

NESTOR THE GOOD COUNSELLOR

At least since Plutarch, and perhaps before, Nestor has been viewed as the prototype of wisdom anchored in old age and experience (Plut. *Mor.* 788–90, 795). This view dominates modern scholarship, most of which treats Nestor as the paradigm of the good counsellor.¹ Yet the same scholars who see Nestor as embodying Homer's ideal of the wise counsellor also observe Nestor's many flaws, from his prolixity to the irrelevant, anachronistic nature of some of his advice, and argue that at one or another place in the narrative Homer presents him ironically, mocks him, or shows him to be ridiculous.² For example, Kirk observes both that Homer presents Nestor as a sage counsellor in his six-line introduction to the character and that he puts into Nestor's mouth anachronistic military advice.³

Few scholars, however, have paid much attention to the apparent contradictions in Homer's depiction of Nestor, let alone tried to reconcile them. Edwards writes that 'Nestor is prolix because he gives only good, important advice, which demands our attention.'⁴ But this sounds rather like special pleading. Finley, one of the few modern scholars to maintain that Homer's Nestor is not a prototype of the wisdom of old age, attributes this image to the idealization of earlier readers and contends that in the whole of the *Iliad* Nestor made only one suggestion 'that could in any proper sense be called a significant and reasoned one'.⁵ Yet while this reading of Nestor is an important corrective, it is rather harsh and reductive.

This paper examines the contradictions in Nestor's presentation and argues both that they are too consistent to be anything but intentional and that they do not detract from Nestor's quality as an adviser. It then goes on to explore the features of the wise counsellor that the *Iliad* itself names and to examine Nestor's role as adviser in preserving the solidarity and promoting the survival of the Achaean host.

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¹ M. W. Edwards, *Homer: Poet of the Iliad* (Baltimore and London, 1987), 4 5, 18, 21; R. P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1989), 52, 59 60, 80 1, 101 2; E. T. Owen, *The Story of the Iliad* (Bristol, 1989), 10; K. Stanley, *The Shield of Homer: Narrative Structure in the Iliad* (Princeton, 1993), 47, 51.

² For example, Edwards (n. 1), 4 5; Martin (n. 1), 61 2; Stanley (n. 1), 403, n. 48, 276 7, 225 7; G. S. Kirk, 'Old age and maturity in ancient Greece', *Eranos Jahrbuch* 40 (1971), 123 58, at 130, notes 'some humour in the freedom' Nestor is allowed in his anecdotes. He attributes Nestor's garrulity to his old age; G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 1. *Books 1–4* (Cambridge, 1987) on 2.336 68 and 2.360 8. A. Severyns, *Homère* (Bruxelles, 1949), 50, on 11.655 803, seems to be right to point out that the character of Nestor gives opportunity for the poet's humour. Cf. C. M. Bowra, *Tradition and Design in the Iliad* (Oxford, 1930), 206 7, on this scene, who also says 'But Homer is not content to leave him as an experienced and sage dispenser of good advice. He has made him more human by making him rather ridiculous' (206). For the Muse's ironic epithets for Nestor, see Stanley (n. 1) at 106, 277, who draws attention to the Muse's rather ironic use of the epithet *hippota* 'horseman' for Nestor, when his chariot is disabled and he has to mount Diomedes' and leave him to Sthenelus and Eurymedon (8.112 15). Shortly he would lose control of yet another chariot (8.137–8).

³ Kirk (n. 2, 1987) on 2.360 8.

⁴ M. W. Edwards, 'Topos and transformation in Homer', in J. M. Bremer, I. J. F. De Jong, and J. Kalff (edd.), *Homer: Beyond Oral Poetry* (Amsterdam, 1987), 47 60, at 48.

⁵ M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (New York, 1978), 114.

In book after book of the *Iliad*, Nestor's counsel proves either ineffective or seriously flawed, yet all the while Nestor himself is lavishly praised by the narrator and/or shown to have the respect of Agamemnon and the other warriors.⁶ The pattern undergoes certain modifications in the course of the epic. The authorial praise is more pronounced at the beginning of the *Iliad* and becomes more muted as the Achaeans' fortunes decline and they are shown to be increasingly mired in the campaign that Nestor had strongly supported. But at no point is Nestor ever criticized.

The pattern is set in Book 1. Here Nestor is introduced over a space of six lines as a man of clear and sweet speech, lucid old age, position of rule, and good intentions (1.247–53). But both Agamemnon and Achilles patently reject the advice he gives them, sound as it is (of which more later), as he tries to mediate their quarrel over Agamemnon's appropriation of Briseis. Agamemnon courteously commends his counsel as *κατὰ μοῖραν* (*kata moiran*, appropriate and well put, 1.286), but immediately afterward goes on to complain about Achilles' bossiness and power hunger. Achilles, not bothering even to be polite, addresses only Agamemnon's affront, without referring to Nestor at all.⁷

In Book 2, we see Nestor completely taken in by the οὔλος ὄνειρος (*oulos oneiros*) baneful dream that Zeus sends to get Agamemnon to do battle against the Trojans (2.79–83). We see him believing the dream's promises of Zeus's favour and advising Agamemnon and the others to rush into a fight that the audience is told from the outset is doomed (2.38–40). Yet he is described as the man whom 'Agamemnon honoured above all' (τὸν ῥα μάλιστα γερόντων τί' Ἀγαμέμνων, 2.21) and 'the shepherd of the people' (ποιμένι λαῶν, 2.85). In his address to the counsel somewhat later, he again urges the leaders to go on to the offensive. He also advises Agamemnon to organize his forces by tribes and clans (2.350–68, esp. 362–8). There is no indication that Agamemnon follows this advice, and Kirk maintains that the arrangement by tribes and clans was anachronistic by Homer's time.⁸ Yet at the end of Nestor's speech, we hear Agamemnon proclaim, 'Yet again, old man, you exceed the sons of the Achaeans in speech' and express the wish that 'I had ten such counsellors' (τοιούτοι δέκα μοι συμφράδμονες εἶεν Ἀχαιῶν, 2.372).

In Book 4, Nestor is again shown exhibiting anachronistic tactical practice. Commenting at length, Kirk points out that scholars since Aristotle have found difficulties with the formation Nestor employs and counsels: with the chariot-force in front, the infantry at the back, and the inferior soldiers in the middle (4.297–300). Chariots in Homer's time served mainly as transport vehicles to take the distinguished warriors to the front—where they would dismount and fight—and, when necessary, to enable them to retreat. Since the fighting was with spears, and Nestor instructs the men not to throw them, but only to thrust them (4.306–7), the formation would have resulted in a deadly tangle of closely packed carriages with no room for manoeuvre.⁹ The instructions are also somewhat confusing, in that it is not clear where he meant the lesser soldiers to be placed. Does 'in the middle' (ἐς μέσσον, *es messon*, 4.299) mean sandwiched between the charioteers out in front and the

⁶ Cf. N. Austin, 'The function of digressions in the *Iliad*', *GRBS* 7(1966), 295–312, at 301 with n. 11.

