those who will help you to decided. See clearly between those who flatter with craft and those with good intentions to do service, so that the wicked do not gain more than the good.”

<sup>11</sup> Arist. *Ach.* 45. “Who wishes to address the assembly?” See also Dem. 18.170: ἡρώτα μὲν ὁ κῆρυξ ‘τίς ἀγορεύειν βούλεται’ παρήει δ’ οὐδείς, “and then the herald asked, “Who wishes to address the assembly,” but no one came forward.”

<sup>12</sup> D.M. Carter “Citizen Attribute, Negative Right: A Conceptual Difference Between Ancient and Modern Ideas of Freedom of Speech,” *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Sluiter, I, and Ralph M. Rosen. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 202.

amongst the *arestoi* confirms that *isonomia* was initially an *aristocratic* concept.<sup>13</sup> Similarly with the exception of the Thersites episode, the addressing of the assembly [ἀγορεύειν], is exclusively the office of the *arestoi*.<sup>14</sup> Thus we see Diomedes in Book 9 address Agamemnon citing his right [*themis*] to do so: Ἀτρεΐδῃ σοὶ πρῶτα μαχίσομαι ἀφραδέοντι, / ἢ θέμις ἐστὶν ἀναξ ἀγορῆ: σὺ δὲ μὴ τι χολωθῆς.<sup>15</sup> That Diomedes as a *basileis* has the right to upbraid Agamemnon indicates that Homeric society is not strictly a monarchical one.

In his article *Reciprocities in Homer*, Walter Donlan draws on the anthropological work of E. R. Service to suggest that Homeric society approximates the societal stage of Service's 'chiefdom,' but in an imperfect or inchoate form. That is, it still exhibits features of the previous structural stage of the 'tribe.'<sup>16</sup> Service's hierarchy ranges from hunter-gatherer 'bands,' to modern 'states,' with the *tribe* and the *chiefdom* situated in the middle. The classical *polis* would constitute Service's *state*, while the *tribe* is characterized by "settlements of agriculturalist/herders. The larger number of local groups is integrated by "pan-tribal sodalities" (clans, age-sets, military societies, etc.), but political integration is usually for specific purposes only. Hence, as in bands, tribal leadership is largely informal and impermanent, the several groups retaining their autonomy." In the *Iliad* we can certainly see this "pan-tribal sodality" in the assembled Achaeans, where the various *basileis* retain their autonomy, and the assemblage is gathered at Troy for a specific purpose. *Chiefdoms* on the other hand, "have a formal authority structure, in which a duly constituted, permanent leader holds an "office." Numbers of local groups are integrated into a single community, under the chief and a proto-nobility." The key distinction being that "unlike bands and tribes, which are egalitarian, chiefdoms are ranked societies. The chief, his family, and his associates, have structured greater access to prestige." Here we can also see the limited *isonomia* of the *Iliad*. The *arestoi* alone appear to have access to "prestige" [τιμή], and Agamemnon clearly holds the office of permanent leader. Nonetheless, the sheer scope of civil societies presented in the *Iliad* extends not through merely these two tiers but a few of the immanent political elements of Service's *states* can be seen; "complex and centralized political and economic structures, characterized

<sup>13</sup> Kurt A. Raaflaub. "Democracy, Oligarchy, and the Concept of the "Free Citizen" in Late Fifth-Century Athens," *Political Theory*, Vol. 11 (1983), 517-519

<sup>14</sup> Though Thersites is likely a member of the *arestoi* albeit a petty-*arestoi*. Many scholars assume Thersites represents a commoner or the democratic voice in Homer. Abraham Feldman provides a good account for why Thersites is far more likely a low-ranking or disreputable member of the *arestoi*. See Feldman, "The Apotheosis of Thersites." *The Classical Journal*, 42 (1947), 219-220

<sup>15</sup> *Il.* 9.32-33 "Son of Atreus, first I will contend with you since you're being senseless, since it is my right in the assembly as a king: but do not be angry at this."

<sup>16</sup> Donlan 138.

by the institutionalization of authority: formal legislative and judicial bodies. . .”<sup>17</sup>

Returning to the Diomedes quote, I will explain an important rhetorical aspect of *parrhesia*. While neither *isegoria* nor *isonomia* were rights strictly speaking, certainly not in the modern sense, they were a kind of *themis* for citizens. *Parrhesia* on the other hand was the ability to speak with frankness or boldly free from fear or shame, either by license, often following a request, or because the speaker in question was simply disregarding all decorum and spoke boldly without regard to shame or polity.<sup>18</sup> Between these two types of *parrhesia*, license and licentiousness, also existed an apologetic or rhetorical form.<sup>19</sup> The apologetic *parrhesia* is a rhetorical ploy that anticipates offence and thus presents the boldness with a prefatory apology, usually citing or implying the necessity of boldness or plain truth. This form is present in the Diomedes quote: σὺ δὲ μὴ τι χόλωθῆς, “don’t be angry at this.” This is a measured speech and the sort of language often seen in the highly developed rhetoric of fifth and fourth century Athens: δεηθεὶς ὑμῶν, ἂν λέγω τᾶληθῆ μετὰ παρρησίας, μηδὲν ἀχθεσθῆναι μοι.<sup>20</sup> Here Demosthenes prefaces his statements by reminding his audience of the plainness of truth and its necessity. Similarly, Patroclus employs a similar technique before he criticizes Achilles: ὦ Ἀχιλεῦ Πηληϊός υἱὲ μέγα φέροτατ’ Ἀχαιῶν μὴ νεμέσα.<sup>21</sup> Later this will be compared with the unmeasured [ἄκοσμά] speeches of vulgar *parrhesia* [κάμαθει παρρησία]. For the purposes of this present paper it is important to recognize that *parrhesia* can be both an object granted upon request, or it may also be assumed and simply held [ἔχω]. In this later form *parrhesia* might be plain blunt speech or a crafty assuming of license.

