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THE HYBRIS OF ODYSSEUS

θυμὸν ἐρυκακέειν . . .
Od . xi 105

At the close of the Cyclops adventure Odysseus piously sacrifices to Zeus the ram that has carried him out of Polyphemus' cave. Yet the god spurns his offering and ponders instead the destruction of Odysseus' ships and their crews (ix 553–5):

ὁ δ' οὐκ ἐμπάζετο ἱρῶν
ἄλλ' ἄρα μερμήριζεν ὅπως ἀπολοίατο πᾶσαι
νῆες εὐσσελμοὶ καὶ ἔμοι ἐρήρες ἑταῖροι.

These lines need explaining, as they present two difficulties, one formal, the other thematic. How can Odysseus know what Zeus is pondering? As a first-person narrator Odysseus assumes temporarily the role of the epic poet, yet without being given the latter's omniscience. He retains therefore the restricted perspective of an epic character which precludes any precise knowledge of supernatural processes. Since he has no way of knowing, he must, when presuming, as is Homeric Man's wont, divine agency behind various phenomena and events, confine himself to generic terms such as θεός, θεοί, δαίμων, 'Zeus' as a metonymy for divine activity in general. Known as 'Jörgensen's rule'¹, this is the way in which the poet sustains the necessarily restricted perspective of the first-person narrator. Now the Zeus in the quoted lines is clearly not a metonymic Zeus: he is the personal god, the Father of Men and Gods residing on Olympus; and since events on Olympus are beyond the ken of the first-person narrator, these lines do not conform to 'Jörgensen's rule'. Yet poetic rules, like any others, allow for exceptions, especially when thematic concerns prove more important than the observance of narrative conventions. This seems to be the case here. The overriding thematic concern here is to give emphatic expression to Zeus' attitude: his displeasure at Odysseus and his sanctioning of Poseidon's persecution of the hero.

Yet it is this very attitude of Zeus that presents the other, and far greater, difficulty. One might try to explain the hostility that Zeus seems to display towards Odysseus as the god's show of solidarity with a fellow-god. But this would not solve the problem; it would only put it differently. As an act of self-defence to which there was no alternative, Odysseus' blinding of the Cyclops was, as B. Fenik observes, 'justified in terms of Homeric or any other morality.'² Poseidon, therefore, acts out of sheer personal vengefulness when he persecutes Odysseus without concern for justice and fairness. Yet in a programmatic speech in the prologue to the *Odyssey* (i 32–43)—a veritable theodicy³—Zeus had repudiated men's mistaken view that the gods arbitrarily cause human suffering. He should therefore be least expected to show solidarity with a god whose actions amount to just that. It is thus hard, if not impossible, Fenik rightly concludes, 'to find any reason for Zeus' enmity here consistent with his own speech in the prologue.'⁴

¹ O. Jörgensen, 'Das Auftreten der Götter in den Büchern ι–μ der *Odyssee*', *Hermes* xxxix (1904) 357–82.

² B. Fenik, *Studies in the Odyssey* (Wiesbaden 1974) [hereafter 'Fenik'] 210. See also J. Irscher, *Götterzorn bei Homer* (Leipzig 1950) 57; A. Heubeck, *Der Odyssee-Dichter und die Ilias* (Erlangen 1950) 84f. Heubeck sees in the act of blinding hybris on the part of Odysseus, but as this is an act that was forced upon the hero, his is only a

factual guilt: an inevitable, yet unintended, offence to Poseidon (on Heubeck's view on divine agency and human guilt, see R. Friedrich, 'Thrinakia and Zeus' ways to men in the *Odyssey*', *GRBS* xxviii [1987] 375–400).

³ W. Jaeger, 'Solons Eunomie,' *SBBerl.* (1926) 69–85 (= *Five essays*, tr. A. M. Fiske [Montreal 1966] 75–99).

⁴ Fenik 222–3, see also 230.

I

These lines, then, raise the larger question of the unity and consistency of the *Odyssey's* religious and moral outlook. K. Reinhardt had tried to answer it by arguing that there is something incongruous in Odysseus' behaviour; and from this he derived a motive for Zeus' attitude that renders it consistent with his 'theodicy' in the prologue. In the hero's gasconade after the escape from the giant's clutches (ix 475-9) Reinhardt discerned a presumptuousness that turns Odysseus' behaviour into an act of hybris, when the hero, while savouring his victory over Polyphemos, claims to have passed sentence on, and meted out just punishment to, the lawless giant in the name of Zeus and the other gods (479: τῷ σε Ζεὺς τείσσοτο καὶ θεοὶ ἄλλοι). Zeus, then, in Reinhardt's view, is angry because the hero has arrogated to himself a divine mandate never given him: the god turns away from Odysseus' sacrifice because he does not approve of the execution of a sentence made falsely in his name. In other words, Zeus is angry at Odysseus⁵ displaying hybris, yet 'hybris in its most subtle form: hybris as the conviction of moral superiority.' After praising Reinhardt's interpretation as 'deeply thought out and persuasively argued', Fenik raises two objections: first, what Reinhardt presents as Odysseus' hybris amounts to the 'sin of moral pride', which, being essentially a Christian notion, is of course quite alien to archaic Greek thought; second, arbitrary persecution of hapless mortals by angry and cruel gods is so familiar in Greek epic poetry and archaic religious thought 'that it seems perverse to raise new problems with concepts like moral pride when simpler and easily attestable categories for explanation [i.e. divine vengefulness and malevolence] lie ready at hand' (216). Ostensibly Fenik has a point when he notes the anachronism of foisting a Christian notion of sin upon a Homeric hero's behaviour. Here, however, the culprit is Reinhardt's style: it is prone to preciousness that invites misunderstanding. A less preciously worded restatement of Reinhardt's interpretation would show that the Christian notion of sin is neither intended nor implied. Fenik's second objection begs the question: what he offers as a solution is for Reinhardt the problem. Reinhardt was, of course, aware of the familiar epic motif of divine anger born from sheer vengefulness: this is precisely how he viewed Poseidon's persecution of Odysseus. His point of departure was Zeus' rejection of Odysseus' thanksgiving sacrifice (ix 550-5) and the implied sanctioning of Poseidon's unfair persecution of the hero: why would Zeus, of all gods, go along so readily with the sea-god's primitive wrath at a mortal who acted in self-defence against a brutal violator of Zeus' own law of hospitality? Reinhardt thought this needed explaining. In this respect Fenik seems to have misunderstood Reinhardt's argument, when he introduces it as 'the most sophisticated and persuasive attempt to lend [Poseidon's persecution of Odysseus] moral and intellectual credibility' (216). Reinhardt attempted nothing of the sort. The primitive, or as Reinhardt put it, the 'negative element' in Poseidon's wrath is essential to his argument: Poseidon, he writes, 'insists only on his divine privilege.'⁶ What Reinhardt did attempt was to give moral and intellectual credibility to *Zeus' adoption of Poseidon's cause*. He did so by trying to show that Zeus has a valid motive for being angry with Odysseus, one that is different from Poseidon's motives. The point of Reinhardt's interpretation is that Zeus' motive (displeasure at the hero's presumptuousness) and purpose (to chasten the hero) in joining Poseidon's persecution of Odysseus differ from the primitive and limited ones of the sea-god. It was to this end that