⁷ The only time Achilles addresses Nestor is in Book 23 after the chariot race in honour of Patroclus (23.618–23).

⁸ See Kirk (n. 2, 1987), on 2.360–8.

⁹ Cf. Kirk (n. 2, 1987), on 4.297–300; N. Postlethwaite, *Homer's Iliad: A Commentary on the Translation of Richmond Lattimore* (Exeter, 2000) on 4.301–9.

infantry at the rear? Or does it mean mingled in with or surrounded by the braver infantrymen?¹⁰ Kirk argues convincingly that Nestor's advice in this speech reflects his distorted memory of much earlier practices. Yet, his instructions, like his mediation speech, are preceded by the narrator's description of him as the *λιγύς ἀγορητής* (*ligys agorētēs*)—the clear-voiced speaker (4.293) — of Pylos, and followed by the description of him as 'having knowledge of battles from of old' (*πάλα πολέμων ἐὺ εἰδώς*, 4.310).

In addition, the audience is shown Agamemnon, who had been watching Nestor's performance, appearing rather pleased with it all. Although the text once again gives no indication that Agamemnon ever implemented Nestor's tactical advice, it tells that he was 'glad' (*γῆθησεν*, *gêthēsen*, 4.311) when he saw Nestor. Then a few lines later, after Nestor declares his intention of joining the riders to 'command them with counsel and words' (*κελεύσω βουλῇ καὶ μύθοισι*, 4.322–3) while the young do the actual fighting, the authorial voice declares that Agamemnon leaves the scene 'cheerful of heart' (*γῆθόσυνος κῆρ*, *gêthosynos kêr*, 4.326). The implication is that he is pleased that Nestor will be there to guide the troops.

In Book 7, Nestor is shown advising the Greeks to take a break in the fighting to bury the dead and to fortify the camp against a Trojan onslaught by building towers and a wall and digging a ditch around it.¹¹ Yet, though the fortifications will soon prove futile, the advice is preceded by the author's statement that Nestor is the aged man 'whose advice was indeed best in the past' (*οὐ καὶ πρόσθεν ἀρίστη φαίνεται βουλῇ*, 7.325) and followed by the information that all the other leaders 'gave him their approval' (*οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπήνησαν βασιλῆες*, 7.344).¹²

In Book 8, we see Nestor advising Diomedes not to challenge Hector after Zeus throws Diomedes' horses into confusion with a bolt of lightning (8.132–44). Diomedes' prediction that Hector will mock him—Diomedes—as a coward if he runs proves accurate, casting some doubt on whether or not Nestor has chosen the right and honourable course (8.145–50, 161–6). However, in the very same incident Diomedes grants that Nestor's explanation of why they should leave is *κατὰ μοῖραν* (*kata moiran*, appropriate and well put; 8.146). And, Hector, echoing Agamemnon's earlier praise (2.371–2), pays Nestor an unheard compliment when he urges his men to follow the two so that they can capture Nestor's famous shield (8.191–3).

¹⁰ Cf. Kirk (n. 2, 1987), on 4.297–300.

¹¹ Needless to say, scholars have wondered why the fortifications were not built earlier, rather than in the tenth year of the war. Some have suggested that the incident is a later interpolation. It should be pointed out, however, that this is one of several incidents in the *Iliad* that are out of place chronologically (for example, Priam's asking Helen to identify the key Greek warriors, who have been on Trojan soil for ten years [3.162–242]). Whoever authored this scene, whether Homer or a later hand, was obviously unconcerned about the chronological niceties. He seems to have included it in order to show Nestor giving this particular advice. For a summary of the sources dealing with building the camp and fortifying it, see M. Finkelberg, 'The sources of *Iliad* 7', *Colby Quarterly* 38.2 (2002), 151–62. Kirk (n. 2, 1987), on 4.327–43, believes the episode is of Homer's hand. For Homer's notion of time, see W. Kullmann, 'Past and future in the *Iliad*', in D. L. Cairns (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Homer's Iliad* (Oxford, 2001), 385–408, trans. L. Holford-Strevens (first published as 'Vergangenheit und Zukunft in der *Iliad*', *Poetica* 2 [1968], 15–37).

¹² The word *καί* may also be translated as 'even', 'although', and 'also'. I chose 'indeed', which makes the statement more emphatic, because it best preserves what I believe is the gist of the argument: Nestor's present advice should be heeded because his advice was superior in the past. This point would be lost with the other alternatives. In fact, it is hard to see what sense they would give the statement.

In Book 9, Nestor's expectation that Achilles will be appeased by Agamemnon's generous gift offerings and rejoin the fighting—his expectation that, as he tells Agamemnon, 'no one could condemn any more these gifts you offer the lord Achilles' (9.164)—is proven overly optimistic. Achilles holds fast to his sense of affront and refuses to accept Agamemnon's gifts and return to the fold. When Odysseus and the other emissaries who had gone to Achilles at Nestor's suggestion return empty-handed from their mission of propitiation, Diomedes observes, correctly, that Agamemnon's extravagant gift offerings had driven Achilles deeper into his pride (697–700). This observation brings home the point, which the audience probably has already gleaned for itself, that Nestor, has misjudged Achilles' disposition. Yet, as in Book 7, the narrator once again frames Nestor's advice in words of approval. Echoing Book 7, the narrator precedes the advice with the statement that Nestor is the person 'whose advice was indeed best in the past' (οὗ καὶ πρόσθεν ἀρίστη φαίνεται βουλή, 9.94) and follows Nestor's directives for the mission with the observation that his suggestion 'was pleasing to all' (τοῖσι δὲ πᾶσιν ἐάδота μῦθον ἔειπεν, 9.173). Both here and in Book 7, the approval and shared consensus far outweigh the error in judgement.

Moreover, this lapse of judgement in no way deters Agamemnon from seeking Nestor's help in finding another way out of the morass in which the Greeks find themselves after Achilles' refusal. Early in Book 10, Nestor is the one to whom Agamemnon goes to 'invent some good device that will not fail, and that may drive the evil away from all the Danaans' (19–20) and for 'shrewd counsel' (χρῆσιν βουλῆς . . . κερδαλέης, 10.43–4).