### Publicity or Creating a Public : Σκήπτρον as Agora-founding

De-contextualized *agora* might mean one of two things, either a market-place or a place of political assembly. This conflation of *topos* is important. That the market-place was the choice location for the gathering of an assembly indicates something of the improvisational nature of *agorasthai* [to address the assembly]. Rather than a citadel or palace, the *topoi* of the preceding Mycenaean monarchies, the pre-existing common location of the *agora* was chosen for the meeting of assemblies of ‘citizens.’ While many *poleis* offer monumental evidence for a dedicated *agora*, such as the

<sup>17</sup> Donlan 138-39.

<sup>18</sup> See Foucault *Fearless Speech*, esp. 1-8.

<sup>19</sup> Foucault 6.

<sup>20</sup> Dem. 10.54 “I ask of you, if I speak the truth with frankness [*parrhesia*], do not be offended by me.”

<sup>21</sup> *Il.* 16.21 “O Achilles son of Peleus, mightiest of the Achaeans, don’t be angry with me.”

Athenian *ekklesia*, an agora is “first and foremost the place where assemblies are held, oriented by an altar to the gods; secondly, it is the people in arms forming the assembly of those who deliberate; lastly, it is the speech pronounced in public in this place of debate.”<sup>22</sup> An agora, as a place where people assemble, may occur anywhere, and in the absence of a monument or alter, the *skeptron* becomes the orientating focal.

Presumably the Achaeans in the *Iliad* had a selected location in their camp that served as their agora, complete with some sort of temporary architectural monument. Nevertheless the agora could occur anywhere at anytime, merely by the presence of a *skeptron* or pseudo-*skeptron*. Thus when in Book 2 Agamemnon chooses to test the soldiers he addresses them holding the *skeptron*,<sup>23</sup> but the crowd he is addressing is so great that his words “set the *assembly* in motion like a great wave of the sea.”<sup>24</sup> Obviously this assembly is too large to fit in his tent or wherever counsel usually occurs, so Agamemnon establishes an *agora-topos* with his *sketpron*. Similarly in Book 23 when Menelaus, feeling unjustly affronted by Antilochus, establishes an assembly in the midst of the funeral games by receiving a *skeptron* from a herald: τοῖσι δὲ καὶ Μενέλαος ἀνίστατο θυμὸν ἀχεύων / Ἀντιλόχῳ ἄμωτον κεχολωμένος: ἐν δ’ ἄρα κῆρυξ / χειρὶ σκῆπτρον ἔθηκε, σιωπήσασί τε κέλευσεν / Ἀργείους.<sup>25</sup> Menelaus feels slighted enough by Antilochus that a he requires public recognition of the insult. He invokes the leaders of the Achaeans to come together in an assembly: ἀλλ’ ἄγετ’ Ἀργείων ἡγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες / ἐς μέσον ἀμφοτέροισι δικάσατε, μὴ δ’ ἐπ’ ἀρωγῇ.<sup>26</sup> Employing the legal language of judgment [δικάσατε] and then a demand for a public oath he coaxes Antilochus into an admission of guilt.

The publicness of an oath is significant. In Book 10 Dolon agrees to sneak into the Achaean camp on condition that he receive the prize of the spoils he takes. ἀλλ’ ἄγε μοι τὸ σκῆπτρον ἀνάσχεο, καί μοι ὄμοσσον / ἧ μὲν τοὺς ἵππους τε καὶ ἄρματα ποικίλα

<sup>22</sup> Detienne, *From Practices of Assembly to the Forms of Politics: A Comparative Approach*, 5. This section is largely indebted to Detienne.

<sup>23</sup> *Il.* 2.101-2

<sup>24</sup> *Il.* 2.142-155. ὡς φάτο, τοῖσι δὲ θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι ὄρινε / πᾶσι μετὰ πληθὺν ὅσοι οὐ βουλῆς ἐπάκουσαν: / κινήθη δ’ ἀγορῆ φῆ κύματα μακρὰ θαλάσσης / πόντου Ἰκαρίοιο, τὰ μὲν τ’ Εὐρός τε Νότος τε / ὄρορ’ ἐπαΐξας πατρὸς Διὸς ἐκ νεφελῶν. “Thus he spoke, and stirred the hearts in the breasts / of all among the crowd and so many who did not hear the / counsel: set the assembly in motion like a great wave of the sea / of the Icarian straight, as when Eurus and Notos / stir them to rush from the clouds of Zeus the father.”

<sup>25</sup> *Il.* 23.566-69. “And then amongst them Menelaus stood up vexed in his heart / And with Antilochus implacably angered: and then into his hands / a herald placed the sceptre, and called for silence / Amongst the Argives:”

<sup>26</sup> *Il.* 23.573-74. “Come all you leaders and rulers of the Argives / and pass judgement between us two in the middle, but judge impartially.”

