Students of Aeschylus know A.F. Garvie (G) particularly for his work on the single codex plays, the Suppliants and the Libation Bearers, which combines depth and breadth of scholarship with fair-minded critical judgment. G’s edition of Sophocles’ Ajax displays the same virtues. Containing a concise introduction to the play, an excellent bibliography, a sensible text, a literal translation, helpful notes, a metrical appendix, and a detailed index, G’s Ajax deserves to be the standard edition of the play for intermediate and advanced readers. Like Lloyd-Jones’ and Wilson’s


3 G’s knowledge of and sensitivity to the play’s reception over the last century are impressive. The only omission I note is Kirk Ormand, ‘Silent by Convention? Sophocles’ Tekmessa’ AJP 117 (1996), 37-64.

4 It is a testament to G’s accuracy that I could find only two errors of fact in the notes: in n.329 G says that ‘in no extant tragedy does a chorus pass through the door of the skene,’ but most scholars believe the chorus exits into the skene with Helen at Euripides Helen 385. See Michael R. Halleran, Stagecraft in Euripides
OCT of Sophocles,\textsuperscript{5} this is a highly readable Greek text of the play.\textsuperscript{6} Similarly, G’s notes on diction and syntax are helpful for readers of all levels (e.g. nn.520-21, 534, 552-5, 652-3, 679-82). His scene-by-scene analyses are lively and his arguments are persuasive (esp. nn.646-92). G’s vision of the Ajax in performance reflects the contemporary consensus about the play’s staging. He believes, for instance, that Athene is invisible to Odysseus but not to the audience throughout the prologue (nn.1-132) and that Ajax appears on the ekkyklema in the first episode (nn.346-7). Just before the first stasimon, G has Ajax, Tekmessa, and Eurysakes exit


\textsuperscript{6} G adds an athesis to the text at 869. G’s editorial choices include 198 (reads \textit{καγχαζόντων}: a verb of sound production is required, pace Lloyd-Jones/Wilson); 379-82 (accepts Lloyd-Jones’/Wilson’s \textit{άπαντ’ αὐων} 405-06 (athetizes); 758-61 (reads \textit{κάνωντα}); 775 (accepts West’s \textit{εἰσφήξει}) 839-42 (deletes with Lloyd-Jones/Wilson, following Wesseling); 1052 (accepts Reiske’s \textit{ξυνόντες} over \textit{ζητούντες} of codd.); 1071 (accepts Reiske’s \textit{δύνα} over \textit{άνδρα} of codd.); 1137 (reads L’s \textit{καλώς}).
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through the central door, while Ajax perhaps exits in the ekkyklema (nn.594-5). While he admits we can not know for certain, G thinks that there is a change of scene at 815, that Ajax commits suicide in full view of the audience, perhaps using a sword with a retractable blade, and that his corpse remains visible until Tekmessa covers it at 915 (nn.815-65). This requires ‘scene-shifters’ to bring on a screen at 915 to hide Tekmessa and the corpse. The protagonist can then exit unseen through the skene door; Tekmessa must speak from behind the screen until its removal at 992.

One of the strongest elements of the edition is G’s continuous commentary on what he considers the central principle of the Ajax—that natural and social reality is in large measure constituted by oscillations between contraries (e.g. pp.15-16; nn.131-3, 719-865, 1223-1420). Ajax’ Trugrede, one of the most debated speeches in Greek tragedy, treats reality as a series of alternations between contrary states. G’s reading of the speech is characteristic of his capacity for synthesis. Against Bowra, Knox, Sicherl, Golder and others, he believes that Ajax intends the speech to deceive (the speech’s effect requires it; 666-7 come close to outright lie; deception is the only way to achieve his desire for suicide; Sophocles needs Ajax’ exit to stage the death of his isolated hero; Ajax is conscious of being overheard, and uses his monologue to deceive, pp.185-6). Yet

7 Against this ‘widely held view’ see R.P. Winnington-Ingram, Sophocles: an Interpretation (Cambridge, 1980), 32 n.65.

with Bowra and Kitto, G thinks that the 'extreme beauty of the language' and the attractiveness of the principle of alternation entail that Ajax is not merely lying. Ajax sees the claims of _sophrosynê_ upon himself, but his emotions impel him to refuse them. Hence, 'The whole speech shows us Ajax resisting and overcoming what is now his strongest temptation' (p.186). For G, the _Trugrede_ is a deception and an expression of conflict between emotion and intellect, delivered both in character and as a functional element of play's dramaturgy.

This is a nice way of cutting through the false contradictions that have made the _Trugrede_ such a difficult problem. G's inference of Ajax' sincerity from the beauty of his language and his faith that he struggles emotionally with an intellectual insight remain open to debate. I would see the matter differently. The _Trugrede_ itself is the performance of suicide as an act of speech. The speech does not so much express Ajax' innermost desires, as it mirrors the yearnings of his audiences (both internal and external) to make them believe he is going to bury Hector's sword, purify himself, and accept a subordinate position in the world and in the army, a situation which would destroy Ajax as a character. The speech appeals to the audience's desire for a happy resolution, telling us (as well as

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10 Bowra, _Sophoclean Tragedy_ (as in n.9), ibid.; H.D.F. Kitto, _Form and Meaning in Drama_ (London, 1956), 188.