⁵ K. Reinhardt, 'Die Abenteuer der Odyssee', *Von Werken und Formen* (Bad Godesberg 1948) 85-6; cf. 85: 'So gewiss Odysseus die Humanität vertritt, so mischt sich doch in die Urteilsvollstreckung etwas Menschliches, was vor der Gott-

heit nicht besteht: die Hybris, freilich in der feinsten Form: die Hybris als moralische Bewusstheit.' Fenik's critique: Fenik 216.

⁶ Reinhardt (n.5) 91.

Reinhardt introduced the notion of Odysseus' *hybris*. Fenik, then, both praises and criticises Reinhardt's interpretation for the wrong reasons. The larger question here is whether the problem which divine wrath in the *apologoi* presents for the consistency of the moral and religious outlook of the *Odyssey* allows of a resolution. It is with this larger issue in mind that I resume the discussion. To Fenik Reinhardt's interpretation is a futile attempt at resolving a problem which can only be explained in oralist terms as a phenomenon resulting from the conflation of multiple traditions (217; 220-1). This assumption, sometimes the *ultima ratio* in dealing with difficulties of this kind, must not become a facile *passe-partout* for explaining problems and thus preclude any attempt at resolving them. For this reason Fenik's arguments, which have gone largely unchallenged and seem to be widely accepted, merit a closer examination.⁷

In Zeus' 'theodicy'—Fenik's point of departure—the poet has the supreme god set out the religious and moral outlook that informs the epic action of the *Odyssey*.⁸ Rejecting a view commonly held by mortals who see divine agency behind the misfortunes they suffer, Zeus states that men bring the sufferings they incur beyond their allotted portion upon themselves by their reckless folly (*atasthalie*) and have thus to blame themselves: θεός ἀνείτιος. Using the Aegisthus-story as a paradigm Zeus proclaims that in such cases the gods only act as guardians of justice who warn in advance and punish afterwards. Implicit is (and here the *Odyssey* moves beyond the *Iliad*) the moral conception of the gods: their ways to men, Zeus' theodicy claims, are just. Now, Poseidon's persecution of Odysseus, being as it is sheer vengefulness unencumbered by considerations of fairness and justice, flies in the face of Zeus' theodicy; for Poseidon, and likewise Helios in *Odyssey* xii, do precisely what Zeus says men falsely accuse the gods of: they arbitrarily inflict suffering on hapless mortals. With morally conceived gods concerned with justice on the one hand, and vengeful deities solely concerned with their honour and prerogatives on the other, the *Odyssey* lacks, in Fenik's view, uniformity and consistency in its religious and ethical outlook.⁹

Fenik's observations, extending those of F. Focke and A. Heubeck¹⁰, about the nature of Poseidon's and Helios' anger are for the most part persuasive and will remain uncontested. Both these gods are indeed vengeful deities who jealously guard their prerogatives and act ruthlessly towards mortals in defence of their honour. In their dealings with mortals nothing could be farther from their minds than considerations of justice and fairness; both resemble the more archaic gods of the *Iliad* and their often ruthless ways to men.¹¹ It is obvious that the moral conception of the divine does not extend to these two Odysseian deities; and in this respect the theology of the *Odyssey* does lack uniformity. But uniformity, or the lack of it, is one thing; consistency, or its absence, quite another. The moral conception of the divine in the *Odyssey* carries the

⁷ For a critical examination of Fenik's views on Helios and Zeus in the Thrinakia adventure, see Friedrich (n.2).

⁸ Fenik, 209; cf. also H. Lloyd-Jones in *The justice of Zeus* (Berkeley 1971) 29; W. Kullmann, 'Gods and men in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*,' *HSCP* lxxxix (1985) 5f.

⁹ Fenik 211 ('not uniform', 'deep-seated disjunction'); 216 ('inconsistent'), 218 ('strongly divergent concepts of divine justice'); 220 ('patent and unmitigated discrepancy').

¹⁰ F. Focke, *Die Odyssee* (Stuttgart 1943) 247ff.; A. Heubeck (n.2) 72-87.

¹¹ J. Irmischer (n.2) 65; more recently R. Rutherford, 'The Philosophy of the *Odyssey*,' *JHS*

cvi (1986) 148.—H. Erbse (*Untersuchungen zur Funktion der Götter im homerischen Epos* [Berlin-New York 1986] 240f) sees no problem here: it does not matter that Odysseus acted in self-defence; what counts is that Odysseus has offended the sea-god by blinding his son; therefore, what Poseidon does to Odysseus is said to be analogous to what Orestes does to Aegisthus. This analogy can be construed only if one believes, as Erbse does with B. Snell, that the notion of man's own responsibility (which Zeus' programmatic speech is generally held to express) is altogether invalid for the Homeric epic. On this last point see A. Heubeck's review of Erbse's book in *GGA* ccxxxix (1987) 13-24, esp. 20ff.

evolution, which has already reached an advanced stage in the anthropomorphism of the Iliadic gods, a further step beyond the primal notion of the gods as personifications of natural forces. We are dealing here with a continuum¹²: the moral conception of the gods, adumbrated already in the Zeus-figure of the *Iliad*, must be viewed as a general tendency: it predominates in the *Odyssey* but does not yet wholly permeate its pantheon to make it uniform. Moreover, such uniformity goes against the grain of a polytheistic religion; it would not even be desirable, as its inherent tendency to make the colourful and multifaceted life of the Homeric gods atrophy, would also militate against the principle of epic diversity.¹³ Seen, then, as a general tendency only, and not as a principle wholly penetrating the Odysseian pantheon, the moral conception of the divine in the *Odyssey* leaves room for gods who deviate from it and thus help retain, at least to a certain extent, the diversity of a polytheistic religion. That these should be the sun-god and the sea-god is not accidental: both are deities still closely identified with the natural elements that form their spheres.¹⁴ Thus Fenik is right in noting the lack of uniformity in the religion of the *Odyssey*: gods who conform to the new ethos enunciated by Zeus in the prologue co-exist with more archaic gods who do not. Yet such a co-existence, while it thwarts uniformity, does not constitute an inconsistency; for consistency does not necessarily require uniformity. Therefore neither Poseidon's nor Helios' ruthless ways to men present a problem for the consistency of the Odysseian religion.