χαλκῶ / δωσέμεν, οἷ φορέουσιν ἀμύμονα Πηλείωνα.<sup>27</sup> Dolon does not simply request that Hector promise him these prizes, he asks that he swear an oath, which can only be performed on a staff. By raising the *skeptron* Hector calls attention to his oath and himself. He creates a temporary agora, even when the terrain is unfavourable. The oath is not merely to the gods to witness, though that is certainly a part of the ritual, it is also to the public. Dolon has public acknowledgement of the oath, therefore Hector cannot pretend never to have sworn the oath. In a pre-literate society, publicity is in the announcement.

“The scepter is almost universally and without qualification believed to be a symbol which gives a speaker something of official authority, and serves as a sign that he has the floor.”<sup>28</sup> It is necessarily to distinguish that “official authority” is not synonymous with obedience. Achilles most certainly does not obey Agamemnon though he carries the Zeus-descended *skeptron*. In his discussion on the origins of *agorae*, Marcel Detienne raises the intriguing and important comparison to the notion of publicity. Drawing on Kant he says that publicity is “that of making public in the form of a material printing and consequent presentation for free discussion.”<sup>29</sup> Though this definition applies to 18<sup>th</sup> century publicity through print it carries some truth when applied to this situation. For the Achaeans publicity retains the consequence of “presentation for free discussion,” but it is the space of the assembly, “through which all public matters are defined. An agora with the will to assemble signifies direct participation of full citizens in all things political.”<sup>30</sup> Detienne goes on to mention: “It is in the agora and before the assembled citizens that, in Crete, for example, one announces the adoption of so-and-so and the acceptance of such-and-such goods in the case of a contested inheritance.” This is a fact perhaps lost on us in our written age, where spoken language carries little authority, but for the Achaeans publicity does not reside in a document than can be referenced but in the collective memory of those present at an assembly and how the word is spread orally.

‘Public concern’ is however also an important matter to mention. The will to assemble always concerns common affairs, *res publica* or *τι δήμιον*.<sup>31</sup> This can be seen in Demosthenes’ defence for the necessity of his bold speech: αἴτιον δὲ τούτων (καίμοι

<sup>27</sup> *Il.* 10.321-23. “But come, lift up your sceptre and swear to me, / say that you will grant me the horses and bronze dappled chariot, / those that bear the noble son of Peleus.”

<sup>28</sup> Combellask 209.

<sup>29</sup> Detienne 13.

<sup>30</sup> Detienne 14.

<sup>31</sup> *Od.* 2.31-32. ἦν χ’ ἡμῖν σάφα εἶποι, ὅτε πρότερός γε πύθοιτο; / ἦέ τι δήμιον ἄλλο παύσεται ἢδ’ ἀγορεύει; “Might he tell us something plainly, that already he has learnt? Or is there **SOME** other public concern that he will make manifest and address?”

πρὸς θεῶν, ὅταν εἵνεκα τοῦ βελτίστου λέγω, ἔστω παρορησία).<sup>32</sup> He establishes a justification within the public interest. Likewise, when Achilles calls the assembly in Book I it is again on account of his the concern for the Danaans: κήδετο γὰρ Δαναῶν.<sup>33</sup>

### Passing the *σκήπτρον*: Passing Authority-in-Speech

The authority of the *skeptron* is a meaning vested like any social construction in the ritual of agora. How one officially takes the floor in the agora, or how the participants are arranged in the ceremony or ritual are the rules by which the community establishes its own representation and how official community action occurs. These rules and ritual are in a manner of speaking a grammar of performance. In Homeric society “an assembly takes the form of a circle or semicircle: whoever wishes to speak moves to the middle, seizes the staff, the *skeptron*, which confers authority to his discourse, opinion or advice, necessarily relating” to a τι δήμιον.<sup>34</sup> In *Speakers and Scepters in Homer*, Frederick M. Combellack challenges the traditional belief “that any speaker in a public meeting may be presumed to hold the sceptre.”<sup>35</sup> He suggests instead that the sceptre is reserved for the most austere moments. This question is difficult to prove either way. One the one hand it is quite possible that Homer reserves *mentioning* the handing off of the *skeptron* only at the most significant moments as a way of building up anticipation, or in moments such as Menelaus’ charge against Antilochus in Book 23 to heighten the awareness of publicity. On the other hand Combellack may be correct in saying that “in Homeric society the sceptre was used by speakers only occasionally and for the definite purpose of indicating the special nature of very solemn or important remarks.”<sup>36</sup> I, however, lean towards the belief that the Greek audience would have assumed presence of the *skeptron* in any public assembly. It would have been a necessary part of decorum, especially when architectural or monumental structures were missing. Obviously it would be unnecessary in private instances such as the embassy in Book 9, or in the din of battle.<sup>37</sup> Considering that the bard likely performed with a staff, performing each part holding the staff or leaning on it, it is reasonable that the audience took the *skeptron* for granted.

<sup>32</sup> Dem. 8.32. “And for myself, by the gods, since I speak these things for the best, let it be all-spoken”

<sup>33</sup> *Il.* 1.53-58

<sup>34</sup> Detienne 6

<sup>35</sup> Combellack 209

<sup>36</sup> Combellack 215

<sup>37</sup> I do not necessarily contend that the Greek’s understood the private/public dichotomy the strict modern sense. The embassy still has a certain publicity to it, but not to the degree of a formal assembly. The embassy is an attempt at persuasion as opposed to deliberation.