11 Cf. Knox, 'Ajax of Sophocles' (as in n.8), 137-9.
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Tekmessa and the chorus) what we want to hear.12 In formulating this kind of speech, Ajax furthers the self-negation that his deceptive night raid on the leaders of the army began and that Hektor's sword will complete.13 The more Ajax seeks to recover his status and hence reclaim his life, the more he denies them, until envisioning himself as an object of the cosmic process and as a member of society who will respect those in power and stay in his ordained place, he annuls his heroic individuality entirely.

G subjects Ajax' character and fate to powerful analysis, and steadfastly interprets the objective of the drama as the 'rehabilitation of Ajax':

The concern of the whole play, from moment when his disgrace is discovered in the prologue, to the final sad but triumphant exit of the funeral procession, is designed to rehabilitate him, to show how a man who has fallen so low can be recognized at the end as the hero that he really is. (pp.10-11).

The question Winnington-Ingram posed two decades ago might serve as a preliminary criticism of G's Ajax: 'Ajax is megas. Is that all we can

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12 It is conventional for scholars to claim, as Charles Segal, Tragedy and Civilization: an Interpretation of Sophocles (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1981), 114, does, that 'the others bend Ajax' meaning to the limited understanding of their untragic view of life.' The meaning of the words is straight-forward. 'Bending' produces their actual (i.e. performative) meaning: Ajax will kill himself.

13 G takes a realistic view of Ajax' use of dolos to achieve his aim of vengeance against the Argives: there was simply no other option open to him (p.12); and he notes the paradox that 'to recover his honour Ajax has had to act stealthily and in the dark, adopting the methods usually associated with his enemy Odysseus' (n.47). Yet it is difficult deny that the paradox of the Ajax consists in the movement whereby Ajax' identity is confirmed through its negation, and this process begins with his adoption of dolos. Segal, Tragedy and Civilization (as in n.12), 110, 114, 124 has an excellent appreciation of this facet of the play.
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say?"14 G’s uncompromising view of Ajax as a ‘great man’ produces a one-sided interpretation of the play.15 I would prefer to read the play as expressing a tension between the rehabilitation and the transcendence of Ajax and hence as working toward two conflicting purposes simultaneously, both honoring and preserving the heroic attributes that belong uniquely to Ajax, and envisioning a contemporary, political form of heroism that overcomes their limitations. Ajax’ attempt at vindicating his honor systematically negates his identity; he must kill himself in a desperate attempt to preserve his heroic self-image. Ajax’ attempt to fix his heroic status in time jeopardizes his status as a man who deserves the protection of the basic laws of the gods. His enemies, the Atreidai, deny him burial, decreeing his corpse nothing more than a lump of flesh, food for coastal birds of prey (1063-5). His polar opposite and most bitter enemy, Odysseus, restores Ajax’ status in performative utterances.16 Ajax’ heroism is self-defeating; and the drama both retains it by honoring its power and simplicity, and transcends it, by overcoming its internal contradictions. The objectives of the drama are ambivalent.

14 Winnington-Ingram, Sophocles: an Interpretation (as in n.9), 19.

15 G appreciates Ajax as a Sophoclean hero on the model of Cedric Whitman and Bernard Knox—the isolated, intransigent, proud, honorable individual immune to persuasion and to compromise. See esp. B.M.W. Knox, The Heroic Temper (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964), 1-61. He thinks that ‘Ajax falls not because he is wicked but because he is a great man, or rather because of the qualities which make him a great man’ (p.11; cf. 14). His Ajax is above all ‘a great man’ (p.11, 140), indeed, ‘too great’ (p.199). ‘Like all Sophoclean heroes,’ he is excessive, boastful, impervious to advice, resistant to moderation, common-sense, and compromise, isolated from his community; he does what he feels is right, not what is expedient (p.14). He is proud, but not ‘megalomaniac’: this ‘introduces a misleadingly derogatory note’ (ibid.). Honor is ‘the most important thing in a hero’s life’ (p.138). For a similar interpretation, see esp. March, ‘Death and Burial’ (as in n.8).

16 G puts this nicely: ‘The final testimony to the greatness of Ajax is that even his enemy accepts it’ (p.16). Cf. Winnington-Ingram, Sophocles: an Interpretation (as in n.9), 58.

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It is telling that G’s useful and detailed index omits the terms κράτος (‘power,’ ‘domination,’ ‘victory’) and κλέος (‘glory,’ ‘renown’). These terms are central to Sophocles’ vision of Ajax’ heroism and of his downfall. When Telamon advises Ajax to ‘desire domination with the spear, but always desire to dominate with god’ (δορί βούλου κρατεΐν μέν, σὺν θεῷ δ’ αεί κρατεΐν, 765), he avers that he ‘will win this kleos apart from the gods’ (ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ δίχα/κείνων πέποιθα τούτ’ ἐπισπάσειν κλέος, 768-9; cf. Aeschylus Seven against Thebes 425-9). ‘Along with the gods,’ he declares, ‘even the man who is nothing could acquire kratos’ (θεοῖς μὲν καὶ ό μηδὲν ὡν ὀμοῦ/κράτος κατακτήσας, 767-68). Ajax rejects Athene’s help to insure his own superlative kleos as a man of kratos (771-7; cf. 112-13). If he did otherwise, he would risk being no different from ‘the man who is nothing.’ Ajax rejects Athene rather than risk being a nobody; on the contrary, he is the sort of hero that reaches the apex of greatness when the entire army is reduced to nothing, defending the Atreidai and Argives, ‘when you were pent up within your defenses, reduced to nothing in the rout of the spear’ (ἠδὲ τὸ μηδὲν ὄντας, ἐν τροπῇ δορός, 1275). We may detest Agamemnon for considering the sons of Telamon ‘nothing’ (δ’ οὐδὲν ὡν τοῦ μηδὲν ἀντέστης ὑπερ, 1231), but Teucer proclaims that Ajax considered the Atreidai ‘worth nothing’ (οὐ γὰρ ἥξιον τοὺς μηδένας, 1114). Ajax’ heroism is played out in a zero-sum game between himself and the gods, on the one side, and his fellow soldiers on the other. Each constitutes a threat to his heroic identity.