What does present a problem, however, is the assumption, held by Fenik and others, that there is the same sort of co-existence in one and the same deity, and in the supreme deity to boot. Zeus is said to act in ix 551-5 and xii 385-8 as a willing partner of both vengeful deities, in blatant contradiction to the principles he has enunciated in the prologue. If true, it would amount to a major inconsistency in the *ethos* of the supreme god—a view Fenik holds discerning 'a different kind of Zeus' in the *apologoi* (223); such an inconsistency would constitute a contradiction that would render the whole theology of the *Odyssey*—crystallizing as it does around the Zeus-figure¹⁵—all but meaningless. To Fenik such inconsistencies and contradictions, however grave, do not matter: easily explained in oralist terms of multiple traditions and their conflation, they do not affect the unity of the poem, which Fenik locates elsewhere.¹⁶ Yet it is hard to see how the *Odyssey* could sustain a contradiction of this order without a serious impairment of its poetic unity; and Fenik's insistence that it could makes one wonder what the meaning of poetic unity might be.

The problem, then, is not Poseidon and uniformity, but Zeus and consistency.¹⁷ Whether it can be resolved depends on whether we can find a motivation for Zeus' enmity towards Odysseus that means more than simply the solidarity a god shows to a fellow-god. Reinhardt has indicated where it may be found. Yet the notion of the *hybris* of Odysseus, if it is to be convincing, is in need of clarification, elaboration, and support by argument.

¹² W. Kullmann, in his lucid treatment of the different conceptions of the gods in *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (n.8, 12ff), sees them in terms of a rather rigid polarity, which renders them mutually exclusive and denies any such continuum. I cannot go into this here; suffice it to point out that Kullmann's view cannot account for the Iliadic nature of Poseidon and Helios in the *Odyssey*.

¹³ Cf. W. Burkert, 'Das Lied von Ares und Aphrodite', *RhM* ciii (1960) 141. On epic diversity

in relation to epic unity see R. Friedrich, 'Epeisodion in epic and drama', *Hermes* cxii (1983) 45ff.

¹⁴ On Poseidon see W. Burkert, *Greek religion: archaic and classical*, tr. J. Raffan (Oxford 1985) 139.

¹⁵ Cf. Burkert (n.13) 144.

¹⁶ In its narrative structures: see Fenik 218-19.

¹⁷ Similar problems are Zeus' behaviour and actions in *Od.* xii 374ff and xiii 127ff., which I have discussed elsewhere (*supra* n. 2).

II

It also requires a broader textual basis than Reinhardt has used. While he focuses on Odysseus' first address to the Cyclops (ix 475-79), others have discerned a hybriatic attitude of the hero in various other parts of the text. F. Muthmann sees presumptuousness already in Odysseus' announcement to subject the Cyclopes to some sort of moral testing (πειρήσομαι, ix 174) which is said to belong to gods rather than mortals.¹⁸ In Walter Nestle's view Odysseus' boasting in the first and the second address (ix 502-5) 'borders on hybris';¹⁹ while C. S. Brown takes the reckless revelation of the hero's name in the second address as an instance of hybris.²⁰ G. W. Nitzsch sees an impious insult that evokes Poseidon's wrath in the sacrilegious words of the third address (ix 523-5):

αἶ γὰρ δὴ ψυχῆς τε καὶ αἰῶνός σε δυναίμην
εὔνιν ποιήσας πέμψαι δόμον Ἄιδος εἴσω,
ὡς οὐκ ὀφθαλμὸν γ' ἰήσεται οὐδ' ἐνοσίχθων.

In Nitzsch's view, then, Odysseus' hybris consists in an act of *asebeia*. Consequently, the wrath of the gods is not arbitrary and unjust, as Odysseus brings it on his head by literally adding insult to injury.²¹

Focusing on the same passage E. M. Bradley claims to have discovered the 'Homeric formula for hybris'.²² His argument is, in short, this: Odysseus' third address to the giant forms a group with three other utterances by epic characters (two by Hektor: *Il.* viii 538-41; xiii 825-31; and one by Melanthius: *Od.* xvii 251-53), which have in common a syntactical structure (a wish optative with εἰ/ἂν γάρ or εἴθε followed by a ὡς-clause) and a reference to a deity (Hektor: 'would that I be a god and honoured as Athena and Apollo as surely as this day will bring evil for the Achaeans'; Melanthius: 'would that Apollo or the suitors kill Telemachos today as surely as Odysseus will never return'). According to Bradley, in all four of them a mortal speaker 'presumes divinity'; and this presumption of divinity is the kind of hybris that is characteristic of the Homeric hero. By his proud declaration of Poseidon's impotence to undo his blinding of the sea-god's son, Odysseus is said to elevate himself 'to *superiority* over the god himself: it is to this challenge, the ultimate in Odysseian insolence, that Poseidon responds with crushing fury' (41). Thus, what Poseidon is seeking it is not so much revenge as the assertion of his divinity over an impudent mortal.

It is hard to see 'presumption of divinity' in any of these utterances; and this notion evanesces altogether once one studies them, as F. M. Combellack has done, as part of a larger group.²³ Their peculiar syntax reveals them as instances of a quaint idiom, which Combellack describes, with D. B. Monro, as a 'form of asseveration' designed to express

¹⁸ F. Muthmann, 'Interpretation der Kyklopie in Obersekunda', *Der altsprachliche Unterricht* viii 3 (1965) 54. On the *peira*-motif in the theoxeny see E. Kearns, 'The return of Odysseus: A Homeric theoxeny', *CQ* xxxii (1982) 2-8. More on this below.

