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# ПРАВООБРАЩЕНИЕ АХИЛЛАСА

Истоки морали в архаическом обществе  
(на материале гомеровского эпоса)



РОССИЙСКАЯ АКАДЕМИЯ НАУК  
ИНСТИТУТ ФИЛОСОФИИ

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# **ПРАВООПРЕДЕЛЕНИЕ АХИЛЛА**

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На материале гомеровского эпоса анализируются основные тенденции формирования морали в архаическом обществе. В центре исследования – нравственная перемена, происходящая с главным персонажем «Илиады» Ахиллом в его отношениях с соратниками и соперниками. Нравоперемена – от гнева к состраданию, от вражды к примиренности и от ненависти к великодушной снисходительности – происходит с Ахиллом, но недопустимость необузданного гнева, гнева в своеволии и насущность сострадания – один из доминирующих мотивов гомеровского эпоса в целом. На материале этого сюжета прослеживаются основные тенденции в изменении архаического эпоса и формирования морали, главным образом в проекции к золотому правилу.

Для исследователей и специалистов в области истории культуры, этики и античности.

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<sup>1</sup> В библиографический список не включены работы, упоминаемые по вторичным источникам.

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## Summary

### **Achilles' Moral Change: The Sources of Morality in Archaic Society (A Study on the Homeric Epic)**

The *Iliad* starts with Homer's exclamation on Achilles' wrath. Achilles is overtaken by the wrath not in front of a battle with an enemy, but in a discord with Agamemnon, the King of Achaean kings and their military leader, because he arbitrarily decided to start repartition of prey degrading for Achilles. However, at the last episode related to Achilles we discover him quite different. This episode is about a meeting with Priam, the King of Troy, who steals into Achilles' tents to get back for ransom the body of his beloved son Hector. Absolutely implacable until quite recently Achilles accepts Priam's supplication and shows amicability and careful regard for him. Along with the epic narration Achilles is going through a *moral change* – from wrath to gracious compassion. This change occurs with one character, but inadmissibility of unbridled anger, anger in arbitrariness and the urgency of compassion – is a dominating motif in the Homeric epic either in the *Iliad*, or in the *Odyssey*. Achilles is in the focus of this emotional and communicative controversy.

Achilles' actions are by no means unusual either in the first episode, or in the second. And yet, his decisions in both cases are extraordinary. Achilles flew into a rage in a dispute with Agamemnon, because in violation of the existed order he decided to take away a lovely concubine Achilles had received in fair distribution of prey after a recent raid. Achilles rose against him and gave vent to his anger in drastic withdrawal from the battle. This decision jeopardized vast efforts attended by countless war losses, because without Achilles, and this had been definitely predicted sometime before, the Achaeans would not be able to take Troy. So, this decision doomed the Achaeans not only to trouble, but to numerous new victims. As to Achilles he was willing to do everything possible to humiliate Agamemnon responsively to the caused disgrace.

Redemption of the body of a relative or friend perished in a battle was a common thing in the world of Homer, as well as a millennium later. The corpse of a fallen enemy, freed from the armor, was pulled off the battlefield in order to return for a ransom, or to dishonor. Priam did not just come with ransom, prostrated

oneself before Achilles and begged him for mercy. This humble supplication was also a ritual act, which according to the standards of the Homeric society could be positively responded. However, Achilles' favor towards Priam completely fell out of scope and internal logic of the situation – in particular configuration, taking into account the relationship of Achilles and Hector.

Achilles acted partly in the logic of existed morals and partly in contradiction to them, completely relying on his own choice and his own will.

Still, Achilles' decisions and actions were neither unique, nor single. There are enough cases in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* positively echoing Achilles' decisions and actions proving the trends in value orientations, deeds, and relationship conjectured in the 'pleats' of the Homeric world.

In the book I am interested in tracing these trends, specifically those which were leading to the formation of the type of consciousness and social discipline later identified by philosophers in the terms of ethics and morality. Such presentation of the book's task makes clear that I consider the Homeric society as a society of *arising* morality. A different issue is how to distinguish in the Homeric ethos arising morality and what in this approach should be a subject matter for a researcher's consideration?

The answer to this question depends upon a concept of morality a researcher relies on. The variety of research attitudes and thus interpretations of ethical or, broader, value-normative composition of the Homeric epic have been reflected quite well in the Homer studies of several recent decades. Though one can trace different research programs in value-ethical studies in Homer, most of the authors have seen their task mainly in *reconstruction* of norms and values of the Homeric society.

Though the modern value and ethical studies in the Homeric epic have become more and more synthetic they are still different in methodology and the variety of approaches is determined by different scholarship background. Some of them concentrated in the *Iliad* and the *Odysseus* as great monuments of ancient literature present purely literary analysis aimed to reconstruction of value or moral world of the Homeric epic as internally self-sufficient. Other present a historical analysis aimed to detect in the text of the poems in relation to other literary sources and archaeological data the traces and evidence of existed mores and habits. Another approach presents a social-anthropological analysis based on the perception of the Homeric world as a particular socio-cultural formation comparable with typologically similar, though geographically and chronologically different societies.