17 Winnington-Ingram, Sophocles: an Interpretation (as in n.9), 18, interpreted this element of Ajax’ character correctly: to accept Athene’s help would diminish his prestige as a hero. March, ‘Death and Burial’ (as in n.8), 10 n.55 takes Winnington-Ingram to task for ‘going too far,’ preferring the view of Ivan M. Linforth, Three Scenes in Sophocles’ Ajax (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1954; = University of California Publications in Classical Philology 15.1), 26, that Ajax’ rejection of Athene represents ‘high heroic spirit’ rather than ‘impious defiance of the gods’. G’s view is slightly more intricate, but nonetheless comparable (197: the messenger’s speech ‘re-establishes our sense of his pride in his heroic stature’).
Everyone competes for *kratos* in the *Ajax*; but Ajax desires it in a pure form, divorced from religious, political, and social institutions, as a heroically self-evident reality identical with its *kleos*. Like the shield Ajax passes on to Eurysakes, which symbolizes the shared essence of father and son (547, 574-6), Achilles’ arms symbolize the shared essence of Ajax and Achilles as heroes of *kratos* and of *kleos*. Ajax is not a hero of knowledge, but he knows one certain thing: ‘so much at least I think I know for certain. If Achilles were alive and had been about to award the victory for heroic excellence to someone in the contest over his own arms, no one else would lay hands upon them but me’ (441-4).\(^{18}\) The arms of Achilles are a *kleos* and a kind of *kratos*, ‘a victory of heroic achievement’ (κράτος ἀριστείας, 443) or simply ‘victories’ (κράτη, 445-6).\(^{19}\) *Kratos* and *kleos* as the ‘best of the Achaians’—these are immanent in the arms of Achilles, and bound up with Ajax’ sense of honor and demand for its social validation.

Yet the Panhellenic army does not validate Ajax’ *kratos*. In this regard, G might have stressed, as others have, the vaguely legal quality Sophocles lends the *krisis hoplôn*.\(^{20}\) Characters depict Ajax’ defeat as a lost court case, a *dike* or an *agon*, in which Menelaos acted as a deceptive ‘vote-maker’ (448-49; 934-36 1135-37; 1239-49). ‘Many judges’ awarded the arms to Odysseus (πολλοΐσον ... κριτάίς, 1243) and these ‘judges’ are elsewhere called ‘jurors’ (ἐν τοῖς δικασταΐς, κούχ ἐμοί,

\(^{18}\) For this passage, R.C. Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments*, part VII: *The Ajax* (Cambridge, 1907; reprinted Amsterdam, 1967), nn 441-4. Because G’s commentary is keyed to the English, it is impossible for him to comment on all aspects of the Greek, although in fact he misses very few opportunities to do so.

\(^{19}\) Cf. 1336-7, where Odysseus claims, ‘this man was my greatest enemy in the army from the time I won Achilles’ arms’ (ἐξ οὖν ἑκράτησα τῶν Ἀχιλλείων δπλων).

\(^{20}\) See Knox, ‘Ajax of Sophocles’ (as in n.8), 146: ‘he describes it [sc. the contest for the arms] in terms which associate it with the court of the fifth-century as the Athenian audience knew it.’ Cf. March, ‘Death and Burial’ (as in n.8), 8.
Ajax and his supporters treat his dishonor as the symptom of a deeper cultural corruption in which a counterfeit nobility of birth such as the Atreidai use low-born scoundrels such as Odysseus to slander truly great men and to deceive ordinary people, depriving its best men of the honor they deserve.

The play represents kratos and kleos as embedded in religious, social and political institutions; their distribution in society depends upon the leading players in these institutions and their mass followers. The solitary hero Ajax seeks to avenge himself on the very system that failed him. He yearns to torture and to kill the leaders who manipulated the votes of the jurors (445-9; 1134-5) as men who wronged him and as representatives of the army. The community dishonored Ajax; and the community is the ultimate target of his vengeance and of his curse. Before his suicide, Ajax enjoins the Erinyes to ‘glut yourself, do not spare the army of the whole people’ (γεύεσθε, μή φείδεσθε πανδήμου στρατού, 844; cf. 175). G construes the Atreidai as the object of

21 G translates πολλοίσιν ... κριταί as ‘majority of judges’ (p.109), as does Jebb, ‘accept that doom for which most judges gave their voice’; Knox ‘Ajax of Sophocles’ (as in n.8), 148, translates τοίσιν πολλοίσιν as ‘the many’. A number of vases depicts the krisis as a mass vote of the Argive army. See Odette Touchefeu, ‘Aias’ in Hans Christoph Ackermann and Jean-Robert Gisler (eds.), Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (Zürich, 1981-97), 312-36 at 325-7; March, ‘Death and Burial’ (as in n.8.), 5. Plato Apology 41b1-4 classes Palamedes and Ajax with Socrates as men, who ‘died because of an unjust decision’ (διὰ κρίσιν ἀδίκημον τέθηκεν).