¹⁹ W. Nestle, 'Odyssee-Interpretationen I', *Hermes* lxxvii (1942) 52: 'sein εὔχεσθαι 475ff., 502ff ermöglicht erst den Fluch des Kyklopen (504f. = 530f); Odysseus streift hier die Grenze der ὕβρις.'

²⁰ C. S. Brown, 'Odysseus and Polyphemus. The name and the curse', *CompLit* xviii (1966) 200.

²¹ G. W. Nitzsch, *Erklärende Anmerkungen zu Homers Odyssee IX-XII*, vol. iii (Hannover 1840) XIVff (Exkurs: 'Vom Zorn des Poseidon'). The notion of Odysseus' hybris seems to have origin-

ated with Nitzsch's commentary. *Contra* Nitzsch, C. F. von Nägelsbach (*Homeric Theologie* [Nürnberg 1861] 35-36) has held, anticipating the views of Fenik and those on whose views he draws, that Poseidon's wrath is that of a revenging, not punishing, deity, and as such without an 'ethical justification', since Odysseus acted, when blinding the Cyclops, in justifiable self-defence; the other gods are said to support Poseidon because they concede to one another the right to an unjust wrath and hatred.

²² E. M. Bradley, 'The hybris of Odysseus', *Soundings* li (1968) 33-44, esp. 39ff. (without referring to Nitzsch's excursus).

²³ F. M. Combellack, 'A wish without desire', *AJP* cii (1981) 115-19.

the speaker's certainty about something by opposing it to an unrealistic wish: a 'wish without desire.' As a form of asseveration Odysseus' third address simply says (in Combellack's words): 'I wish I were as sure of being able to kill you as I am that not even Poseidon will cure your eye (118).' Bradley's interpretation clearly presses the text unduly. In order to extract his 'Homeric formula for hybris', Bradley has to isolate the examples containing a reference to a deity from the larger group of those which do not.²⁴ Viewed as part of this larger group, i.e. as instances of the quaint idiom, they do not yield the notion of presumed divinity, on which the alleged Homeric formula for hybris is based.

And yet, there is more to Odysseus' taunting words to the giant than just the quaintness of an idiom. The certainty Odysseus expresses is about Poseidon's impotence to heal his son's eye. This is a significant shift in emphasis visible in the displacement of the reference to the deity from the wish to the $\omega\varsigma$ -clause: it makes Odysseus' boast culminate in an insult to Poseidon. Thus, to say, as Bradley does, that vv. 523-5 show Odysseus as 'playing god' and arrogating to himself even superiority over the sea-god is certainly to say too much; on the other hand, to say, as Combellack seems to do, that Odysseus is simply using a quaint idiom to express his certainty that the Cyclops' blindness is beyond cure, is to say too little. The poet has Odysseus use the idiom in a manner that makes it into an act of impiety: no more, no less.

We are back at Nitzsch's view of Odysseus' hybris as *asebeia*. If there is such a thing as the hybris of Odysseus, the *asebeia* displayed in his taunt of the Cyclops' divine parent will certainly be an important component of it. This, and the other interpretations, point to different facets of Odysseus' attitude which, taken together, will show his hybris (or putative hybris, as we should say at this stage of the argument) in its full compass.

III

To ascertain what Odysseus' hybris may be, it is necessary to grasp the ethos of the Cyclops adventure as a whole.²⁵ What brings Odysseus into the ogre's cave in the first place? Certainly no external necessity: his little armada casts anchor at the island of the goats which lies at a safe distance from the Cyclopes. Nor is it need: any provisions they require they find in abundance on this island. In the *Cyclopeia* Odysseus is the adventurer-hero avidly seeking the encounter with the Cyclops. His stated motives are curiosity (ix 174-6) and the wish to obtain guest-gifts from Polyphemus (228-9); in W. B. Stanford's often quoted and apparently widely accepted formula, 'inquisitiveness and acquisitiveness'. This formula questions Odysseus' heroic nature, as inquisitiveness is uncharacteristic, and acquisitiveness even unbecoming of Heroic Man.²⁶ Now Odysseus does possess a curious mind, and this intellectual curiosity does mark him off from the

²⁴ All the other instances of this idiom are without a reference to a deity. Among them is Achilles' notorious address to the dying Hektor (*Il.* xxii.346-8):

ἀὶ γὰρ πῶς αὐτόν με μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀνείη
ὦμ' ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἐδμεναι, οἶα ἔοργας,
ὡς οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅς σῆς γε κύνας κεφαλῆς ἀπαλάλκοι.

What could Achilles be said to presume here? Certainly not divinity; if anything, it would be bestiality.

²⁵ For a fuller and more detailed argument see R. Friedrich, 'Heroic Man and *Polymetis*: Odysseus in the *Cyclopeia*', *GRBS* xxviii (1987) 121-33.

²⁶ W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses theme* (Oxford 1954) 76; see also Stanford's commentary on the *Odyssey* (Oxford 1950 & 1955) 354: 'Note O.'s motives—inquisitiveness and acquisitiveness—very typical of himself and many later Greeks.' In stressing Odysseus' alleged cupidity Stanford continues a tradition that ranges from the scholiast who called the hero *philochrematos* (Σ Q *ad Od.* vii 225) to F. Jacoby ('Die geistige Physiognomie der Odyssee', *Die Antike* ix [1933] 159-94 (= *Kleine philologische Schriften* i [Berlin 1961] 107-38) who spoke of the mercantile spirit of the *Odyssey*; cf. on this Friedrich (n.25) 124-26.

traditional heroes as we know them from the *Iliad*. This, however, does not by itself render Odysseus less heroic. The way in which he pursues his interest in fresh knowledge is of a piece with the traditional heroic attitude and bespeaks the hero. Heroic Man usually does as it pleases his *megaletor thymos*: he follows, as is his wont, the impulses arising from his proud heroic temper. In like fashion Odysseus, feeling the urge to explore the land of the Cyclopes, instantly sets out to gratify it, no matter how dangerous it may turn out to be.