The most convincing demonstration of this occurs in Book 2 of the *Odyssey*, when we can see Telemachus move through each step in the decorum of sceptered-assembly:

ὥς φάτο, χαίρει δὲ φήμη Ὀδυσσῆος φίλος υἱός,  
οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔτι δὴν ἦστο, μενοίνησεν δ' ἀγορεύειν,  
στῆ δὲ μέσση ἀγορῆ: σκῆπτρον δέ οἱ ἔμβαλε χεῖρὶ  
κῆρυξ Πεισῆνωρ πεπνυμένα μῆδεα εἰδώς.<sup>38</sup>

After commanding his heralds to call an assembly,<sup>39</sup> and waiting for Aegyptus to finish his address he stands, takes the appropriate position in the middle of the assembly,<sup>40</sup> receives the *skeptron*, and then begins his address. Moreover, the purpose of the *skeptron* as a speaking staff ensures orderly assembly so that each speaker has a chance to make their appeal. Since there are few examples of a character interrupting another during an assembly (such as Achilles' response to Agamemnon in Book 1, and in this case Agamemnon presumably has his own Zeus-descended *skeptron*) it is reasonably safe to assume that the counsellors are obeying the ceremony of passing the staff back and forth. Likewise the Trojan assemblies obey this ceremony as well: ἦτοι ὃ γ' ὥς εἰπὼν κατ' ἄρ' ἔξετο: τοῖσι δ' ἀνέστη / δῖος Ἀλέξανδρος Ἑλένης πόσις ἠὔκομοιο, / ὅς μιν ἀμειβόμενος ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα.<sup>41</sup> Though Paris is angered at Antenor and responds with ἔπεα πτερόεντα, he nonetheless waits for Antenor to sit down before rising and responding.

The authority of the *skeptron*, however, is derived from more than simply ceremony. It appears to be a direct conduit to heaven: ὥς εἰπὼν τὸ σκῆπτρον ἀνέσχεθε πᾶσι θεοῖσιν.<sup>42</sup> There is also a precise description of the heavenly descent from which Agamemnon receives his *skeptron*:

<sup>38</sup> *Od.* 2.6-38. "Thus he spoke, and the dear son of Odysseus rejoiced at his speech, / and yet he did not stay seated long, but desired eagerly to address the assembly, / and he took a stand in the middle of the assembly: and in his hand / the Herald, placed the sceptre, Peisenor who was well versed in wise counsel."

<sup>39</sup> *Od.* 2.6-7. αἶψα δὲ κηρύττεσσι λιγυφθόγγοισι κέλευσε / κηρύττειν ἀγορήνδε κἀρῆ κομόωντας Ἀχαιοῦς, "Immediately he commanded the sweet-tongued heralds to address the Achaians in the assembly once they had been set in order."

<sup>40</sup> The importance of taking a position is significant, and often even when there is no mention of a *skeptron* we still find the speaker moving first to the centre: Ἰδαῖος: ὃ δ' ἄρ' ἦλθε καὶ ἀγγελίην ἀπέειπε / στᾶς ἐν μέσσοισιν: "And [Idaeus] came and declared his message / standing in the middle." (*Il.* 7.416-17)

<sup>41</sup> *Il.* 7.354-56. "And thus when he had spoken he sat down, and following / arose godly Alexander husband of lovely haired Helen / who answering addressed him with winged words."

<sup>42</sup> *Il.* 7.412. "Thus [Agamemnon] spoke and held up the scepter to all of heaven."

ἀνὰ δὲ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων  
 ἔστη σκῆπτρον ἔχων τὸ μὲν Ἥφαιστος κάμε τεύχων.  
 Ἥφαιστος μὲν δῶκε Διὶ Κρονίωνι ἄνακτι,  
 αὐτὰρ ἄρα Ζεὺς δῶκε διακτόρω ἀργεῖφόντη:  
 Ἑρμείας δὲ ἄναξ /δῶκεν Πέλοπι πληξίππῳ,  
 αὐτὰρ ὁ αὐτε Πέλοψ δῶκ' Ἄτρεϊ ποιμένι λαῶν,  
 Ἄτρεὺς δὲ θνήσκων ἔλιπεν πολύαρνι Θυέστη,  
 αὐτὰρ ὁ αὐτε Θυέστ' Ἀγαμέμνονι λείπε φορῆναι,  
 πολλῆσιν νήσοισι καὶ Ἄργεϊ παντὶ ἀνάσσειν.<sup>43</sup>

The precise descent of authority here should be of particular note. First of all the *skeptron* doesn't descend directly from Zeus as is initially implied, but first is passed down to Hermes, the messenger god. Secondly Atreus is characterized as a ποιμένι λαῶν, "shepherd of men," and similarly Thyestes is characterized as πολύαρνι, "of many sheep." The imagery of sheep-herding suggests a comparison between the *skeptron* and the staff a shepherd uses to herd sheep. Finally, Agamemnon receives it so that he might ἀνάσσειν, "rule his own flock of men." The verb φορῆναι, here is curious since the *LSJ* states that it is often used in relation to carrying a message or serving as a messenger. Therefore there are two very important instances of the uses of *skeptrons*. First, we see it as a staff to usher sheep or comparatively usher men, like when Odysseus uses it in Book 2. Secondly it is used as the implement of a herald, or sign of a king's authority passed down through a messenger. The fact that the messenger here is Hermes himself should not be surprising since it follows the conventional passing authority through a herald.