22 G’s formulation of the problem (‘For it is not enough for Ajax himself and his friends to be conscious of his merit. According to the traditional heroic code one’s merit must be recognized also by other people’, 10) seems to me to miss the way the play lays bare the workings of the political process and exposes the personal ties of friendship and patronage behind the scenes of ‘public recognition.’

23 Knox, ‘Ajax of Sophocles’ (as in n.8), 131 stresses Ajax as a destroyer of to koinon.
... weakening the reading of Jebb and of Kamerbeek, who take ‘the army of the whole people’ as the object. Ajax is an enemy of the people: whether the vote was rigged or not, he blames the entire army and seeks vengeance against the Argives (43-4, 53-4, 719-32; cf. 1055), and they in turn view him as an enemy and target him and his associates for retribution (151-5, 408-9, 458, 720-28).

G endorses Thomas G. Rosenmeyer’s view that the vote is ultimately irrelevant because Ajax’ greatness transcends demotic caprice. Ajax’ personal transcendence of the group violates the most basic principle of Athenian democratic society: the demos is king. His refusal to accept the judges’ decision as final and authoritative constitutes his heroic defiance and defines his status as an enemy of the people. This is a crucial ambivalence in the play. The Ajax pits equally important social and political values against one another: on the one side, democratic society considered the honor of the individual inviolable and considered hybris an intolerable breach of public values. On the other, it invested the demos with the authoritative distribution of honor in society. Sophoclean heroes may be estranged from their community, but they do not seek to avenge themselves against it; rather, they seek to enact its higher values, its unwritten laws, even if this requires transgressing the dictates of those in power. The Ajax divides these functions between its two antagonists, Ajax and Odysseus. The former is the honorable, transgressive and isolated hero immune to sensible solutions; the latter overturns the dictate of the Atreidai in conformance to divine law (1343-4; 1363; cf. 1125-31).

To quote Winnington-Ingram again: ‘... Ajax is great; we must find greatness in him other than his great size, his great courage, his great

24 Apart from his construction of 844, G is sensitive to the army’s outrage and its potential abuse (e.g. Menelaos’ claim at 1055). See esp. his n.722.

25 ‘The use of the ballot expresses the views of the people, and the hero must not be subject to their whims’ (Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, The Masks of Tragedy. Essays on Six Greek Dramas [Austin, 1971], 171). Rosenmeyer considers it axiomatic that a ‘hero’ cannot be subject to will of the people (163).
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capacity as a fighting-man. What can we do for Ajax? We can play down his impiety; we can play up his sense of grievance ...' 26 G chooses the first course of interpretation, more or less neglecting the second. First, he insists that the rebellious, 'titanic' strain in Ajax' character is 'folly' (άνοια) instead of hybris (e.g., pp.12-16, n.758-61). He mitigates the charges against Ajax and diminishes the gravity of Athene's wrath (pp.11-17, nn.719-865, 1087-8), imagining that the audience would admire Ajax for what his enemies describe as hybris (p.14). 27 The strict insistence on the disjunction of folly and hybris is perhaps misguided. Xerxes' bridging the Hellespont, his invasion of Hellas, and his destruction of temples variously attract the terms hybris, 'disease of the mind,' and 'thinking above the human station' (Aeschylus Persians 749-50; 818-26). Thoughtless disregard for a god's honor is hybris (Euripides Hippolytus 474; Bacchae 1297, 1347), though G is correct to reject offenses against the gods as quintessential acts of hybris.

Ajax values his kratos and kleos over other values such as divine grace, paternal authority, military order, and the demos' right to distribute honor. And those who condemn him—Athene, Kalchas, Menelaos, and Agamemnon—employ a distinctively Aeschylean moral vocabulary. According to them, Ajax rejects his father's injunction, thinks beyond the human condition (δοτις ἀνθρώπων φύσιν/βλαστών ἔπειτα μὴ κατ' ἀνθρώπων φρονή, 761; οὐ κατ' ἀνθρώπων φρονών, 777; cf. Aeschylus Persians 749-50, 820, 827-8; Seven against Thebes 425), 28 and

26 Winnington-Ingram, Sophocles: an Interpretation (as in n.9), 14.

27 'In the eyes of his victims his behaviour may seem to be hybris, but it is for these qualities that we admire him' (p.14). Cf. Cedric Whitman, Sophocles: a Study of Heroic Humanism (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), 69: 'The hero's haughtiness and crimes are symptoms of something deeper in the man himself, symbols of a greatness which antedates, survives, and all but obliterates their criminality'.

28 G to 760-61 notes the commonplace involved, and lists all uses of the topos together without further comment. I would classify Sophocles Antigone 768,
utters these intentions as a self-defeating ‘boast’ (766; 770, τοσόνδ', ἐκόμπει μύθον; ἀντιφωνεὶ δεινόν ἄρρητον τ᾽ ἔπος, 773; cf. 96; Aeschylus Persians 827-31; Seven against Thebes 402-6, 550-52, etc.; Prometheus Bound 358-65). Menelaos mouths the words of Aeschylus’ Erinyes and Athene on the role of fear and respect in establishing public order, accusing Ajax of considering himself above these virtues and poised to sink the ship of state (1073-86; Aeschylus Eumenides 517-65; 690-710).29