His desire for gifts may appear to be born from unheroic greed for gain (*kerdos*). But if it were, why then would Odysseus reject his comrades' suggestion to take as much from the cave as they can without risk while its owner is still absent, and leave as quickly as possible (*Od.* ix 224-7)?²⁷ Accustomed as he is to obtaining his possessions either by fighting or as gifts in recognition of his honour, Odysseus spurns his comrades' unheroic advice because it is beneath the dignity of Heroic Man. The gifts Odysseus expects to receive from the Cyclopes must be seen as being analogous to a *geras*, a gift of honour, the tangible token of the hero's superior reputation. His wish to obtain gifts, then, far from representing unheroic *kerdos*, is part and parcel of Heroic Man's perennial quest for honour, *philotimia*. The Odysseus, then, who embarks on the Cyclopes adventure is the essential Heroic Man.

Yet little does he know how incongruous are the heroic spirit and the world he is about to enter. Instead of having his honour recognized by an exchange of guest-gifts, he is subjected to extreme humiliations. With utter helplessness (*amechanie*, 295) Odysseus is forced to witness the wretched deaths of two of his men, whom the giant devours in response to the hero's request for a guest gift. His heroic urge to kill the monster in revenge and so restore his violated honour is thwarted by the sudden realization that this heroic act would be but a futile gesture: as only Polyphemus would be able to remove the huge boulder that blocks the exit of the cave, they would all face a slow death in the obscurity of the Cyclopes' cave—a death as unheroic as being eaten alive by the ogre. He soon realizes that his heroic *philotimia* has marooned him in a world in which heroic acts become empty gestures and cannot even secure a honourable death. To escape from the unheroic situation of *amechanie*, into which his heroic *megaletor thymos* has led him, Odysseus has to rely on his wit, *metis*. This necessitates the determined suppression of his *megaletor thymos*, as its headlong impetuosity could thwart all that his *metis* would devise. But his intellectual strength alone would not suffice. Only in union with Odysseus' *tlemosyne*, his exemplary endurance, will his *metis* be able to sustain its control over his heroic *megaletor thymos*, for the escape plan his *metis* devises entails further, and graver, humiliations that are bound to provoke his heroic temper. All this militates heavily against Heroic Man's dignity and honour. The humiliations culminate in the trick with the name. By giving up his *onoma klyton* (ix 364) on which the hero's honour and glory are fastened, and calling himself *Outis*, Heroic Man inflicts upon himself the ultimate outrage, self-abnegation. Self-preservation necessitates the sacrifice of the heroic self. But suppressing his *megaletor thymos* to the point of self-effacement is too great a sacrifice. Bound as it is to reassert itself, it does so with a vengeance in his three addresses to the giant from the escaping ship. As the man of *metis*, then, Odysseus experiences the greatest triumph; as Heroic Man, the most profound humiliation. The *Cyclopeia* is the tale of Odysseus' *metis* triumphing over the Cyclopes' violent force (*kratere bie*) as well as the tale of the humiliation and eventual restoration of Odysseus' heroic self; and it is this duality that shapes the ethos of this episode.

The important point for our argument is that the need to restore his humiliated and effaced heroic self determines Odysseus' attitude after the deed and the tenor of his

²⁷ Cp. Nestle (n. 19) 52.

addresses to the blinded giant. Odysseus' taunting of his defeated enemy turns the blinding of the Cyclops into something more than just an act of self-defence: it attains thereby the significance of a *tisis*, an act of heroic revenge designed to restore the hero's violated honour. It is the extreme nature of this violation —enforced self-abnegation— that causes the ferocity and vehemence which Odysseus displays in these addresses.

The first address curiously mixes heroic triumph and moral claim (ix 474-9):

Κύκλωψ, οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλες ἀνάλκιδος ἀνδρὸς ἐταίρους
ἔδμεναι ἐν σπηῆι γλαφυρῶ κρατερῆφι βίηφι.
καὶ λίην σέ γ' ἔμελλε κιχήσεσθαι κακὰ ἔργα,
σχέτλι', ἐπεὶ ξείνους οὐχ ἄζεο σῶ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ
ἔσθήμεναι· τῶ σε Ζεὺς τείσατο καὶ θεοὶ ἄλλοι.

With a sarcastic litotes (οὐκ . . . ἀνάλκιδος ἀνδρὸς κτλ..) Odysseus begins to reaffirm his heroic *alke* after the unheroic *amechanie*, to which the Cyclops' *bie* had subjected him in the cave. Odysseus behaves as we expect Heroic Man to behave after a victory: he boasts. Indeed, this address, and the other two as well, are reminiscent of the typical boast (*euchos*) with which the Iliadic hero, taunting his vanquished enemy, seals an *aristeia*.²⁸ At the same time Odysseus declares the blinding to be a divine punishment for the giant's lawlessness and hybris (477-9). The interpretation of line 479 is a moot point. At first view, it may suggest modesty and pious humility on Odysseus' part: he seems to credit Zeus and the other gods with his victory.²⁹ In Reinhardt's view, as we have seen, it contains the very essence of Odysseian presumptuousness. This remains to be clarified later.

Odysseus' taunting voice exposes the ship to the missiles of the giant and puts them all at great risk, thus jeopardizing the successful escape at the last minute. To their horror his comrades see their leader readying himself for the next taunt. They implore him to restrain himself; yet, as Odysseus reports (500-1), 'they could not persuade my *megaletor thymos*, but I addressed the Cyclops again with a furious *thymos*':

Κύκλωψ, αἶ κέν τις σε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
ὄφθαλμοῦ εἴρηται ἀεικελίην ἀλαωτύν,
φάσθαι Ὀδυσσῆα πτολιπόρθιον ἐξαλαῶσαι,
υἱὸν Λαέρτεω, Ἰθάκη ἐνὶ οἴκῳ ἔχοντα. (ix 502-5).

With the proud revelation of his famous name the hero's repressed *megaletor thymos* reasserts itself by annulling his self-abnegation: he ceases to be the *outis* he was forced to make himself into under the dictates of his *metis*. Now, under the dictates of the heroic code, his *metis* no longer controls his *megaletor thymos*. It should be noted that in the second address already Odysseus proudly claims the deed as his very own. The resurgence of his *megaletor thymos*, all the more violent because of the enormity of the outrage suffered in the cave, finally has Odysseus lose all restraint; as a result, his insolent boasting culminates in a gratuitous insult to Poseidon (ix 523-5):

αἶ γὰρ δὴ ψυχῆς τε καὶ αἰῶνός σε δυναίμην
εὖνιν ποιήσας πέμψαι δόμον Ἄϊδος εἴσω,
ὡς οὐκ ὄφθαλμόν γ' ἴησεται οὐδ' ἐνοσίχθων.