In addition to kings and priests the other, perhaps the most common figures associated with *skeptrons* are heralds. More so than any other figure, heralds serve as agora-founding servants, and by extension publishers. More importantly heralds embody the transference of authority held with the *skeptron*. In the shield of Achilles *ekphrasis* from Book 18 they are portrayed as an integral part of the polis, herding men with their *skeptron* before the authority is passed on to the elders:

λαοὶ δ' εἰν ἀγορῇ ἔσαν ἀθρόοι: ἔνθα δὲ νεῖκος  
 ὠρόρει, δύο δ' ἄνδρες ἐνεΐκεον εἵνεκα ποινῆς

<sup>43</sup> *Il.* 2.101-108. "And then Lord Agamemnon rose / Holding the *skeptron* skilfully made by Hephaestus. / Hephaestus gave it to Zeus the lord son of Kronos, / And then Zeus gave it to the Agros-slaying messenger, / And Hermes the lord gave it to horse driving Pelops, / And then again, Pelops gave it to Atreus, shepherd of men, / But Atreus dying bequeathed it to Thyestes, rich in flocks, / But then Thyestes left it to Agamemnon to carry with him like a messenger / so that he might lord over many islands and all of Argos."

ἀνδρὸς ἀποφθιμένου: . . .  
 κήρυκες δ' ἄρα λαὸν ἐρήτυον: οἱ δὲ γέροντες  
 εἶατ' ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοις ἱερῷ ἐνὶ κύκλῳ,  
 σκῆπτρα δὲ κηρύκων ἐν χέρσ' ἔχον ἠεροφώνων:  
 τοῖσιν ἔπειτ' ἥϊσσον, ἀμοιβηδὶς δὲ δίκασον.<sup>44</sup>

Here it is evident that peace-time Homeric society appear not at all monarchal, but in fact highly organized and perhaps even institutionalize with judicial bodies. The heralds use their authority to establish the space of the assembly and then pass this authority for speaking to the *gerontes* [elders]. It is worth noting that the presence of the *skeptron* as well as the polished stones of the sacred circle announces the agora-space. The architectural element of the sacred circle means this is a permanent place of assembly, and like the *skeptron* itself, the space is sacred. The grammar of the exchange is the same here as elsewhere, the heralds pass the *skeptron* off to the elders, who, holding it, pass judgement.

In Book 2 Agamemnon passes the authority of his *skeptron* onto Odysseus so that he might, in the role of herald restrain the deserting crowd. Although, Odysseus approaches Agamemnon for the *skeptron*, he is acting perfectly within the office of a “loud-voiced” herald that we have seen elsewhere: αὐτὸς δ' Ἀτρεΐδew Ἀγαμέμνονος ἀντίος ἐλθὼν / δέξατό οἱ σκῆπτρον πατρῷον ἄφθιτον αἰεὶ: / σὺν τῷ ἔβη κατὰ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων.<sup>45</sup> Odysseus does not act as a king here, but by holding the most honoured *skeptron*, and with the aid of Athena shines as the ideal herald. That he uses the *skeptron* also to beat some of the soldiers into submission should not be too much of a surprise since we've already seen other wielders of this same *skeptron* characterized as shepherds:

ὡς φάσαν ἢ πληθύς: ἀνὰ δ' ὁ πολίπορθος Ὀδυσσεὺς  
 ἔστη σκῆπτρον ἔχων: παρὰ δὲ γλανκῶπας Ἀθήνη  
 εἰδομένη κήρυκι σιωπᾶν λαὸν ἀνώγει,  
 ὡς ἅμα θ' οἱ πρότοί τε καὶ ὕστατοι υἴες Ἀχαιῶν  
 μῦθον ἀκούσειαν καὶ ἐπιφρασσαίατο βουλήν:  
 ὃ σφιν ἐν φρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν: <sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Il.* 18.496-506. “And the men were gathered in crowds in the agora. For there a / quarrel had begun, and two men wrangled with each other / on account of the penalty for the murder of a man. . . / But the heralds restrained the men: and the elders / Sat upon polished stones in the sacred circle, / Then in their hands they held the sceptres of the loud-voiced / heralds: and thereupon each in quick succession stood / and passed judgement.”

<sup>45</sup> *Il.* 2.185-88. “And [Odysseus] himself went to meet Agamemnon son of Atreus / And received the sceptre of his father, ever unfading: / And with it went along the ships of the bronze-clad Achaeans.”

<sup>46</sup> *Il.* 2.278-283. “. . . so the crowd spoke, but city-sacking Odysseus arose / Holding the *skeptron*: and beside him bright-eyed Athena / Appeared like a herald she commanded the men be silent, / So that both the nearest

Following typical assembly decorum, Odysseus stands while holding the *skeptron* and the men become silent. Athena's presence here in the 'ειδομένη' of a herald, however, is slightly confusing. It could signify that Odysseus after silencing the crowd is no longer acting in the capacity as a herald but as a *skeptron* and *themis* wielding king addressing the assembly, and thus Athena as a herald is lending him additional authority to speak. Or it could be that heralds as previously seen often work in pairs or more. Odysseus does, however, speak μετέειπεν, in their midst, the proper place for a formal address. Some scholars suggest that in this scene Odysseus is usurping the authority of Agamemnon and acting in his stead on account of Agamemnon's incompetence as a leader. Such an outlook ignores the social convention of Homeric society. Odysseus performs the role of the herald and receives the *skeptron* from Agamemnon just as a herald would receive the *skeptron* and its associate authority. Furthermore, it would surely be very un-kingly for Agamemnon, the commander-in-chief of the Achean army to run up and down the ranks trying to call the men to order. This is the appropriate office of the heralds and thus it is perfectly appropriate for Odysseus, as a particularly decorated and kingly herald, to perform this duty in Agamemnon's stead.