If the play diminishes the condemnation of Ajax, it does so by reproducing Aeschylean tragic norms as a form of hypocrisy which justifies the feeble-minded brutality of an elite of birth (οἱ δοκούντες εὐγενεῖς πεφυκένοα, 1095; 1229-31; 1259-63). The Ajax dramatizes ‘nobility’ as hybris in the quest for kratos on the one hand, and as the remembrance of charis (483-84; 522-24; 1266-89; 1353) on the other. The quarrel between the Atreidai and the sons of Telamon involves the first type of nobility as each side dishonors the other in a zero-sum contest for supremacy. The reconciliation between Ajax and Odysseus exemplifies nobility as the recollection of charis. Ajax’ theomachia and hybris exalt his personal aretē; but the Atreidai’s hybris, based merely upon the arrogance of birth, transgresses divine law to punish social inferiors for their disobedience (1229-31). The play pits aretē against genos as bases for claims to honor in society (cf. Isocrates 19.45). Aretē earns charis (see esp. Thucydides 2.40.4). Odysseus recognizes that Ajax’ aretē prevails

Troades 473, and Euripides Alcestis 799 as different from the Aeschylean passages: they do not involve transgressions of such magnitude that they threaten the status of the gods. Kreon hyperbolically accuses Haimon of ‘not thinking like a man’ after he storms off, rejecting his father’s plan. In the example from the Trachiniae ‘thinking mortal thoughts’ is opposed to ‘beastly thoughts.’ Finally, in the Alcestis, by ‘thinking like a man’, Herakles means carpe diem. One might maintain that Sophocles and Euripides both undermine the moral authority of the concept.

29 G’s note to 1073-6 is exemplary, but does not discuss the possible relations with the Eumenides. For this, see Winnington-Ingram, Sophocles: an Interpretation (as in n.9), 63; Segal, Tragedy and Civilization (as in n.12), 147.
over his enmity (1357). Ajax’ honor could not be restored if he had not earned the charis of the Argives (1266-88).

More to the point, however, Ajax’ honor could not be restored if Agamemnon did not consider Odysseus his ‘greatest friend among the Argives’ (φίλον σ’ ἐγὼ μέγιστον Ἀργείων νέμω, 1331). The burial of Ajax is Agamemnon’s favor to Odysseus; and indeed, Agamemnon makes it clear that he would have granted Odysseus an even greater favor (1370-71).30 He tells Odysseus, ‘Indeed, I would not be sane/prudent/thinking well/well-intentioned’ (ή γάρ εὖν οὖχ ἐν εὖ φρονών, 1330) if he does not allow Odysseus to speak with candor. Good sense appears finally in its social form, as reciprocal friendship. Sophocles’ Athene makes such prudence the rationale for divine love and hatred: ‘The gods,’ she proclaims, ‘love the temperate and hate the bad’ (τούς δὲ σώφρονας/θεοί φιλοῦσι καὶ στυγνούσι τούς κακούς, 132-3).31 We might consider this akin to the Aeschylean notion that ‘god

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30 G claims that Odysseus cleverly begins by establishing that Agamemnon is prepared to treat him as a friend and to observe the traditional code of friendship. By agreeing to do so Agamemnon dooms himself to lose the ensuing argument’. This seems to place too sinister an interpretation on the exchange. Agamemnon stresses more than the traditional code of friendship: he underscores Odysseus’ superlative status as philos. G does not comment on this line.

31 G’s n.132-3 suggests that we read σῶφρονας and κακούς as status designations and not moral evaluations, but I would not be so quick to separate the two types of labels, especially since the Ajax as a whole exposes the vicious circle of status and moral quality. Those in positions of power routinely define status as a function of obedience, loyalty, and usefulness to them, a fact which G notes (nn.127-33; 1252). Menelaos classes Ajax as a man of low status and moral quality (κακούς) because he failed to obey him (1068-72). Agamemnon does the same with Teucer (1226-62) and with Ajax (κλύειν τόν ἐσθλὸν ἄνδρα χρή τῶν ἐν τέλει, 1351-2). Athene is no different. The language of status which G finds in Ajax 132-3 is perhaps more obvious in a passage such as Euripides Helen 1679-80: ‘Divine beings do not hate the well-born; the toils of the those who do not count are greater’ (τοὺς εὔγενεῖς γάρ οὐ συγνοούσι δαίμονεστών δ’ ἀναριθμητῶν μᾶλλόν εἰσιν οἱ πόνοι).
Prudence is foreign to Ajax’ nature; but the Ajax works toward the coexistence of sophrosyne and kratos. Agamemnon unwittingly resolves the tension between them. He declares: ‘It is not the stout and broad-backed men who are most secure, but those who are prudent who everywhere have the kratos’ (άλλ’ οί φρονούντες εύ χρατούσι πανταχοδ, 1250-52). Kratos is not merely domination, power, and victory; it is the reward for ‘prudence’ (σωφροσύνη; εύ φρονεῖν), for knowing one’s place and limitations within the religious, social and political order. In the process, charis becomes an extension of kratos. The unbreakable will to power and victory encompasses defeat at the hands of friends: ‘You win,’ Odysseus insists to Agamemnon, ‘when you are defeated by friends’ (κρατείς τοι τῶν φίλων νικώμενος, 1353; cf. 483-4). The measure of kratos is not only such tangible rewards as the arms of Achilles; it is the charis of others.