Odysseus sacrifices his victory over the Cyclops, the *aristeia* of his *metis*, to the heroic passion of his *megaletor thymos* as his triumphant boasting lays him open to the curse of

²⁸ Cp. H.Eisenberger, *Studien zur Odyssee* Hektor in *Il.* xvi 830ff and Achilles in xxii 331ff. (Wiesbaden 1973) 141. Compare the boasts of

²⁹ Thus Eisenberger (n.28) 141.

the Cyclops and the baneful wrath of Poseidon.³⁰ Worse still, Odysseus incurs the displeasure of Zeus as well (ix 550-3).

The three addresses, taken together, make up Odysseus' *euchos* that seals his victory over the Cyclops. Paraphrased as one sequence they can be shown to form a tripartite unit:

'Cyclops, it was not an unwarlike man whose comrades you devoured: for your lawlessness and impiety Zeus and the other gods punished you through my deed (ix 475-9): tell everyone who asks that it was Odysseus, the Sacker of Cities, who destroyed your eye (502-5): a deed not even your divine father, the Earthshaker, can undo' (523-5).

Back to the question of how to interpret ix 479 (τῷ σε Ζεὺς τεῖσατο καὶ θεοὶ ἄλλοι). Does it, as Eisenberger argues against Reinhardt, suggest the hero's pious modesty rather than his arrogance, as he humbly attributes the victory over the lawless Cyclops to the gods? Assuming it does: it must then be a very short-lived one indeed; for already in the next address Odysseus claims, as we have seen, the victory as his very own (502-5); and he does so even more emphatically in two later references to it. Approaching Skylla (xii 201ff), Odysseus tries to inspire his men with courage by reminding them of their successful escape from the Cyclops' cave (xii 208ff): ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔνθεν ἐμῆ ἀρετῆ βουλῆ τε νόῳ τε ἐκφύγομεν. As he attributes the successful escape exclusively to his *arete*, *boule*, and *noos* Odysseus stresses the absence of all divine support in the Cyclops' cave; similarly, in Book xx where he calls to mind his plight in the Cyclops' cave, he credits his *metis*, and his *metis* alone, with the victory (xx 20-21): σὺ δ' ἐτόλμας, ὄφρα σε μήτις/ ἔξάγαγ' ἐξ ἀντροιο οἴομενον θανέεσθαι. If there ever had been humility and modesty in Odysseus' first address to the Cyclops, they must have evaporated instantly without leaving a trace. More to the point: are not humility and modesty quite alien to an heroic *euchos* in general,³¹ and to this Odysseian *euchos* in particular? Its whole tenor militates against the notion of a humble and modest hero. After all the humiliations and the enforced self-effacement in the Cyclops' cave, it is quite natural that Odysseus' *euchos* should surpass in intensity and force the traditional boast of the triumphant hero. It is therefore not surprising that Odysseus' suppressed *megeletor thymos*, reasserting itself as it does in this *euchos*, should honour modesty and pious humility more in the breach than the observance.

IV

It remains to be proved that Heroic Man's *megeletor thymos* has an inherent proclivity to *hybris*, and that its manifestation in the finale of the *Cyclopeia* bears a specifically Odysseian mark. To do this one must focus on all three addresses—which, as we have seen, cohere as three parts of the typical *euchos*—rather than on only one or two of them, as Reinhardt and others have done.

C. M. Bowra speaks of the 'most unusual self-reliance' of men emerging from, and asserting themselves *vis-à-vis*, the tribal collectivity—a self-reliance that gave rise to the notion of an Heroic Age. It was, as he points out, the 'belief that almost nothing is impossible for men who have the courage and the will to attempt what they want', often formed against the pretensions of superstition and the assumption of 'a world thought to be in the control of gods or demons, whom only the shaman or the witch doctor is qualified to placate.'³² Such exorbitant self-reliance fosters in Heroic Man a

³⁰ See on this C. S. Brown (n.20).

³¹ Eisenberger concedes as much, (n.28) 141, when he notes that such modesty is quite 'ungewöhnlich' for an heroic *euchos*.

³² C. M. Bowra, 'The meaning of an heroic age' (Earl Grey Memorial Lecture, Newcastle 1957) in: G. S. Kirk (ed.), *The language and background of Homer* (Cambridge 1964) 27.

strong disposition towards overbearingness: fertile soil for hybris. Perhaps the most extreme form of hybris one encounters in the Homeric epics can be found in the Cyclops' response to Odysseus' warning of Zeus' anger at breaching the law of hospitality (ix 273–8):

νήπιός εἰς, ὦ ξεῖν', ἧ τηλόθεν εἰλήλουθας,
 ὅς με θεοὺς κέλεαι ἢ δεῖδιμεν ἢ ἀλέασθαι.
 οὐ γὰρ Κύκλωπες Διὸς αἰγιόχου ἀλέγουσιν
 οὐδὲ θεῶν μακάρων, ἐπεὶ ἧ πολὺ φέρτεροί εἰμεν·
 οὐδ' ἂν ἐγὼ Διὸς ἔχθος ἀλευάμενος πεφιδοίμην
 οὔτε σεῦ οὔθ' ἐτάρων, εἰ μὴ θυμὸς με κελεύοι.