Book 11 features Nestor giving Patroclus advice that will lead to his death, as well as to the death of Achilles. Nestor's hope that Patroclus will be able to persuade Achilles to abandon his anger and join the battle proves to be as misplaced as his earlier expectation that Achilles would accept Agamemnon's gift offerings. His suggestion that, in the event that Achilles does not agree, Patroclus go into battle wearing Achilles' armour, in the expectation that 'if the Trojans take you for him, they may hold off from the battle' (11.799–800) is also shown to be based on a serious misjudgement.¹³ Far from being intimidated by Achilles' armour, Hector is stirred into action by it. Ultimately, Nestor's advice to Patroclus will lead to Achilles' battlefield victory over Hector and thus indirectly help the Achaeans. But the happy ending is the incidental outcome of the advice, not its immediate result. Nonetheless, right before his fateful meeting with Patroclus, the narrative provides detailed evidence of Nestor's military prowess, wise counsel, and physical strength. Nestor is first shown in this book in the midst of pitched battle (11.500–1), holding his own with

¹³ For study of the paradigmatic tale in Nestor's speech to Patroclus, see V. Pedrick, 'The paradigmatic nature of Nestor's speech in *Iliad* 11', *TAPA* 113 (1983), 55–68. For the excessive length of this paradigm, see Austin (n. 6), 306, 311. For excision of lines 11.664–762 on the basis of being out of place, language that is closer to that of the *Odyssey* than the *Iliad*, and exemplifying civilization later than the 'true Homeric time', see W. Leaf, *A Companion to the Iliad* (London, 1892), 213–14. On the structure of the lengthy speech, see J. H. Gaisser, 'A structural analysis of the digressions in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*', *HSCP* 73 (1969), 1–43, at 9–13; D. Lohmann, *Die Komposition der Reden in der Ilias* (Berlin, 1970), 70–75, 263–71; W. J. Slater, 'Lyric narrative: structure and principle', *CLAnt* 2 (1983), 117–32, at 122, who considers it the 'most muddled story in the *Iliad*, [which] . . . must be meant to illustrate the deliberate bumbling of Nestor'. D. Frame, *The Myth of Return in Early Greek Epic* (New Haven, 1978), 82–95, attempts to give meaning to the tale about the Pylians by connecting it with the base *nes*, in Nestor's name, which may indicate Nestor's role in bringing his people back to life.

the younger heroes and taking the same risks that they do. Evidence of his sage counsel is provided by his possession of Hecamede, the valuable and beautiful prize who had been given to Nestor as a reward for his having been 'best in counsel' (βουλῇ ἀριστεύσκειν ἀπάντων, 11.627). His physical prowess is shown in his effortlessly lifting a cup that others can barely get off the table when it was full (11.637). As will be explained in more detail shortly, these features are key characteristics of the good adviser. The focus on them in this book reinforces Nestor's legitimacy as an adviser even at this fateful junction.

In Book 14, Nestor's description of the disastrous state of affairs on the battlefield—the protective wall torn down, the troops in disarray and being indiscriminately killed—and his advice that the wounded Agamemnon, Odysseus, and Diomedes not return to the battlefield because 'a wounded man cannot fight in any way' (οὐ γάρ πως βεβλημένον ἔστι μάχεσθαι, 14.63) deepen Agamemnon's apprehensions and gloom and lead him, for the second time in the epic, to decide to sail back home. Odysseus severely rebukes the decision as dishonourable and potentially ruinous as well (14.83–102), but neither he nor anyone else attaches any responsibility to Nestor. In fact, Nestor's reservations about wounded men fighting (14.62–3) are taken into account in Diomedes' recommendation that the wounded warriors return to the battle but keep out of the path of the enemy's weapons, and are tacitly vindicated when the Achaean leaders adopt it (14.110–32).

Finally, in Book 23, his next and last appearance in the *Iliad*, Nestor gives his son Antilochus standard advice about how to win the chariot race that Achilles organizes for Patroclus' funeral. The advice seems a bit suspect because, immediately after giving it, Nestor breaks his hitherto uninterrupted account of past successes to tell of his defeat in a chariot race in his youth (23.638–42).¹⁴ Yet, we are also shown Achilles honouring Nestor with a kind of pre-retirement prize of a double-handled jar (23.615–17), a clear expression of the esteem in which Achilles and the other heroes hold him.¹⁵ That it is Achilles who offers the prize, after having so blatantly rejected Nestor's advice throughout the epic, makes the gesture particularly meaningful as an affirmation of Nestor's status as the wise counsellor of the Achaeans.

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The above sketch shows a systematic disparity between the content and outcomes of Nestor's advice and the positive valuation of Nestor by the narrator and the key characters in the epic. We see some of Nestor's advice ignored or rejected; his tactical guidelines anachronistic; his counsel to fortify the camp, though eminently sensible, ultimately futile. We see him duped by Agamemnon's false dream, misreading the characters of Achilles and the Trojan adversary, and deepening Agamemnon's depression when the king is already demoralized. Yet, with all of this, Nestor is directly praised throughout the first part of the epic; direct criticism of him is carefully withheld in the second part, even as the fortunes of the Achaeans decline; and he is

¹⁴ Stanley (n. 1), 225–7 finds a superb irony in the balance between Nestor's lengthy speech of instruction to Antilochus on how to win the chariot race, and his subsequent confession that even in his youth he did not win this race (23.306ff., 638ff.). For a detailed discussion of Nestor's advice and Antilochus' implementation of it, see H. M. Roisman, 'Nestor's advice and Antilochus' tactics', *Phoenix* 42 (1988) 114–20.

¹⁵ I. M. Hohendahl Zoetelief, *Manners in the Homeric Epic* (Leiden, 1980), 115–16, maintains that the prize is given 'in explicit pity for his [Nestor's] old age', but that Nestor chooses to see in Achilles' gesture a homage. A. Sauge, 'Iliade 23: les jeux, un procès', *ZAnt* 44 (1994), 5–43, at 15–16, thinks Achilles must have figured out Nestor's advice to Patroclus, and that Achilles' words of appreciation to the old man are ironic.

consistently shown as honoured and respected by the Achaeans, even when they do not follow his counsels. Whatever the outcome of his advice, Nestor is surrounded by a kind of glow in the *Iliad*, sometimes brighter, sometimes a bit dimmed, but always there. It is this glow that may be responsible for the scholarly view of Nestor as Homer's favourite character.¹⁶

On first thought it might seem that the glow, so strange in the light of Homer's consistent presentation of Nestor's failings, could be interpreted away. For example, Agamemnon's esteem for Nestor may be judged excessive and put down to the same tendency to get carried away by his emotions that we see in his appropriation of Briseis, in the counter-productive extravagance of his gift offerings to Achilles, and in his attacks of despair and precipitate, impulsive decisions to return to Greece. Or we can observe, as some scholars have, the many ironies of Nestor's presentation. For example, Stanley notes the irony of the narrator referring to Nestor as the Gerenian horseman in the episode where Nestor loses his horse.¹⁷ But such interpretations, while not without grounds, should not be pushed too far. Nestor is held in esteem by all of the characters, not only Agamemnon. And the ironies are gentle. In the episode in which Nestor's horse is killed, Nestor is shown acquitting himself no worse than the other heroes, who, with the exception of Diomedes, had all fled the field. Odysseus is shown riding away so quickly that he ignores Diomedes' call for help (8.92–8). Whatever irony there is, it would seem to refer to the nature of things—that even good horsemen can lose their horses—rather than to show up Nestor's inadequacies.¹⁸ Above all, the central disparity between the poor outcomes of Nestor's advice and the positive view of Nestor that is advanced throughout the epic should not be obliterated by dismissing the positive statements as sarcastic or ironic. Such an interpretation would leave Nestor the butt of an ongoing joke and a much thinner and far less rich character than he is.