Odysseus performs Ajax’ identity in speech, declaring him, ‘the single best man of the Argives to look upon, as many as came to Troy, except for Achilles’ (έν ἀνδρ’ ἰδεῖν ἀριστον Ἀργείων ..., 1340-41). G notes that the utterance validates Ajax’ own perception of himself (n.1366-41). More importantly, perhaps, it demonstrates the dependence of individual status upon the speech-acts of others: heroic deeds do not speak for themselves as Ajax naively assumes. Odysseus pronounces Ajax esthlos (1344-5), gennaios (1355), and hence immune to dishonor. He further promises to help with the burial of Ajax ‘as it is necessary for mortals to labor for the best men’ (χρή τοῖς ἄριστοις ἀνδράσιν πονεῖν βροτούς, 1380) while at the same time admitting that he labors ‘for himself’ (1366-7). When Teucer addresses Odysseus as ἄριστε (1381), G comments: ‘For Teucer, Odysseus’ recognition of the arete of Ajax entitles Odysseus himself to be called aristos, but all the emphasis is on the status of Ajax, not on that of Odysseus’ (p. 248). The Ajax features a higher degree of
reciprocity between Odysseus and Ajax and a heavier stress on Odysseus' status as *aristos* and *esthlos* (1398-9) and as 'wise in judgment' (γνώμη σοφόν, 1374-5) than G at times allows. Odysseus is a man of equal status who possesses social and political as opposed to military aretē. We might put the matter this way: as an exemplar of a new form of heroism which supersedes that of Ajax, Odysseus absorbs and reaffirms Ajax' heroic quality at the same time as he transcends it.

While G notes that Sophocles' use of Odysseus in the plot of the *Ajax* is perhaps the only innovation in his treatment of the myth (p. 5), he denies that Ajax and Odysseus figure old and new forms of heroism. Yet the Odysseus of the *Ajax* remains unparalleled in the theater as a model for contemporary democratic leadership, especially as it relates to its treatment of the military elite. To recognize Odysseus' form of heroism as somehow 'new' in the fifth century is necessary for an understanding of the historical tensions that structure the play. Just as Ajax' followers are archaic 'hoplites and sailors' (565; cf. Thucydides 1.10.4), so Ajax is an outmoded defensive hero. At a time when the Athenians no longer mounted the land defense of their territory, and when the military is a society of sailors (872, 902, cf. 1329), Ajax is the last, great shield-carrier.

32 Cf. 'But all the emphasis at the end of the play is on the vindication of Ajax, and ultimately the unexpected behaviour of Odysseus is merely a means to an end' (16).

33 G also offers a more balanced description: 'It is better to understand the play as demonstrating the excellence of both Ajax and Odysseus' (16).

34 See e.g. N.O. Brown, 'Pindar, Sophocles, and the Thirty Years' Peace' *TAPA* 87 (1951), 1-28 at 19-27; Knox, 'Ajax of Sophocles' (as in n.8), 144: 'Ajax is presented to us in the play as the last of the heroes.' Golder, 'Beyond the Shadow' (as in n.8), 9-34 at 16: '... mad Ajax visibly confirms the death throes of Homeric heroism'. D.J. Bradshaw, 'The Ajax Myth and the Polis: Old Values and New' in D. Pozzi and J. Wickersham (eds.), *Myth and the Polis* (Ithaca and London, 1991), 99-125 at 115-16.
Odysseus is a uniquely political hero. Unlike other figures in the drama, he simultaneously maintains the values of honor, piety, justice, and community, succeeding in a way that he will never duplicate on the stage, where he figures the combined villainy of the politician and of the sophist. To be sure, Aeschylus presented Odysseus as the son of Sisyphos and Antikleia (fr. 175). Sophocles’ Odysseus, however, is the first attested tragic figure to attract the kind of ridicule reserved for sykophants and politicians in comedy and oratory. He is a ‘devious knave’ (τούπιτριπτον κίναδος, 103), offspring of ‘the wasted line of the Sisyphidai’ (τὰς ἀσώτου Σισυφιδαν γενεὰς, 189), ‘a villain at heart’ (πανούργος φρένας, 445), an ‘instrument of every evil on every

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35 Helen Gasti, ‘Sophocles’ Ajax: The Military Hybris’ QUCC 40 (1992), 81-93, cited with partial approval by G at 16, seems to me to miss the mark entirely. The Ajax does not dramatize the failure of a Homeric hero to appreciate the cooperative nature of hoplite fighting; rather it presents the fall of the last infantry hero, leaving men of lesser stature—sailors, archers, puffed up generals, and politicians—to fill the void he leaves.

36 For Odysseus in the theater, W.B. Stanford, The Ulysses Theme2 (Oxford, 1963), 102-17 remains fundamental.

37 Cf. Andocides 1.99, ‘sykophant and devious knave’ (οι συκοφάντα και ἐπίτριπτον κίναδος) Aristophanes Clouds 443-51, 1004; Birds 430-31; Sannyrion fr. 11; Demosthenes 18.162, 242; Aeschines 3.167; Deinarchus 1.40.

38 Sophocles’ usage of the term ἀσώτος is closer to that of the orators ([Demosthenes] 40.58; 45.77-8; Isocrates 15.5, 288; cf. Demades fr. 77.3) and to the comedians (Krobylos, fr. 4; cf. Strattis fr. 54) where the term refers to financial and moral dissolution, than to Aeschylus Agamemnon 1597, where it means ‘destructive’ (i.e. ‘unsparing’).