Relying on his strength the Cyclops refuses to acknowledge the moral order established by Zeus as a restraining guide of his actions. He acts as it pleases his *thymos* (cf. v.278: εἰ μὴ θυμὸς με κελεύοι.). This is, as Walter Nestle has argued, the same mentality which we find in the great *anaktēs* of the *Iliad*, only exaggerated by way of caricature.³³ Like the Cyclops, the great heroes, too, tend to act as it pleases their *thymos*; and while they do occasionally proclaim the superiority of the gods, their actual behaviour often belies such insight, as the examples of heroes fighting or defying gods in the *Iliad* attest.³⁴ One might call it the 'Cyclopien' element inherent in the hero's *megaletor thymos* as a potential that presents an ever-present peril for the hero himself and the community.³⁵

As Heroic Man Odysseus partakes of this 'Cyclopien' disposition for hybris. It is possible to make an argument for Odysseus' hybris in terms of this disposition alone: Heroic Man's notorious *philotimia* leads him into a situation where he is forced to offend a god by blinding his son; but instead of regarding this as a regrettable yet unavoidable act of self-defence, he glories in his victory, seals it with the boastful revelation of his name, and in the exultation over his successful revenge tops it, quite gratuitously, with an insolent taunt of the victim's divine father. If this is not hybris, what is? Yet this is not all, and to leave it at that would mean to miss an important aspect. In many respects Odysseus is the traditional hero, but Stanford is also right when he calls him the 'untypical hero'.³⁶ It is, first of all, his intellectuality that marks him off from the traditional hero. In the Cyclops' cave Odysseus shows himself as the hero who values reflection over plain impetuosity, and it is this ability to suppress—at least temporarily—the unthinking spontaneity of his *megaletor thymos* that saves him and his comrades from the clutches of the Cyclops (were he the typical hero only, he would not survive: an Achilles or an Ajax would have given in to the impetuosity of their *megaletor thymos* and, unmindful of the consequences, rushed headlong at the giant). What makes him seek out the Cyclops is, as we have seen, a mixture of heroic and intellectual motives, *philotimia* combined with intellectual curiosity. Yet there is more to his intellectual curiosity:

³³ W. Nestle (n.19) 65.

³⁴ See Nestle (n.19) 62f. Examples: Diomedes wounds Aphrodite and Ares (*Il.* v 330ff, 856ff); he very reluctantly cedes to Apollo (*Il.* v 432ff) as does Achilles at the beginning of *Iliad* xxii; Dione lists cases of gods being wounded by heroes (*Il.* v 381ff); and the lesser Ajax challenges the gods in *Od.* iv 499ff. Add to this the less than cordial relationship between the heroic king Agamemnon and the clergy: witness his treatment first of Apollo's priest (*Il.* i 22ff; cf. 24: ἀλλ' οὐκ Ἀτρεΐδῃ Ἀγαμέμνονι ἦνδανε θυμῷ) and then of the seer (*Il.* i.105ff).

³⁵ The ferocity and vehemence with which Achilles abandons himself to his *menis oulomene* is a strong case in point: that this passion, born of his *megaletor thymos*, is an implicit negation of communal life is not only visible in the destructive effects it has on the heroic community, but also reflected in Achilles' growing isolation. The cannibalistic phantasies in his savage address to Hektor (*Il.* xxii 346ff) provide another instance of the 'Cyclopien' element in the heroic *megaletor thymos*.

³⁶ Stanford (*supra* n.26 [1954]) 66ff.

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ σὺν νηϊ τ' ἐμῇ καὶ ἐμοῖς ἑτάροισι
 ἔλθῶν τῶνδ' ἀνδρῶν πειρήσομαι, οἳ τινές εἰσιν,
 ἦ ρ' οἳ γ' ὕβρισταί τε καὶ ἄγριοι οὐδὲ δίκαιοι
 ἦε φιλόξενοι, καὶ σφιν νόος ἐστὶ θεουδῆς (ix 173-6).

What is striking is the ethico-political nature of the knowledge he is after: he wants to know whether the Cyclopes possess *sophrosyne*, *eusebeia*, and *dikaiosyne*, and honour the law of hospitality. More striking, even startling, is the motif of 'testing' (cf. 174: πειρήσομαι), which belongs properly to the role of a god in a divine visitation or theoxeny.³⁷ Could one say that in the *Cyclopeia* Odysseus arrogates to himself something resembling such a role when he announces that he will subject the Cyclopes to an ethical test (ix 174-6)? And if so, what conclusion are we allowed to draw from this?

To repeat, Odysseus, who, keen as he is on adventures and the gratification of his *philotimia*, embarks on the expedition to the land of the Cyclopes shows himself as the typical hero; at the same time his intellectuality and curiosity mark him off as the untypical hero. Even more untypical is the ethical orientation of this curiosity. Can we say that Odysseus has moral pretensions: the bearer of the nascent polis-civilization, conscious of his cultural superiority, plans to test the Cyclopes as to whether they are civilized or savage? Now it is very tempting to see in lines ix 173-6, especially on the strength of πειρήσομαι (174), the intimation of a theoxeny-like enterprise on which Odysseus embarks—with disastrous results.³⁸ The Cyclops turns out to be far more savage than Odysseus could have ever imagined. Flaunting his *hybris* and *asebeia* he is not satisfied with simply flouting the law of hospitality, but proceeds to a most grotesque mockery of its customs when he eats his guests; and in the process humiliates Odysseus' heroic self in the extreme. Blinding the Cyclops, then, is, as we have seen, an act of self-defence that his *euchos* turns into an heroic *tisis*, designed to restore his heroic self. But this is not good enough for Odysseus the untypical hero. Not content with reasserting triumphantly his heroic self, he passes off his revenge as a victory of the Olympian order: by blinding the Cyclops, he proclaims, he has punished him in Zeus' name for failing the 'hospitality test' and thereby reaffirmed, just like a god in a theoxeny, Zeus' moral order which the Cyclops had negated in word and deed. Parading as he does his adventure as a theoxeny-like enterprise and elevating what is in fact a very personal revenge to restore a very personal honour, to the execution of the will of Zeus, he arrogates to himself (not, as Bradley thinks, a divine position but) a *divine mission* for which he has no divine authorization. In short, he aggrandizes his very personal triumph by elevating his heroic *tisis* to a victory of Zeus' order. It must greatly irritate Zeus that such a claim should be made by a man who, by entering the Cyclops' abode in his absence and helping himself uninvited to his food (ix 231-2), was the first to violate the very code he now boasts to have vindicated.³⁹ The Odysseian *hybris* springs

³⁷ Cf. *Od.* xvii 485-7:

The gods take on all sorts of disguises, resembling strangers,
 and they range at large through the cities
 observing men as to their *hybris* and lawfulness.

Cf. Kearns (n.18) and Muthmann (n.18).

³⁸ One of the referees suggests a parallel to another disastrous *peira*, Agamemnon's testing of the host in *Iliad* ii. Note that the different nature of both *peirai* reflects the larger difference of both epics: the one *peira* is heroic, the other ethical.