Throughout the *Iliad*, Nestor is shown from a dual perspective: as a venerated warrior-counsellor worthy of respect and as a man of flawed judgement whose advice may be irrelevant or, worse, have very poor outcomes. These seemingly conflicting perspectives exist simultaneously. Both must be recognized and their simultaneity acknowledged if we are to appreciate fully the complex character that Homer has crafted and to begin to address the question of how these apparently conflicting aspects of his depiction fit together.

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The concept of the good counsellor in the *Iliad* is evidently distinct from and does not depend on the outcome of the advice. Nestor is no less a good adviser because Agamemnon and Achilles choose not to take his advice about how to mend their rift, because Achilles scorns the offer of reconciliation that Nestor urges Agamemnon to make, because the fortifications of the camp that Nestor advises constructing are breached by the enemy, or because Patroclus is killed while wearing Achilles' arms, as Nestor had urged him to do.¹⁹ This disconnection between the quality of advice and its outcome is central to the *Iliad*.

¹⁶ Kirk (n. 2, 1987), on 1.247–52, citing Willcock.

¹⁷ Stanley (n. 1), 106, 277. For possible irony in Nestor's reply to Achilles in 23.626–50, see Stanley (n. 1), 378, n. 22; Sauge (n. 14), 17–20.

¹⁸ Possibly one could argue that his decision to flee has a dramatizing effect: even Nestor, who is such a good horseman, is overwhelmed by the events of the battle.

¹⁹ Cf. E. Minchin, 'Speaker and listener, text and context: some notes on the encounter of Nestor and Patroclus in *Iliad* 11', *CW* 84 (1991), 273–85, at 273–5.

It is a distinction that may be difficult for us to grasp, because of the close association drawn in modern times between value and practical benefits and also because of our belief in our ability to affect what happens to us. But in the world of the *Iliad*, outcomes are ultimately in the hands of the ever arbitrary and fickle gods, there is no illusion that things will work out as expected, and the heroes are not necessarily viewed as responsible when things go awry or work out differently than anticipated. Today, we would probably discredit Nestor for being misled by the lying dream and for failing to anticipate Achilles' response to Agamemnon's gift offerings and Hector's response to seeing Achilles' armour. The *Iliad* does not discredit him, however, any more than it discredits Odysseus, Agamemnon, and the other heroes, who all participate in one or another of these errors. Odysseus, to take the most salient example, remains 'the resourceful' throughout the epic, even though he was as fully misled by the lying dream as Nestor and participated whole-heartedly in the abortive mission of reconciliation to Achilles.

The separation between the quality of the advice and its outcomes does not mean that a person who is regularly ignored or duped or who regularly misjudges situations and people can be defined as a good adviser. What it means is that the good adviser must be judged as a human being, with the limitations inherent in his humanity. He is not expected to be a seer who can see into the future or penetrate deceptions, or a sorcerer who can impose his will on reluctant chattel. It is not expected that his judgements will always be correct or that he will be able to solve all the practical problems at hand. Odysseus is actually much better than Nestor when it comes both to solving practical problems and persuading people to do what he wants.²⁰

The question that arises from the disjunction of counsel from outcome is this: if the quality of neither the advice nor the adviser is to be judged by its outcome, how then does the *Iliad* define good counsel and distinguish between that and bad counsel?

The remainder of this paper is based on the view that Nestor is both a good adviser and an imperfect one, and tries to understand how the two aspects of his characterization combine to create a single definition of a good counsellor in the *Iliad*. I am indebted in a general way to Malcolm Schofield's excellent paper on *euboulia* in the *Iliad*, which demonstrates the importance of good counsel in the world of this epic, highlights the combination of emotional and rational appeal by which it is characterized, and, contesting Finley, considers Nestor a good counsellor even where his advice is ignored.²¹ My paper focuses instead on Nestor's characterization, assuming that Homer's characterization of Nestor represents his definition of a good counsellor who is nonetheless flawed. More specifically, it examines two attributes, sweet speech and the quality of ἐὺ φρονέων (*eu phroneōn*, 'kindly intentioned'), 'kind intention' that Nestor is repeatedly said to possess.

²⁰ The author of the *Iliad* does not seem to have placed the value on persuasion that later generations would do. The text nowhere suggests that the ability to persuade is a crucial—or even desirable—feature of the counsellor. On the contrary. It shows riff raff like Thersites being able to persuade people to follow his suggestions by appealing to their baser inclinations. Odysseus' ability to persuade is associated with his wiliness; and Achilles' well known assertion in Book 9 that he hates a man who says one thing and means another as much as the gates of Hades (9.312–13) implies contempt for the skilled orator. As will be argued a bit further on in the text, what is valued in the adviser is not his ability to persuade as such, but his ability to fit his words to the needs of the situation and to draw on and maintain the consensus.

²¹ M. Schofield, 'Euboulia in the *Iliad*', *CQ* 36 (1986), 6–31.

THE INTRODUCTION TO NESTOR

Nestor is first introduced in Book 1 of the *Iliad* when he tries to settle the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon.

τοῖσι δὲ Νέστωρ
 ἡδυεπὴς ἀνόρουσε, λιγύς Πυλίων ἀγορητής,
 τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδή—
 τῷ δ' ἦδη δύο μὲν γενεαὶ μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
 ἐφθίαθ', οἳ οἱ πρόσθεν ἅμα τράφεν ἡδ' ἐγένοντο
 ἐν Πύλῳ ἡγαθέη, μετὰ δὲ τριτάτοισιν ἀνασσεν—
 ὁ σφιν εὖ φρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν'

(1.247–53)

Among them Nestor of sweet speech
 rose up, clear voiced speaker of the Pylians.
 And his voice poured from his tongue more sweetly than honey.
 Already in his time two generations of mortal men had passed away,
 those who were reared with him and born in
 sacred Pylos, and he was the ruler of the third generation.
 He with good intent addressed and spoke among them.

This introduction is longer than that given to either Agamemnon or Achilles. Kirk (on lines 1.247–52) suggests that Homer made it relatively long either because Nestor was less well known to his audience than the other heroes or in order ‘to emphasize his persuasiveness and venerability so as to give greater force to his advice’.²² Without speculating about motives, however, we can observe that the introduction brings together a number of qualities that define Nestor’s character and situation, and suggest that these qualities are what define the good counsellor whom Nestor exemplifies.