39 Kleon is πανούργος, a ‘villain,’ but more or less a common thief in comedy (cf. Aristophanes Thesmophoriazusae 726-7, 929-34; Eupolis fr. 99.114-16). Kleon is the only politician in extant fifth-century comedy ridiculed as this figure: Acharnians 658, Knights 45, 56, 247, 249 (bis), 250, 317; 803; Wasps 1175 (πανούργος ... κλεπτής) cf. Wasps 932, 961 (Philokleon’s view of Labes).
occasion, the most filthy trickster of the army’ (ἀπάντων τ’ ἀει/κακῶν ὄργανον, τέκνον Λαρτίου/κακαχοπινέστατον τ’ ἄλημα στρατοῦ, 379-81) and ‘the most wheedling, hated trickster’ (τῶν αἰμυλώτατον ἔχθρον ἄλημα, 389).40 Like the demagogue, Odysseus is a master of peitho who marshals the envy of the common people against great members of society (148-57); he ‘sees and hears everything’ (379; cf. Kleon, Aristophanes Knights 75). Ajax refers to Odysseus as ‘my defiler’ (ὁ λυμεών ἐμός, 573): ‘defiling’ is a characteristic activity of the dramatist’s rhêtôr (Euripides fr. 597; cf. Aristophanes Knights 1408; Menander Sententiae 1.709 [Jaekel]).

G limits the contemporary resonance of the Ajax on the grounds that Odysseus is a traditional heroic type with traditional values, citing Iliad 24 and Odyssey 22.411-12 as evidence (p.16). These parallels and the function they serve in the argument deserve scrutiny. Iliad 24 makes Achilles and Thetis conform to the moral imperative of Apollo and Zeus; it is part and parcel of the archaic and early classical motif of ‘turning toward the father.’41 In the course of yielding to the symbolic authority of the father, Achilles acknowledges his own mortality (i.e. his patrimony from Peleus) and experiences Peleus’ grief mirrored in Priam’s. Achilles must conform to the prevailing moral and religious order. Even so, he threatens to transgress ‘the commands of Zeus’ (570, 586), and never reconciles with his enemy Hector.

Odysseus in the Ajax is significantly different. His response to Ajax’ tragedy takes place against the gradient of the prevailing moral and

Sykopphants and teachers of rhetoric are also ridiculed this way: Birds 1468, 1695-9; Eupolis fr. 99.85; cf. Archippos fr. 37.3; Aristophanes Ecclesiazusae 436-40.

40 Aeschines 2.40; cf. the use of παιπάλη and παιπάλημα: Aristophanes Clouds 260, 62; Birds 431. For αἰμυλῶς, see Aristophanes Knights 683-7.

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religious order which ridicules and humiliates the victim. Athene invites him to laugh at his enemy (79). Those who claim political authority refuse to allow the corpse burial. Tradition does not explain Odysseus’ conduct.42

Although traditional, and explicitly endowed with social and political overtones in Pindar (Nemean 8.20-43), the rift between Ajax and Odysseus parallels the division within the ranks of Athenian leadership between those represented as flattering and deceiving the masses to prey upon the rich, the well-born, and the military elite, and those of genuine areté who are the victims of this coalition. This division is a common subject for Old Comedy, and occasionally features in tragedy (e.g. Euripides Supplices, Orestes; Sophocles Phoenissae). G’s comment that ‘Ajax’ abuse is appropriate to the traditional picture of the clever Odysseus, especially as we see him in those plays ... in which that cleverness is presented as a vice’ (n.103) reverses the historical development of the tradition. Tragedy appropriated the traditional Odysseus, a heroic king, warrior, and trickster, whose métis was a supreme instrument of personal salvation, as a figure for the contemporary social and political roles of the un-heroic and non-aristocratic rhétor, sykophant, and sophist.

The Ajax similarly portrays Menelaos as a quintessential Spartan hégemôn, another figure unparalleled before the play. Brutal, grossly class-conscious, feebly dependent upon moral platitudes as a mask for

42 Nor do I find Odyssey 22.411-2 a suitable parallel. A blood-soaked Odysseus commands his slave Eurykleia not to raise an olougê over the slaughtered suitors but to ‘rejoice in your heart’ since ‘it is not right to boast over dead men.’ Sophocles’ Odysseus does not so much as ‘rejoice in his heart’ when he sees his enemy Ajax insanely deluded and then dead by his own hand. Odysseus’ invocation of ‘holiness’ (ósiē) in the Odyssey signals his anxiety about the consequences of his deed rather than respect for the dead. He fears that a servile woman’s cry of joy might invoke a spirit of nemesis. Hence he declares he did not commit the deed: the gods and the suitors’ own violence destroyed them. A closer parallel might be Odyssey 8.521-31, but in this passage Odysseus’ identification with the female victims of the Trojan War is encoded in a simile.

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personal authority, he deprives Athenian leadership of its autonomy. Sophocles' portrayals of Menelaos and Agamemnon all but justify Ajax’ desire to kill them. In this way, the Ajax uniquely reconciles the deceptive rhētōr and the heroic stratēgos, creating an ideal role for the former: Odysseus attains aretē and acknowledges the aretē of Ajax as superior.43 The resolution of the conflict between Odysseus and Ajax repairs the division within Athenian social and political values and roles by placing them in opposition to those of their Spartan and Peloponnesian counterparts. Whether we view Ajax as a hybristic anoētos or Odysseus as toupitripton kinados, either is preferable to Peloponnesian leadership of the Panhellenic army. The Ajax, like Euripides’ Suppliants and Aristophanes’ Knights, resolves the problem of the contemporary political order as an inversion of the real social order (i.e. it honors Odysseus over Ajax, the ponēroi over the chrēstoi) in the ideals of Athenian hegemony which Odysseus espouses (pity, justice, the right of the dead to burial).44

As a hero of kratos, Ajax personifies the indomitable spirit of Athenian imperialism and dēmokratia. He cannot be dominated or enslaved; he is the great defender, ‘Ajax the great shield carrier’ (Αϊαντί τῷ σακεσφόρῳ, 19; cf. 574-6, 1211-13, 1266-88), just as the Athenians

43 For Ajax as stratēgos, see Peter W. Rose ‘Historicizing Sophocles’ Ajax’ in Barbara E. Goff (ed.), History, Tragedy, Theory: Dialogues on Athenian Drama (Austin, 1995), 59-90, esp. at 69-79; cf. Brown ‘Pindar, Sophocles ...’ (as in n.34), 18-19.