### *Aristeia* and the New Grounds for Speaking

Detienne, in his comparative analysis of different independent agora-esque assemblies from throughout the ages suggests that often they grow out of warrior cultures. "The right to speak necessary for the advent of a deliberative assembly must be construed along the lines of the right to wage war."<sup>47</sup> The equality of word and deed in the *Iliad* confuses the right to speak. Diomedes for example in Book 9 declares his right [*themis*] as a king to address Agamemnon, and relies on his own *might* rather than holding a *skeptron* to ensure this might. Likewise, Homer points out that Polydamas and Hector are not equal in *euboulia*, that Polydamas is wise in counsel while Hector brave in deeds of war:

ὡς Ἐκτωρ ἀγόρευ', ἐπὶ δὲ Τρῶες κελάδησαν  
 νήπιοι: ἐκ γὰρ σφεων φρένας εἶλετο Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη.  
 Ἐκτορι μὲν γὰρ ἐπήνησαν κατὰ μητιόωντι,  
 Πουλυδάμαντι δ' ἄρ' οὐ τις ὅς ἐσθλὴν φράζετο βουλήν.<sup>48</sup>

and the farthest of the sons of the / Achaeans might hear the matter and know the counsel: / And well minded he addressed them and spoke amidst them."

<sup>47</sup> Detienne 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Il.* 18.311-14. "Thus Hector address the assembly and the Trojans shouted / aloud, like children: for from them Pallas Athena seized their / wits. For all applauded Hector's poor plan, / But no one praised Polydamas who showed good counsel."

The Trojans applaud for Hector not only because Athena steals their wits, but also perhaps because Hector holds much more τιμή. This represents the problem of discerning *euboulia* since the best fighter is not necessarily the best in counsel.

Perhaps it is Achilles himself who points out the arbitrary contrived nature of the *skeptron* convention in the very oath he makes in Book 1. He at once follows conventional oath practice, employing the *skeptron* while also establishing his rejection of the practice of assembly, the decorum of the *skeptron* and the unnaturalness of the staff stripped of its natural state:

δημοβόρος βασιλεὺς ἐπεὶ οὐ τιδανοῖσιν ἀνάσσεις:  
 ἦ γὰρ ἂν Ἀτρεΐδη νῦν ὕστατα λωβήσαιο.  
 ἀλλ' ἔκ τοι ἐρέω καὶ ἐπὶ μέγαν ὄρκον ὁμοῦμαι:  
 ναὶ μὰ τόδε σκήπτρον, τὸ μὲν οὐ ποτε φύλλα καὶ ὄζους  
 φύσει, ἐπεὶ δὴ πρῶτα τομῆν ἐν ὄρεσσι λέλοιπεν,  
 οὐδ' ἀναθλήσει: περὶ γὰρ ῥά ἐ χαλκὸς ἔλειψε  
 φύλλά τε καὶ φλοιόν: νῦν αὐτέ μιν υἱεὺς Ἀχαιῶν  
 ἐν παλάμῃ φορέουσι δικασπόλοι, οἳ τε θέμιστας  
 πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύαται: ὃ δέ τοι μέγας ἔσσεται ὄρκος:<sup>49</sup>

Achilles swears by the *skeptron* he is holding, which of itself is of no surprise,<sup>50</sup> but he also draws attention to the artificiality of the *skeptron* itself. By discussing the stripping of its leaves and bark, and cutting from the mountain, Achilles may be suggesting his awareness of the absence of any natural worth in the *skeptron*. Stripped by bronze it is a piece of human artifice, and therefore: “now the sons of the Achaeans / carry it in their hands as judges, who draw the decrees from / Zeus,” might be an ironic or even sarcastic statement on the descent of authority from Zeus. Remembering the descent of the scepter to Agamemnon, through Hermes and other intermediaries, Achilles might call attention to the fact that the *skeptron* is not directly given by Zeus, or that it might be a manmade construction and not the bearer of Zeus-descended *themis*. More famously, of course, is that when concluding

<sup>49</sup> *Il.* 1.231-239 “People-devouring King, since you lord over men of no account, / For otherwise now this, Atreid, would be your last insult. / But I will speak against you and upon this great oath I swear: / Aye, by this sceptre, that should never again bear leaf and twig / Since it left its stump on the mountain, / Nor will it sprout afresh: for the bronze has stripped the leaves and / bark from around it: and now the sons of the Achaeans / Carry it in their hands as judges, who draw the decrees from / Zeus: and this for you will be a great oath.../ Thus spoke the son of Peleus, and then he threw / the sceptre to the ground, studded as it was with / golden nails, and then he sat himself down.”

<sup>50</sup> Though, of course the fact that we are never told when he is given the sceptre suggests that holding the *skeptron* is something a Greek audience would assume, and it would not have been necessary to mention everytime the *skeptron* is passed off.

his curse, Achilles throws the *skeptron* to the earth. Thus Achilles is both complicit with and rejecting the ceremony of assembly. He completes his oath by striking the earth, but he also throws the *skeptron* away in his anger. After throwing away the scepter he also does not speak in counsel again until Book 22.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the throwing of the staff signifies and retirement from public life, either permanently or, as in this case, temporarily.

Achilles is not the only figure in Homer to throw away the *skeptron*. Telemachus also casts it to the ground in his anger: ὣς φάτο χωόμενος, ποτι δὲ σκήπτρον βάλε γαίῃ / δάκρυ' ἀναπρήσας: οἶκτος δ' ἔλε λαὸν ἅπαντα.<sup>52</sup> Despite being the son of “wily” Odysseus, it is not necessarily that Telemachus throws the *skeptron* to the earth and bursts into tears for the purpose of being pitied. As a young man he has a temper like Achilles’ wrath and is unable to measure his speech like his father. This is, however, also a sign of *parrhesia*. Throwing down the *skeptron* and thus throwing away traditional authority both Telemachus and Achilles relocate the truthfulness and therefore value of their addresses outside the traditional ceremonial realm of the sceptered-assembly, and proper decorum.