Largely based on the results the Homer studies I am developing another research program aimed to restore an early genesis of moral forms at the level of

behavioral and communicative practice. Morality is taken here in a configuration known and familiar to the modern person of the Judeo-Christian cultural tradition, though in a particular aspect of the content of decisions and actions (rather than forms of motivation and personal self-determination). This content is positively expressed in (a) refraining from causing unnecessary harm, (b) pursuit of justice, (c) benevolence, (d) cooperation, (e) friendly partnership, (f) thoughtful participation and negatively – in (a') indifference, (b') malevolence, (c') injustice, (d') destruction, (e') hostility, (f') ruthlessness. All these dispositions could be realized on different and not only categorical-imperative (in Kantian sense) basis. In terms of normativity this content is given in *the Golden Rule*, *Lex Talionis*, and *the Commandment of Love* as well as in derivative principles and rules. These principles and rules as such are absent in the texts of the Homeric epic. But they are present in them prospectively – in rudiment forms. Their identification is possible owing to a method of *conceptual explication of rudiment normative content*. The method is in an analysis of syncretic in their value-normative content and specifically conceptualized texts on the basis of modern ethical notions.

The analysis of the epic plotlines of confrontation and reconciliation of Achilles, on the one hand, with Agamemnon and on the other hand, with Hector and Priam (in this case, confrontation and reconciliation are split in their personal focus), allows drawing some conclusions about the tendencies in the development of the archaic moral consciousness.

*First.* The Homeric epic clearly insists on desirability of peace and undesirability of hostility. This thought largely trivial for the later developed moral systems is accentuated by Homer and passes through the *Iliad* as a single thread. Homer glorifies heroic warriors both, Achaean and Trojan, but he never eulogizes the war. The descriptions of the Trojan War combats are expatiative and sometimes almost naturalistic detailed, but there is no admiration of fights, confrontation and hostility in these details. On the contrary, one can hear in the poem more than once the words of condemnation, direct or indirect, of discord and enmity. Internecine strife is not admitted. But enmity between strangers is also undesirable. The war is recognized as inadmissible in relations both between people and between nations. In bitter lamentations of Achilles over the death of Patroclus this thought is risen even to greater height: he curses every feud, both among gods and among men.

*Second.* The principle of retribution is fundamental for morality of the Homeric society. At that the reward is immediate and unrestricted. All persuade Achilles to temper his anger, to cool down, to reconcile, but nobody, even Nestor, even Thetis and Athena, who often have given Achilles wise advises, do not blame him for redundancy response to injustice caused by Agamemnon. His anger and

pride are excessive. But the measure of retribution is determined by Achilles according to his own feeling of the injury inflicted to him. So, in the Homeric world we find a different ethos comparatively to the one we know from the Pentateuch. Here one can distinguish some hints of *Lex Talionis*, but these resembling *Lex Talionis* features are a subordinate part of a different regulatory mechanism, namely, the mechanism of unmeasured revenge

*Third.* Although the principle of 'evil for evil' (specifically, unmeasured evil in response to committed evil) is common in the archaic Greek society, Homer describing the discord between Achilles and Agamemnon, in fact, cautions against the desire the other evil, particularly excessive *responsive* evil. Most notable in this regard are the words of Achilles recognized the loss of any sense of his repose on Achaeans defeat, so far it turned into Patroclus' death. With this insight the story of his discord with Agamemnon is revealed in its deep ethical meaning. This meaning has not been purposefully articulated in the *Iliad*, much less it has become an occasion for didactic instruction.

However, not being formulated in the *Iliad* in *general normative modality*, this meaning is revealed in a form of various maxims expressed on particular and partial occasions and is implicitly present in the epic, which by the very fact of its presentation played admonitory-moralistic role. This moralistic theme – along the lines: *do not wish/cause evil and you will not suffer harm* – will be multiply rendered in the literature of different ancient peoples. Possibly it was present in the pre-Homeric tradition, which has not come down to us. However, from what we know, this is historically the earliest example of such narrative. And because the normative figures of this type are an essential intermediary link between the rule of reciprocity and the Golden Rule, the presence of such narrative in the Homeric epic considering analytically the traced normative dynamics towards the Golden Rule should be recognized a fundamental fact for the epic as such and for historical genesis of moral consciousness.