44 One might take this as support for view of Jan Kott, The Eating of the Gods: an Interpretation of Greek Tragedy (London and New York, 1974), 289 n.42, for a date in the 420s. Cf. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Sophocles I (Cambridge, Mass. and London, Loeb Classical Library, 1994), 9. I am convinced that dating the play to the period 450-40 is mistake. For the Ajax as an ‘early’ play, see Jebb Sophocles Plays and Fragments VII (as in n.18), li- liv; Karl Reinhardt, Sophocles (Oxford, 1979; translation by Hazel Harvey and David Harvey of Sophokles3 [Frankfurt am Main, 1947]), 9-33; Brown ‘Pindar, Sophocles ...’ (as in n.34), esp. 26-8; J.C. Kamerbeek, The Plays of Sophocles, part 12: Ajax (Leiden, 1963), 15-17; March, ‘Death and Burial’ (as in n.8), 32-4; cf. Meier, Political Art (as in n.9), 166-87.
were the ‘liberators and saviors of the Hellas’ at Marathon and Salamis. Like the Athenians, Ajax is unique and performs his actions ‘alone’ (μόνοις: 29, 47, 294, 467, 1276, 1283).\(^{45}\) Ajax came to Troy ‘in command of himself’ (ώς αὑτοῦ κρατών, 1099) and not under the power of ‘the Atreidai who have the two-fold power’ (δικρατεῖς Ἀτρείδαι, 251; cf. 1226-35). Like Athens, Ajax and his men engage in hegemonic rivalry with the Spartans and Peloponnesians. Menelaos could not dominate Ajax while he lived (1067-9), and his attempt to display his power over Ajax’ corpse is contemptible (1093-1117). But he must be told that a Spartan is lord over Sparta, not over Ajax and his contingent (Σπάρτης ἀνάσσων ἦλθες, οὐκ ἡμών κρατῶν, 1102). Ajax’ bastard half-brother Teucer acts out Ajax’ spirit of \textit{kratos}, defying the Atreidai in a way that resonates with every Athenian member of the audience, irrespective of social status, as he bravely resists the arrogance and stupidity of the Peloponnesian ‘noblemen.’

There is another important element in the play: ritual burial. In this regard, I think G too strictly circumscribes the validity of ritual readings of the play.\(^{46}\) The mythical pattern of the drama largely follows the hero-athlete tale: a hero achieves greatness, does not receive proper compensation from his society, goes mad and wreaks havoc on the community, and eventually attains cult as compensation.\(^{47}\) The resolution

\(^{45}\) Knox, ‘Ajax of Sophocles’ (as in n.8), 144; for the Athenians as ‘the liberators and saviors of Hellas’ and as μόνοι, see David Rosenbloom, ‘Myth, Memory, and Hegemony in Aeschylus’ in Barbara E. Goff (ed.), \textit{History, Tragedy, Theory: Dialogues on Athenian Drama} (Austin, 1995), 91-130 at 98-9 and nn.39, 45.

\(^{46}\) ‘... it is going to far to think of [Ajax’ consecration as a hero] as the main concern of the drama’, 6; see n.1172: ‘Jebb was certainly wrong to find the main theme of the play in the establishment of a hero cult...’ Cf. Taplin, \textit{Greek Tragedy in Action} (as in n.9), 189 n.4: ‘the historical existence of the hero-cult of Ajax is no concern of Sophocles’ play’. See further Segal, \textit{Tragedy and Civilization} (as in n.12), 439 n.119.
of the Ajax is the burial and the cult of a hero whose failure to receive validation from the army hastened his destructive madness and threw the community into confusion. Albert Henrichs' reading of the play as the transformation of a tragic into a cult hero captures an essential movement of the myth and of the drama. G seems to assume that the reality of this process depends upon Ajax' consciousness of it. G sees the play as enacting the recovery of Ajax' heroic status; but it in order to do this, it must also transform that status. Burial and cult are the central elements of the transformation. There is another point to make about the cult as opposed to the narrative hero: great man or villain, noble or base, winner or loser, the recipient of cult wins de facto heroic power and memory. Cult transcends the conflicting versions of narrative and fixes heroic status.

For all its fine points, this edition will probably never attain its rightful place in the classroom. Greekless readers using the text for its translation are likely to find it unpalatably literal and to dread using the commentary—it presumes a high degree of familiarity with the language and a classicist's tolerance for lectio interrupta. Teachers of Greek will hesitate to use an edition with a facing English translation and a commentary keyed to it. Advanced students and scholars of all fields will nonetheless find the text and the commentary invaluable.

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48 Albert Henrichs, 'The Tomb of Ajax and the Prospect of Hero Cult in Sophokles.' CA 12 (1993), 165-80; see also Peter Burian, 'Supplication and Hero Cult in Sophocles Ajax' GRBS 13 (1972), 151-6; Poe, Genre and Meaning (as in n.9), 9-18.

49 So his comment on Burian's observation that the final scene is the consecration of Ajax' hero-cult would suggest: 'But Ajax himself is unaware of all this'. (n.1172).