The introduction may be divided into three parts. The first three lines present Nestor as a speaker, the next three lines as an elderly ruler, and the last line as a man of good intent. All three qualities, or sets of qualities, are essential to the good counsellor. I will begin by looking at them in turn.

Nestor is referred to as a speaker three times in as many lines: first as a *ἡδυεπὴς* (*hēdyepēs*), a man of sweet words/speech; then as *λιγύς ἀγορητής* (*ligys agorêtēs*), which translates as clear-voiced orator/speaker, an epithet repeated of him in 4.293;²³ and then as one whose *αὐδή* (*audē*), or voice, flows sweeter (*γλυκίων*, *glykiôn*) than honey. The first designation refers to the content of what Nestor

²² Cf. Owen (n. 1), 10, who writes that: ‘it is interesting to observe that Nestor, unlike Agamemnon and Achilles, is formally introduced (247–52). The poet does not expect his audience to know about him, which suggests that the prominent part he plays in the story was an invention of the poet’s.’ Kirk (n. 2, 1987), on line 1.247: ‘Nestor is introduced without delay and within 247 itself, so that his intervention is unlikely to have been an afterthought or subsequent elaboration. Thus Nestor’s role as counsellor and mediator is established early in the poem, the quarrel is given even more weight, and the inflexibility of the two contenders—who at 285–303 will reject his reasonable proposals—is demonstrated in a new light.’ Cf. Kirk (n. 2, 1987), on 327–43, where he maintains that when the monumental composer realized that ‘the wall built close to their sterns, and which he found in the tradition, was inadequate to justify and accommodate the kind of combat he needed to elaborate; and so decided to supplement or virtually replace it with a more formidable construction, the idea of which would then be typically credited to Nestor’.

²³ Used in *Iliad* to describe both the sound of the lyre and the voices of heralds (2.50; 9.10, 186; 18.569; 2.50; 23.39), the adjective *λιγύς* (*ligys*) refers both to the pleasantness of sound and the resonance of voice.

says,²⁴ the second to the quality of his voice, and the third combines content and sound in the word *αὐδή* (*audē*), which can signify speech (for example, report, account) and voice both.²⁵ Unlike *φωνή* (*phonē*), which refers only to sound, the term *αὐδή* (*audē*) encompasses both what is said and how it comes across.²⁶ The description thus entails a connection between voice and speech, between sound and content. If we interpret voice (as I believe we can) to encompass the entire manner of delivery, the description links what is said with the way in which it is said.

Here what is of note is the connection made between the content and manner of speech, and the clear implication that they are not to be separated in the good counsellor. The insufficiency of content or manner alone is brought home in Book 2, in the treatment of the upstart Thersites, who foments rebellion against Agamemnon and urges the Achaeans to abandon the cause and sail for home. Thersites is introduced as a man of fluent but disorderly speech: a man 'of unmeasured words [*ἄμεᾶ τροεπής*, *ametroepēs*] . . . who knew in his mind many disorderly [*ἄκοσμα*, *akosma*] words, with which foolishly and in no orderly way he quarrelled with the kings' (2.212–14). The description contrasts his verbal dexterity with the disorderly quality of what he says. Then, after he speaks, Odysseus upbraids him with a similar distinction: 'Thersites of indiscriminate speech, although you are a clear-voiced speaker [*λιγύς ἀγορητής*, *ligys agorētēs*], cease; do not seek all by yourself to quarrel with kings' (2.246–7). It is very clear from these lines that for all Thersites' verbal fluidity, he is not a good counsellor. Thersites may be seen as a foil for Nestor.²⁷ The Thersites episode, coming as it does early in the epic, highlights Nestor's special abilities as a speaker in whom manner and matter come together in an orderly whole.

The next three lines in the introduction present Nestor as having outlived two generations and being a ruler of the third. They highlight his long life experience (three generations), leadership, and position of command. They tell us that he is still active and involved and, by extension, still strong, healthy, and in full possession of his wits—otherwise he would not be able to rule and to command obedience and respect. Just as the first three lines insist on the conjunction of the content and manner of the counsellor's speech, these lines insist on the conjunction of age with the physical and mental vitality that are more characteristic of the prime of life.

His activity and involvement differentiate Nestor from the old men at the Scaean gate in the *teichoskopia* (3.150). Structurally, Nestor is the Achaean parallel of the

²⁴ K. Dickson, *Nestor: Poetic Memory in Greek Epic* (New York and London, 1995), 26–7, examines the compound adjectives with *ἥδυ-* (*hēdy*) in both Homer and the Homeric Hymns, and reaches the conclusion that 'whatever is sweet is at least potentially intoxicating' (26) and always pleasing. See also Martin (n. 1), 102, 105, who maintains that the epithet refers to divine speech in Greek archaic poetry.

²⁵ *αὐδή* (*audē*) can be understood as 'voice' in all the six cases in which it appears in the *Iliad* (1.249; 13.757; 15.270; 18.419; 19.250; 19.418), but as speech only in two of them (18.419; 19.418).

²⁶ For further discussion of these terms, see Dickson (n. 22), 27–38, who tends to draw a comparison between Nestor's renowned faculty of speech and that of an *aoidos*, but refrains from touching on how these terms reflect the content of what Nestor says.

²⁷ The text links Nestor and Thersites in Book 9, when Nestor asks Agamemnon to invite the elders to a feast, since his 'tents are full of wine' (*πλείαι τοι οἶνου κλισίαι*, 9.71). With only one word different, this statement echoes Thersites' insult to Agamemnon in Book 2, when he told him that his 'tents are full of bronze' (*πλείαι τοι χαλκοῦ κλισίαι*, 2.226). Martin (n. 1), 110–13, notes that while Nestor plays the role of a praise poet, and thus practises 'the craft of the epic itself', and is 'of sweet speech' like Homer, 'Thersites, on the other hand, is quite literally "without meter" in his performance, markedly more so than the average hero' (113).

Trojan elders, who, like him, are presented as old men and commended for the quality of their speech:

γῆραϊ δὴ πολέμοιο πεπαυμένοι, ἀλλ' ἀγορηταὶ
ἑσθλοὶ, τεττίγεσσιν ἑοικότες, οἳ τε καθ' ὕλην
δενδρέω ἐφεζόμενοι ὅπα λειριόεσσαν ἰεῖσι. (3.150 2)

Due to their old age they had ceased from battle, but they
were excellent talkers—like cicadas, who send
forth a lily like voice sitting on a tree in the forest.