³⁹ Cf. F. Walsdorff ('Odysseus bei Polyphem', *Der altsprachliche Unterricht* viii 3 [1965] 15-33); also G. Germain, *Genèse de l'Odyssee* (Paris 1954) 68f.—Much, perhaps too much, is made of lines ix 231-2 by R. Newton ('Poor Polyphemus: emotional ambivalence in the *Odyssey*', *CW* lxxvi [1983] 139f) and N. Austin ('Odysseus and the Cyclops: who is who?', in C. A. Rubino and C. W. Shelmerdine, *Approaches to Homer* Austin 1983] 12f.). Newton tries to construe from ἐθύσαμεν the sacrifice and consumption of one of the Cyclops'

from a turbid mixture of heroic ambition and moral pretension. It is this moral pretension that Reinhardt seems to have had in mind when he characterized the Odysseian hybris, not too felicitously, as 'Hybris als moralische Bewusstheit.' To what extent it is pretension—that is, an unearned and arrogated claim—is patent from the incongruity of his claim and the manner of its proclamation: he claims to have punished, as the agent of Zeus, the Cyclops' recklessness, savagery, and impiety; yet this is proclaimed in the form of a boast that is reckless, savage, and impious: in a word, 'Cyclopian'. The 'Cyclopian' trait in the heroic *thymos*, lurking as it does in Heroic Man's exuberant self-reliance as an ever-present peril and temptation, manifests itself in Odysseus' *euchos* — with baneful results, as it provokes the displeasure of Zeus.

This brings the argument back to the theological difficulty. If my argument has succeeded in demonstrating that there is such a thing as Odysseus' hybris, then there is, after all, a motive for Zeus' anger at Odysseus - a motive that is consistent with his programmatic speech in *Odyssey* i. In that case Fenik's thesis that 'the wraths of Zeus and Poseidon are merged', with Zeus relapsing thereby to the level of the sea-god's primitive vengefulness, no longer holds: in this respect the Odysseian theology cannot be said to be inconsistent. Reinhardt's argument, on the other hand, has much to recommend it: Zeus, rather than blindly identifying himself with his fellow-god's wrath as Fenik says he does, uses it as a means to a larger end.⁴⁰ *Dum duo faciunt idem, non est idem*: both deities persecute Odysseus, but for different reasons and for different purposes. Poseidon simply wants to take revenge on Odysseus, while Zeus intends to chastise and chasten the hybristic hero *for the hero's own sake* in order to prepare him for the tasks that await the home-coming hero. Zeus' larger design is the restoration of the order of justice in Ithaca through the punitive actions of the returning ruler (*cf.* xxiv 482-6)⁴¹, and it is this end that the evolution and the growth of the hero serve. The *Cyclopeia* represents a stage of the epic action at which Odysseus' character is still marked by an incongruous mixture of heroic, intellectual, and ethical qualities which have not yet found their balance and proper relationship to one another.⁴² The temporal setting of the Cyclops adventure is, we must remember, the year of the sack of Troy: throughout Book ix the adventurer Odysseus is primarily Heroic Man, the 'Sacker of Cities', as which he acts in the Cicones adventure and as which he proudly reveals himself to the Cyclops in his second address (ix 504: Ὀδυσσῆα πτολιπόρθιον); and it is due to the predominance of his heroic temper, with its proclivity to hybris, that he comes to grief in the Cyclops adventure. His sufferings during the *plane* make him experience the limits and liabilities inherent in the heroic, and in the end will enable him to see it in perspective. As the epic action progresses, Odysseus, chastened by his sufferings, will overcome the imbalance in his character. The boasting and

sheep, which is certainly not warranted by the text. True, the verb suggests a burnt sacrifice, and all that the texts allows us to infer (quaint though it sounds) is that Odysseus and his comrades must have burnt some of the Cyclops' cheese, to which they help themselves uninvited.

⁴⁰ Reinhardt (n.5) 91: 'in Poseidon's Zorn ist etwas Negatives. Er will nur sein Götterrecht . . . Doch auch sein Negatives dient dem grossen Positiven, dessen Name Zeus ist. Zeus lässt ihn gewähren, wirkt doch auch sein Zorn zum Ganzen.' This is said to point to 'etwas hintergründig Theologisches in der Dichtung' (*ibid.*)

⁴¹ Cf. H. Erbse (*Beiträge zum Verständnis der Odyssee* [Berlin and New York 1972]) 141-2,

where he draws a felicitous analogy to the Aeschylean *Oresteia*: with the covenant established by Zeus through Athena that precludes the vicious circle of revenge and counter-revenge among the people of Ithaca, the *Odyssey*-poet 'schuf das Modell für die aeschyleische Orestie.' See also Erbse (n. 11) 255.

⁴² Stanford (n.26 [1954]) 71 sees this incongruity in different terms (the victory over the Cyclops is Odysseus' greatest Autolycean triumph but at the same time his 'greatest failure as the favourite of Athene') and explains it a conflation of pre-Homeric and Homeric traditions; on this see Friedrich (n.25) 122.

presumptuous Sacker of Cities, whom we see in the finale of the *Cyclopeia*, will become the just ruler who, executing the will of Zeus, restores the order of justice in Ithaca, while his heroic qualities are made to serve this cause. This development and growth of the *Odyssey's* hero can be gleaned from the strikingly different attitude Odysseus displays after his next heroic victory: the slaying of the suitors. When Eurycleia is about to raise the cry of triumph over the slain, Odysseus forbids it as 'unholy' (οὐχ ὀσίη, xxii 410). No *euchos* seals this victory; and the words by which Odysseus describes himself as a mere tool of divine justice (τούσδε δὲ μοῖρ' ἐδάμασσε θεῶν, xxii 413) are said this time with true modesty. At the same time his theoxeny-like mission⁴³ possesses the divine authorization which he had vainly and arrogantly claimed in the *Cyclopeia*.

To say, as Brown does, that 'in the same way that the *Iliad* is about the wrath of Achilles, the *Odyssey* is about the hybris of Odysseus,'⁴⁴ is to overstate the case. The *Odyssey* is about the *nostos* of Odysseus; connected with it is the novel theme of the hero's evolution, to which the theme of heroic hybris is central. It is in this respect that the hybris of Odysseus forms an important component of the *Odyssey's* main theme.

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⁴³ I use 'theoxeny-like mission' on the strength of Kearns' convincing demonstration that Odysseus' return is patterned on a theoxeny (n.18, also n.37).

⁴⁴ Brown (n.20) 202.