### Thersites, Approval and Proto-democracy

The difficulty with the Thersites episode is that his speech, de-contextualized from the speaker is quite reasonable. Quintilian discusses this: “The speech against Agamemnon, when made by Thersites, provokes laughter. Give those words to Diomedes or someone of his stature, and they will seem to bear witness to a lofty spirit.”<sup>53</sup> Some scholars point to Thersites as a proto-democratic figure. He certainly speaks boldly and with assumed license, and Achilles would have a hard time berating him for “holding one thing in his heart while speaking another.” However, beyond lacking both *areastaea* and a *skeptron*, he does not step forward into the middle of the assembly, nor is there even mention of him rising, all typical indications of decorum. He also speaks against not only a *basileis*, but a sceptre-wielding king, in the role of a loud-voiced herald, and one who is wielding the supreme Zeus-descended *skreptron*. Moreover, Thersites is described in terms that suggest he lacks craft. His words are unmeasured ἀμετροεπής, they are without order ἄκοσμά and therefore he speaks with an ignorant *parrhesia*. We find similar language in Euripides for disparaging an unwanted speaker in this messenger speech from *Orestes*:

<sup>51</sup> Achilles does speak again at line 292 when he interrupts and insults Agamemnon, but do not consider a proper address to the assembly.

<sup>52</sup> *Od.* 2.80-81. “Thus furious [Telemachus] spoke, but then he threw the sceptre to the ground and let burst his tears: and pity seized all the men.”

<sup>53</sup> Translation not my own. Quoted from Ahl, *The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome*, 175.

ἐπὶ τῷδε δ' ἠγόρευε Διομήδης ἄναξ.  
 οὔτος κτανεῖν μὲν οὔτε σὲ οὔτε σύγγονον  
 εἶα, φυγῆ δὲ ζημιοῦντας εὖσεβειν.  
 ἐπεροθήσαν δ' οἱ μὲν ὡς καλῶς λέγοι,  
 οἱ δ' οὐκ ἐπήγουν. κἀπὶ τῷδ' ἀνίσταται  
 ἀνὴρ τις ἄθυρογλωσσος, ἰσχύων θράσει,  
 Ἀργεῖος οὐκ Ἀργεῖος, ἠναγκασμένος,  
 θορόβῳ τε πίσυνος κάμαθει παρρησία,  
 πιθανὸς ἔτ' αὐτοῦς περιβαλεῖν κακῶ τινη.<sup>54</sup>

This Argive character is presented as an unequivocal *kakaboulian* [one without good counsel]. He has a doorless-tongue ἄθυρογλωσσος, that is he cannot control his own tongue, and though described as possessing *parrhesia* it is in the pejorative sense of plain speech, κάμαθει παρρησία.

#### (εὔ)βουλία ἄνευ σκῆπτρου : (Good) Counsel without a Scepter

Similarly on the battlefield when no *skeptron* is available the spear also creates an agora-esque space, though of course the realities of the battlefield preclude the possibility of a genuine agora. In battle we often see Hector and others rallying men by waving around their spears.<sup>55</sup> The spears are a suitable battle substitute for the *skeptron*, but the significance is different. The spear doesn't serve in the same kind of authority as a staff, it carries a more pressing rallying authority in the midst of *melée*:

ἔξ ἵππων δ' ἀποβάντες ἐπὶ χθόνα μῦθον ἄκουον  
 τὸν ῥ' Ἑκτώρ ἀγόρευε Διὶ φίλος: ἐν δ' ἄρα χειρὶ  
 ἔγχος ἔχ' ἑνδεκάπηχυ: πάροιθε δὲ λάμπετο δουρὸς  
 αἰχμῇ χαλκείῃ, περὶ δὲ χρύσεος θέε πόρκης,  
 τῷ ὃ γ' ἐρυσάμενος ἔπεα Τρώεσσι μετηύδα:  
 'κέκλυτέ μεν Τρώες καὶ Δάρδανοι ἠδ' ἐπίκουροι: <sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Eur. *Orest.* 898-906. "And next lord Diomedes addressed the assembly. / He advised that they should not kill you or your brother, / But in order to be pious they should punish you with exile. / So many shouted in approval that the words were good, / Still others did not approve, and next stood up / A man who cannot keep his mouth shut, strong in arrogance, / An Argive but not from Argos, forced upon us, / Relying on his booming voice and ignorant plain speech, / Convincing upon them to encompass some evil."

