The title of Professor Raaflaub's lecture was "Homer, Hesiod, and the Beginnings of Greek Political Thought." The challenging element in this title is "Homer." Most of us do not think of Homer as a political thinker. Homeric scholarship, when it has been concerned at all with the political in Homer, has attempted to find evidence for the history of political institutions—assemblies, councils, law-courts—that might have been in existence in Homer's own time and to combine that evidence with the archaeological record, with facts from later Greek history, and with comparative evidence. The political thought of Homer is a paradoxical notion, and my remarks will therefore largely be concerned with what Professor Raaflaub had to say about Homer.

Almost any approach, let alone this paradoxical one, is beset with difficulties, and Raaflaub acknowledged the problems of using Homer as a historical source, addressing himself to seven preliminary questions. The fourth through the seventh of these questions were concerned with the use of poetry in general and of Homer in particular as historical evidence. He took the position that the society depicted in the Homeric epics, as distinguished from the heroes and their deeds, is historical and is that known to the poet and his audience. I am in agreement with this contention concerning the basic historicity of the material and social aspects of the epics, which do, with some notable exceptions, form a coherent picture. Certainly no one doubts that the principles of the warrior-aristocrats form a consistent
code reflecting the ideology of the aristocrats of Homer’s own
day, in whose halls the bards sang epic song.\textsuperscript{1}

If Homer can mirror this society and its ideology, can he also
criticize them? Is Homer capable of \textit{critical} thought about con-
temporary institutions? Raaflaub’s answer is yes. He has enucle-
ated a critical attitude toward the aristocratic chieftains which
brings Homer unexpectedly closer to Hesiod, whose \textit{Works and
Days} reproaches the ‘bribe-devouring kings’ he had to contend
with in Boeotian Ascra. I find Raaflaub’s analysis of this anti-
aristocratic tendency in the \textit{Iliad} very persuasive and, in passing,
I want to add a corroborative detail. In rereading the opening
books of the \textit{Iliad} through the impulse of Raaflaub’s paper, I
noticed that the adjective ‘other,’ in various formulaic expres-
sions, serves to distinguish a leader from his followers and often
to express their dissension. For example, at the very beginning
of the \textit{Iliad}, Agamemnon rejects the petition of the priest Chryses,
while ‘the other Achaeans’ approve it. The result of the king’s
decision is the plague, sent by Chryses’ patron, Apollo, which
forces Agamemnon to restore Chryses’ daughter, for whom he
demands Briseis as recompense—and all the rest.

I should like, however, to qualify Raaflaub’s position in two
respects.

First, no matter what traces of political thought we find in the
\textit{Iliad}, the fact remains the fundamental situation is not a political
one. A band of Achaeans from many cities is gathered in a camp
on the plains of Troy. A quarrel breaks out between the leader of
the Achaeans and the best warrior amongst his chieftains.
Agamemnon, the leader, is \textit{primus inter pares}; his position is based
on the fact that he rules over more people than do the others.
Achilles, the best warrior, like the other chieftains, is under no
obligation to fight at Troy. His loyalty to Agamemnon and to his
fellows is based on the principles of \textit{φιλία}, a kind of friendship.\textsuperscript{2}
This \textit{φιλία}, I submit, is pre-political or apolitical. The quarrel
between Agamemnon and Achilles breaks out because Achilles
feels that his honor has been offended. His honor is a personal
matter, not a political one, and Zeus himself accords it the
greatest importance. The Plan of Zeus (I 5, 498-530; XIII 345-360)

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\item Murray 1983, p. 49. \item Nagy 1979, pp. 103-111.
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