The old men are linked to Nestor by the comparison of their speech to cicadas, whose chirping the LSJ notes was thought to be particularly sweet.²⁸ However, unlike Nestor who partakes in the fighting until around midway through the epic, they are passive, no longer fight, and spend their time talking—for lack of anything better to do, it is implied. The separation of their talk from action and involvement makes it somewhat vacuous—the cicada's singing may be beautiful, but it has no meaning.²⁹ None of them takes a leadership position. The only one even to offer any advice is Antenor, when in Book 7 he recommends returning Helen to the Greeks (7.347–53). Moreover, although Priam is king of Troy, he is consistently shown yielding to the preferences of his son Paris (for example, 7.345–78), even to the detriment of his people. Indeed, while he is ever kind to Helen, he rejects Antenor's sensible and just advice to return her because Paris opposes it, and, in fact, places Paris' wishes above the good of his kingdom. Nestor, in contrast, is not shown yielding to or opposed by any of his sons; on several occasions, he is shown to be heeded by the Achaean heroes; and nowhere in the *Iliad* is he shown placing the good of any individual above the good of the community.³⁰

The first six lines of the introduction thus bring together the two sets of conjunctions that stipulate respectively the requisites of speaking and doing that Nestor possesses and that seem to constitute essential features of the good adviser. The seventh line, which leads directly to Nestor's first address, names yet another feature: his being *ἐὺ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*), which may be variously translated as 'well intentioned' and 'sensible'. In contrast to the other two components, which refer respectively to Nestor's specific abilities as a speaker and to his life experience and current activities, his being *ἐὺ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*) points to a quality of character or disposition that may be developed with age, much as prudence was believed to be (for example, Plut. *Mor.* 788c, 789f), but which is essentially an element of who the person is. By highlighting his good intentions, the poet seems to indicate that once a person meets the other two requirements for being a good adviser, then he is to be judged by this criterion of character: not only by whether he speaks sense and in a pleasing manner, but also by whether or not he cares, thinks positively of those he addresses, and means well.

²⁸ For references and further discussion, see J. Cressey, 'The mind of the Grasshopper of the Greeks and Romans', *LCM* 4 (1979), 37–40. For *λειριόεσσαν* as referring to sweet voice, see Hes. *Th.* 40 1.

²⁹ See H. M. Roisman's discussion on 'Old men and chirping cicadas in the *Teichoskopia*', forthcoming.

³⁰ Although the text is silent as to whether or not Antilochus heeded his advice about how to win the chariot race in Book 23, the fact that he did not crash around the turning posts suggests that he did. For a discussion see M. Gagarin, 'Antilochus' strategy: the chariot race in *Iliad* 23,' *CP* 78 (1983), 35 9; Roisman (n. 14, 1988).

The definition tells us that Nestor, as a good adviser, possesses the three features, or components, that it designates. Of the three, the component of doing is the easiest to understand, at least for me. All of its aspects seem clear and self-evident. As Plutarch points out, one does not seek advice from an old man who is passive, ailing, withdrawn, or out of touch with the world (Plut. *Mor.* 788a–b). For all the importance placed in the epic on Nestor's venerable age and long life experience, both in this introduction and in Nestor's repeated references to the feats of his youth, it is understood that life experience is inadequate without current capabilities.³¹ Indeed, as noted above, in Book 14 the poet takes pains to demonstrate Nestor's current military prowess and physical strength as part of the legitimization of his role as counsellor. In Book 23, Nestor's role as counsellor comes to an end with the demise of his physical prowess. Explaining his motives for bestowing the prize of a double-handled jar, Achilles states that he is giving it to him 'Because never again will you fight with your fists nor wrestle, nor enter again the list for the javelin-casting, nor race with your feet; since now difficult old weighs heavy on you' (23.621–3). The explanation brings together the loss of Nestor's physical powers—his ability to fight, wrestle, throw, and run—with the end of his role as the Achaeans' adviser as well.

More puzzling is the characterization of the content and manner of Nestor's speech as sweet and the highlighting of his being *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*), of good intentions. Sweetness and good thoughts or intentions are not what we today think of in connection with a good adviser. We are inclined to think more in terms of incisiveness, shrewdness, and analytical ability, and of flexible and creative thinking—qualities closer to those possessed by Odysseus than Nestor. Sweetness is mentioned twice in the seven-line introduction, emphasized through the comparison to honey, and complemented by the designation of Nestor's voice or speech as 'clear'. Nestor's good thoughts or intentions seem to be of a piece with the sweetness of his speech and are highlighted by their mention at the end of the introduction. Moreover, although these attributions are formulaic and are applied also to other characters in the *Iliad*, both are applied several times to Nestor in the course of the epic (1.253, 7.326, 9.95), which is not the case with any of the others.³² In both the introduction and the epic as a whole, the poet thus makes sweetness and the characteristic of being *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*) distinguishing features of Nestor—and of the good adviser that he is.

It may thus be argued that Nestor's advice is valued precisely for its sweetness and good intention. The problem is that the introduction gives little if any clue as to what *γλυκὺς* (*glykus*) and *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*) entail beyond a general glow of pleasantness and good will, and they are nowhere specifically defined in the text. Homer's original audience probably understood the terms better than we do today. We, however, may try to figure out for ourselves what they may mean and precisely how they pertain to Nestor's counsel and to the definition of the good counsellor. This is the endeavour of the remainder of the paper. The guiding assumption is that the qualities the terms refer to are embodied in Nestor's various addresses, and thus that looking at these addresses will help us to grasp their meaning.

³¹ For Nestor as the source of past and memory in the epic, see Dickson (n. 24), *passim*. For Homer's characterization of Nestor as a proof for Homer's understanding of how memory works, see E. Minchin, 'Homer on autobiographical memory: the case of Nestor', forthcoming.

³² Calchas (1.75), Odysseus (2.283), Priam (7.367), Thoas (15.285), Polydamas (18.253).

SWEETNESS OF SPEECH AND BEING ἐὺ φρονέων (*eu phroneōn*)

Beginning with the way Nestor addresses his audiences, one can reach the conclusion that γλυκὺς (*glykus*) and ἡδύς (*hēdys*), refer to the aptness or fitness of the manner to the person or persons addressed at the time of the address.

From several of Nestor's speeches, especially those early in the epic, it is quite clear that their sweetness or appeal does not inhere in their being saccharine, flattering, complimentary. Three speeches in particular begin with sharp reprimands. The first lines that Nestor addresses to the quarrelling Achilles and Agamemnon are couched in a reproach aimed at reinforcing the substantive point that the heroes' quarrel may give succour to the enemy:

ὦ πόποι, ἦ μέγα πένθος Ἀχαιῖδα γαῖαν ἰκάνει.
ἦ κεν γηθήσαι Πρίαμος Πριάμοιό τε παῖδες,
ἄλλοι τε Τρῶες μέγα κεν κεχαροῖατο θυμῷ,
εἰ σφῶν τάδε πάντα πυθοῖατο μαρναμενοῖν. (1.254–7)

Oh fools! Indeed great grief comes to the land of Achaea.
Surely Priam will rejoice and the children of Priam,
and the other Trojans would rejoice in their heart greatly,
if they should learn this tale of you two fighting.