<sup>55</sup> *Il.* 6.102-105

<sup>56</sup> *Il.* 8.492-497. "Then from their horses the men dismounted and upon the ground then / listened to the speech that Hector addressed the assembly, Hector dear to Zeus. / And in his hand / He held an eleven-cubit spear: and before him the bronze spear-head shone, / around which gleamed a golden ring, / Leaning on this he spoke his

Likewise the in-battlefield-*bouliā* permits far less space for counsel. Therefore battlefield ‘agoras’ usually only have time for one or two points of view and they tend to carry a private quality as opposed to the inherently public nature of assemblies. For example, when Helenus or Polydamas express counsel to Hector it does not take the form of an assembly so the lack of *skeptron* is hardly noteworthy. Instead we see them standing beside Hector to offer counsel. On two occasions Polydamas’s counsel to Hector follows similar formulaic lines indicating his proximity, and implying, given the context of the din of battle, that their conversation is relatively private.<sup>57</sup>

The moveable quality of *parrhesia* as a direct object extends diachronically from the transferable authority physically embodied in the *skeptron*. Both function in a similar way by acting as a form of license that limits who has the privilege to speak and when, and both are often strictly controlled. Euripides includes this sort of control in the Herald’s speech to Pentheus in the *Bacchae*:

βάκχας ποτνιάδας εἰσιδών, αἰ τῆσδε γῆς  
οἴστροισι λευκὸν κῶλον ἐξηκόντισαν,  
ἦκω φράσαι σοὶ καὶ πόλει χρῆζων, ἄναξ,  
ὥς δεινὰ δρῶσι θανυμάτων τε κρείσσονα.  
θέλω δ’ ἀκούσαι, πότερὰ σοὶ παρηρησία  
φράσω τὰ κείθεν ἢ λόγον στειλώμεθα:  
τὸ γὰρ τάχος σου τῶν φρενῶν δέδοικ’, ἄναξ,  
καὶ τοῦξύθυμον καὶ τὸ βασιλικὸν λίαν.<sup>58</sup>

The herald, fearing for his own person, prefaces his statement with a request for permission to speak freely. Likewise, in the *Iliad* we find one of the most pressing examples of similar *parrhesia*, not represented by a moveable *skeptron* but specifically in its absence. In Book 1, Achilles asks Calchas to reveal the origin of the plague, but Calchas hesitates and asks for protection first:

speech among the Trojans: / “Hear me, Trojans, Dardanians and friends!”

<sup>57</sup> See *Il.* 12.60: δὴ τότε Πουλυδάμας θρασὺν Ἔκτορα εἶπε παραστάς, “and then Poulydamas coming near to bold Hector spoke”; and *Il.* 13.725: εἰ μὴ Πουλυδάμας θρασὺν Ἔκτορα εἶπε παραστάς, “if Polydamas had not coming near to bold Hector spoken.”

<sup>58</sup> Eur. *Ba.* 666-671 “I have come to tell you and announce to the city, lord, / how they do such things mightier than this, / but I wish to hear whether I should speak to you with fearless speech / the situation there, or if I should dispatch the speech? / For I fear the hastiness of your passion, lord, / and your quickness to anger and your exceedingly / kingly position.”

ὦ Ἀχιλεῦ κέλεαί με Διὶ φίλε μυθήσασθαι  
 μῆνιν Ἀπόλλωνος ἑκατηβελέταο ἄνακτος:  
 τοὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω: σὺ δὲ σύνθεο καὶ μοι ὄμοσον  
 ἧ μὲν μοι πρόφρων ἔπεσιν καὶ χερσὶν ἀρήξῃν:  
 ἧ γὰρ οἴομαι ἄνδρα χολωσέμεν, ὃς μέγα πάντων  
 Ἀργείων κρατέει καὶ οἱ πείθονται Ἀχαιοί: <sup>59</sup>

The precise nuance is not the same. The Herald in the *Bacchae* requests *parrhesia* directly from Pentheus, the king whom he fears. Calchas, however, defers this question to Achilles.<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless the results are nearly identical. The perception of safety is often the first necessity for bold speech, hence why Foucault calls it ‘fearless speech.’ However, the need to create a safe environment for counsellors is essential for *euboulia*. Calchas, though well minded, ‘ἐν φρονέων,’ is no *basileis*, he possesses neither *skeptron* nor *aristeia*, nor *themis* in counsel. Still his knowledge and counsel is vital to the war effort.

### Conclusion

The *Iliad* crystalized in the 8th century just as the *polis* was forming into its classical form, that the *Iliad* reflects this formation should be of no surprise and many scholars have commented on this. Nevertheless we must remember as well that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were not the only epics available, many have been lost to posterity and while posterity can sometimes be fickle and erratic in what it preserves, that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* survived where others did not probably attests to their popularity long after the 8th century. A work like the *Iliad* with such a nuanced discussion of politics, power and the need for good counsel [*euboulia*] would surely remain popular in the highly politicized world of the classical *poleis*. In the Athenian democracy especially where public figures were quite aware of the artifice of rhetoric, they would understand the need to pierce rhetorical art that could make *kakaboulia* look like *euboulia*. Therefore it should be no surprise that certain political elements of the system of assembly should be found immanent and in a

<sup>59</sup> *Il.* 1.74-79. “Oh Achilles, dear to Zeus, you call on me to explain / the wrath of lord Apollo the far-shooting: / And therefore I will speak, but take heed and swear to me / That readily by your words and by your hands you’ll defend me: / For I anticipate that I’ll anger a man who greatly among all / The Argives rules and whom the Achaeans obey:”

<sup>60</sup> Interestingly Calchas asks Achilles for protection because he trusts martial prowess to keep him safe. Therefore just as Odysseus uses the *skeptron* in Book 2 as a cudgel to beat the rank and file into submission, Calchas here uses Achilles similarly as a *skeptron* stand in. Perhaps the *skeptron* tradition itself might represent authority quite literally as the threat of violence the *sceptre-holder* wields in counsel. Zeus too has his own kind of *skeptron* [σκήπτρον] in his *thunderbolts* [σκηπτός].

less developed, though still highly complex form within these texts. Nor should it surprise anyone that the highly political plays of Athens should inherit not only the myths but also the political awareness latent within the *Iliad*.

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