*Fourth.* Retribution is a special case of a more general relationship, namely, reciprocity. Reciprocity is the dominant ethical orientation in the Homeric epic. The relations of favor and benevolence like that, which Achilles demonstrated in his treatment of Priam are ethically the most significant, although partial, expression of reciprocity. Strictly speaking, the episode of the meeting of Priam and Achilles gives us a glimpse of a prototype of 'the Golden Rule' in its behavioral and communicative, but normative version. Here is no rule as such, all the more, the Golden one, super-situationist or super-personal generalization of communicative experience. However, if we try to reconstruct the normative content of the emerging relationship, the latter is higher than just *quid pro quo* relation. We have here a kind of exteriorized Golden Rule. One can distinguish its

varieties in Hector's proposal to Achilles before the strike, as well as in Priam's appeal to Achilles. Both cases present one's attitude towards the other according to the pattern of other's desired attitude towards oneself. But this relation is imaginary reciprocal. Its potential reciprocity is manifested in the kind of action Achilles committed in response to Priam's supplication and with full benevolence towards Priam.

*Fifth.* At the same time Achilles' attitude toward Priam is by no means equal. According to the epic plot, Achilles knows that by perishing Hector he gives rise the foretold by gods prerequisite of his own death. In this sense this relation from the party of Achilles is higher than just an exchange of services or gifts. From the side of Priam we have a foretype of thinking in terms of the Golden Rule and from the side of Achilles – an action in terms of *agapē*, generous mercy, the Commandment of Love. Achilles seems to be archetypical in this sense to ancient Greek mode of thinking. In contrast to the later Christian ethics in Greek ethics the idea of *agapē* is often combined with the idea of *philia*. It is distinctive that in the Greek texts of classical period Achilles' self-sacrifice aimed to recover honor of fallen Patroclus is often presented as an example of selfless behavior. Meanwhile Achilles' treatment of genuflected Priam contradicting to adherence in friendship to the memory of Patroclus demonstrates a different pattern – benevolence to an alien and out of any hope for reciprocity. According to Aristotle, such actions *inter alia* is an embodiment of the beauty and the noble, i.e. the good in itself, namely, actions for the sake of others and not the one, who acts. As to benevolence Aristotle puts it more definitely in his *Ethics*, where it is limited by actions in relation towards ours – mainly friends. Achilles' behavior during the meeting with Priam falls out of this logic. Achilles' behavior is of extraordinary character in the context of the *Iliad* (and, broader, classical Greek thought till the Stoics).

Thus understood this episode leads to the conclusion regarding perhaps the highest ethical standard in the archaic moral thinking. But this conclusion must be limited in view of two conditions inherent to this very episode and the archaic thinking in general. First, the supposed scenario of thinking and behavior of Priam and Achilles not only heterogeneous in content (one actualizes the logic of the Golden Rule, the other – the Commandment of Love), but they are also different in reflective statuses of Priam and Achilles. The position of the former is reflexive, moreover, it is doubly reflexive and, hence, perhaps, is principled, too; but Achilles is just kindly sympathetic and generous and we can only guess regarding ethical reflexivity of the actions he commits. Second, neither the one nor the other position has been anyhow generalized by the very agents – the participants of communication, or by gods or through gods, or by the epic poet himself and thus has not been brought up to the level of a standard.



*Sixth.* Archaic moral consciousness that is the kind of moral consciousness revealed to us in the Homeric epic is non-normative. And yet, it is intrinsically imperative. It is advisable to distinguish between a prescriptive function that performs some text (written or oral), and the ways in which it occurs. The moral imperativity does not always function in normative form, i.e. being executed in the form of objective, or super-personal, universal, or addressed to all rules. It may be manifested in the form of a reaction to another person – through adaptation to the other, including the overcoming confrontation with the other. An epic poet is not the only one who acts as a ‘locutionary source’ of epic imperativity. Epic is filled by imperativity also at the level of particular narratives. Epic poet does not moralize, but epic characters – gods, heroes, noblemen-*agatboi* – constantly enounce addressing each other value and imperative (in its broadest sense, not specifically moral) judgments, expressing expectations, recollecting the past experience, recalling the existing traditions, giving examples of worthy deeds of great men. The imperativity of archaic moral thinking is of narratively-situational nature, most judgments about what is preferred, expected or seemed appropriate are expressed regarding individual cases. Double-level nature of epic imperativity – inner-epic and super-epic – reflects in its own way the structure of morality as such, presented, on the one hand, in a form of direct communicative reactions, and on the other – in a form of universalizable and rational norms. This is not directly related to the moral change in Achilles. But the mere fact of such character of epic imperativity certifies ‘embryonic’ integrity of the Homeric morality, without which the representation and description of such moral change would be impossible.

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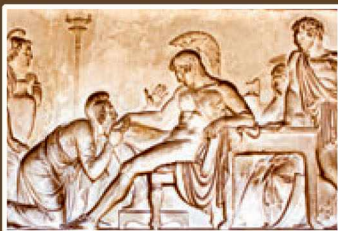
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