In Book 2, he begins his speech to the troops who had run to their ships by berating them as children: 'Oh fools! You are holding an assembly in the manner of silly boys, to whom the works of war mean nothing' (2.337–8). He ends it by calling them soldiers who 'fight only with words' (2.342). Similarly, in Book 7, he begins his address to the warriors who are paralysed by fear following Hector's challenge to single combat with the rebuke: 'Oh, fools! Great grief comes on the land of Achaea. Surely aloud would Peleus groan, Peleus, the old driver of chariots' (7.124–5). To our ears there seems little sweet about such reprimands in the conventional sense of the term. They sound demeaning, and Nestor sounds like a scold. But none of his hearers expresses resentment. On the contrary. Agamemnon consistently retains his affection for Nestor, the recalcitrant troops accept his rebuke, and no fewer than nine warriors rise up to accept Hector's challenge of one-to-one combat after Nestor addresses them (7.161–9).

What makes these speeches *glykus* is their aptness to the listeners and the occasion. By aptness I mean that the reprimand is applied selectively, in keeping with the emotional state and needs of his listeners at the time. The purpose of the reproach in all three of the above speeches is to shame his hearers into behaving better.³³ The assumption, if we can extrapolate backward from later Greek thought, is that the fear of shame moves good men to right action.³⁴ In his first speech, in which he tries to mediate the heroes' quarrel over Briseis, Nestor's reproach is aimed at shaming Agamemnon and Achilles into letting go of their egocentric power struggle and joining forces for the good of the enterprise. In Book 2, Nestor applies the tactic to soldiers who are potentially courageous and heroic but who have been led to flee by homesickness and by Agamemnon's foolish attempt to test them. In Book 7, he applies it to shock the Achaean warriors out of their paralysis and into accepting Hector's challenge. In all three cases the reprimand seems aimed at pushing aside

³³ For praise and control as 'Nestorian strategy' in some of his speeches, see Martin (n. 1), 61–2, 101–2.

³⁴ Dem. 8.51, 25.93, 60.25–6. For discussion, see J. Roisman, *The Rhetoric of Manhood* (Berkeley, 2005), ch. 3.

a powerful but unworthy emotion—egotism, homesickness, or fear—so that more communal or heroic motives can operate. Each of the speeches is *γλυκὺς* (*glykys*) and *ἡδύς* (*hēdys*) because their reprimand is exactly the medicine required under the circumstances.

The selectivity of Nestor's manner of address becomes apparent if we look at gentler addresses. One of various examples may be found in his addresses to Diomedes and Agamemnon in Book 9. By this point in the epic, the Achaeans have been routed and Hector is within reach of destroying their ships. Agamemnon is in despair and goes so far as to call the leaders together and suggest sailing home (9.17–28). Diomedes, young and impulsive, attacks him as lacking the 'heart'—or courage—to continue fighting and threatens to show him up by continuing to fight in his absence and urges others to follow suit (9.32–49). Yet even as Nestor firmly rejects the intended behaviours of both men, he does not reprimand them and, in fact, addresses both the angry and impetuous youth and the despairing king with considerable gentleness (9.53–78).

Nestor frames his address to Diomedes so as to support and channel the heroic impulses that are behind the young man's disrespectful and dangerously divisive challenge to Agamemnon's authority. To this end, he opens his address by pouring lavish praise on Diomedes' martial abilities and judgement, commending him for being 'beyond others strong in battle, and in counsel noblest among all men of your own age' (9.53–4). Then, he couches his criticism of Diomedes' divisiveness indirectly: 'Tribeless, outlawed, hearthless shall be that man who loves dread strife among his own people' (9.63–4). By making his criticism general and indirect, Nestor tempers the harshness of its content and expressly avoids reproaching or shaming the young warrior whose heroic motives he wants to encourage.³⁵

He takes similar care with respect to Agamemnon.³⁶ Seeing Agamemnon discouraged and vulnerable, he starts not by shaming him but by bolstering his sense of self-respect, addressing him by his patronymic, name, and position:

Ἀτρεΐδῃ κύνιστε, ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον,
 ἐν σοὶ μὲν λήξω, σέο δ' ἀρξομαι, οὐνεκα πολλῶν
 λαῶν ἔσσι ἄναξ καὶ τοι Ζεὺς ἐγγυάλιξε
 σκήπτρον τ' ἥδ' ἐθέμιστας, ἵνα σφίσι βουλεύῃσθα. (9.96–9)

Most honoured son of Atreus, Agamemnon, king of men,
 with you I will end and with you I will begin, because you
 are king of many people and Zeus has given you the sceptre
 and the judgements, so that that you may give counsel to them.

The statement essentially warns Agamemnon that his counsel will be centred on him—and that he will find fault with the king and call upon him to rectify his mistakes. But Nestor removes the barb from that warning by embedding it in phrasing that is found in hymns to the gods (9.97). He also stresses Agamemnon's powers and rights as a sceptre-bearing king. It is only then, after he has accorded Agamemnon the respect due him, that Nestor tells him in clear, unambiguous terms that his great power comes with a responsibility to listen to counsel for the common good and that he has brought his troubles on himself by appropriating Briseis and alienating Achilles.

³⁵ For the proverbial nature of these words, see B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 3. Books 9–12 (Cambridge, 1993), on 9.63–4.

³⁶ See Minchin (n. 19), 280–1, on how Nestor selects his words of advice to Agamemnon in 1.259–74 and 9.95–105, as opposed to the tactics he uses with Patroclus in 11.656–803.

Calibrating his criticisms is only one way that Nestor adjusts his speech to his hearers. Another example may be found in the different ways in which he wakes up Odysseus and Diomedes in Book 10 (10.137–42, 157–76). It is still night and both are annoyed and give him a hard time. He quickly assuages Odysseus' annoyance by explaining to him that the leaders must be woken up to deliberate the question of whether to fight or flee, given the life and death situation on the field (10.144–7) and—it is implied, but not stated—Achilles' rejection of Agamemnon's peace offering. Diomedes, being younger, requires a different approach. Assuming the role of parent, Nestor awakens Diomedes more gruffly than he had Odysseus, nudging him with his foot instead of stooping down (cf. Hainsworth, on line 158) and scolding him for sleeping when the Trojans are only a short distance away. His gruffness may be seen as both an assertion of his age-entitled authority over the young man and as tactful avoidance of coddling, at which young people proud of their new adulthood may take offence. (Parents who have had to rouse adolescents from slumber will surely find resonance in this scene [10.157–76].)³⁷

The examples above are only a few of the instances of the ways in which Nestor adapts his speech to those to whom it is addressed, without sacrificing frankness and incisiveness. This fitness, which might be called tact, is a key feature of Nestor's speech and can be found in virtually all his addresses and exchanges.³⁸ It is this fitness that makes Nestor's speech *γλυκὺς* (*glykus*)—literally sweet, figuratively pleasing or appealing—to the hearer. Who would not be pleased to be addressed with the kind of tact and sensitivity Nestor shows? Who would not be pleased to hear words tailored to one's own situation at the particular time?

The idea of tailoring one's style of oratory to one's audience and its situation is a basic principle of later Greek and Latin oratory, as of any good writing or speech. The principle is developed at length in classical oratorical treatises, with elaborate rules and codifications.³⁹ This tailoring, however, should not be taken as solely a technical skill, though it may be that too. In Nestor, the inclination to tailor his speech to his listeners, which is found throughout the *Iliad*, seems to reflect his ability to sense their moods, needs, and wants at any given time. This ability, it may be suggested, stems not from any special intellectual perspicuity—as is evident from Nestor's various misjudgements—but rather from his being *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*).

BEING *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*)

The statement that Nestor is *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*) brings together a number of related meanings, even though it is a formulaic phrase.⁴⁰ Kirk (on 2.78) points out

³⁷ Nestor's motivating the heroes by the use of shame and praise may be compared to Agamemnon's *epipoleis* in Book 4 as he ranges among the ranks of warriors, encourages the eager ones (232–9), and criticizes the slack ones (240–50). The poet tells us specifically how Agamemnon praises the Cretans (251–72), the Aiantes (273–92), and Nestor (293–326) and does not refrain from shaming Menestheus, Odysseus (327–48), and Diomedes (365–421). Moreover, just as Agamemnon is corrected by Odysseus and has to apologize (349–63), so Nestor is corrected by Agamemnon and apologizes to him—after wrongly accusing Menelaus of slacking in his duties (10.119–30).

³⁸ Cf. C. H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (New York, 1958), 163; Postlethwaite (n. 9), on 1.247–52.

³⁹ For example, Arist. *Rh.* 1356b: τὸ πιθανὸν τινὶ πιθανόν 'what is convincing is what convinces someone'.

⁴⁰ The verse reads: ὁ σφιν εὖ φρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν. Dickson (n. 24), 104, claims that this formulaic verse 'forms a nexus of a complex of narrative stances and gestures that together offer privileged access to Mediation as a significant scenic pattern in the poems'.

that the term in ancient Greek could imply either good sense or benevolence, and suggests that in its application to Nestor's function as an adviser, it refers to the former. Scrutiny of the text, however, suggests that the dichotomy is artificial and, moreover, that benevolence and like inclinations are central both to Nestor's advice and to his role and abilities as adviser. This section will take a look at the various places in the *Iliad* where being *ἐὺ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*) is attributed to Nestor, in order to try to identify its implications and range of meanings.

We may begin with the mediation speech immediately following Nestor's introduction. The lines most relevant to our concern are the ten lines at the end, where Nestor makes his specific recommendations:

μήτε σὺ τόνδ' ἀγαθὸς περ ἔων ἀποαίρεο κούρην,
ἀλλ' ἔα, ὥς οἱ πρῶτα δόσαν γέρας νῆες Ἀχαιῶν
μήτε σὺ, Πηλεΐδην, ἔθελ' ἐριζέμεναι βασιλῆϊ
ἀντιβίην, ἐπεὶ οὐ πολλ' ὁμοίης ἔμμορε τιμῆς
σκηπτούχου βασιλεὺς, ᾧ τε Ζεὺς κῦδος ἔδωκεν.
εἰ δὲ σὺ καρτερός ἐσσι θεὰ δέ σε γείνατο μήτηρ,
ἀλλ' ὅδε φέρτερός ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ πλεονεσσὺν ἀνάσσει.
Ἄτρεΐδην, σὺ δὲ παῦε τεδὸν μένος· αὐτὰρ ἔγωγε
λίσσομαι Ἀχιλλεῖ μεθέμεν χόλον, ὃς μέγα πᾶσιν
ἔρκος Ἀχαιοῖσιν πέλεται πολέμοιο κακοῖο. (1.275–84)

Do not, even though you are brave, seek to take the girl,
but let her be as the sons of the Achaeans first gave him the prize;
and you, son of Peleus, do not wish to quarrel with the king
with force, since a sceptre bearing king to whom Zeus
has given glory never partakes equally in honour.
And if you are stronger and a goddess gave birth to you,
yet he is mightier, since he rules over many.
You, son of Atreus, cease from your wrath; for it is I who
ask you to cast away your anger for Achilles' sake,⁴¹ who is
for all the Achaeans a mighty bulwark in evil war.

The meaning of *ἐὺ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*) as good sense is readily apparent from the balanced, fair, and sensible nature of this advice and the rational grounds offered for each suggestion: Agamemnon should not take Briseis because she is the prize the Achaeans had given to Achilles; Achilles should not challenge Agamemnon because of the power and superiority he has as a king; and Agamemnon should put aside his anger at Achilles because he is the 'bulwark' of the war effort. The advice is that each man recognize and behave in accord with what is due to the other, whether by virtue of his rank and responsibility or his valour and martial ability. That the heroes reject it does not make it any less apt or sensible, but rather highlights their egotism.

But the lines also convey the respect and appreciation that Nestor has for both Agamemnon and Achilles, even as he criticizes their behaviour and urges them to amend it. Nestor recognizes Agamemnon as 'brave' and appreciates his superiority as a 'sceptre-bearing king' to whom Zeus gave glory. He also recognizes Achilles' strength, divine birth, and essentiality to the war effort. These statements may be understood as compliments sweetening the bitter pill that Nestor is serving up to the self-inflated and self-absorbed heroes—as flattery designed to make it easier for them to come down off the high towers they had climbed. As judicious flattery, the

⁴¹ Benner reads the dative Ἀχιλλεῖ, 'dative of advantage', 'for Achilles' sake' (line 283); Leaf and Bayfield understand the dative similarly: 'for (in favour of) Achilles'.

lines are yet another example of the sweetness of Nestor's speech, as it stems from his sympathetic understanding of the psychological needs of his hearers. But the sentiments are also genuine expressions of the esteem in which he holds them. At no point in the *Iliad* does Nestor question Agamemnon's special superiority as a king or Achilles' superiority as a warrior. In this sense, Nestor's characteristic of being *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*) would thus refer to the good thoughts, sympathy, and positive regard that he has for those he counsels, which enables him to intuit what they need and to mingle, as he does, criticism with expressions of esteem.

A third meaning of being *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*) also suggested in these lines is 'well intentioned'.⁴² The introduction to this speech is the second time in the *Iliad* that the term *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*, 1.253) is used. The first is to describe Calchas (1.73), the reader of bird signs who tells the assembly that Apollo is angry because Agamemnon dishonoured the priest Chryses by taking his daughter. It is important for the poet to make clear that Calchas' criticism of the king is motivated by genuine concern for the Achaeans and not by malice or selfish considerations. The same applies to Nestor's mediation speech.

Like Calchas, Nestor here, as elsewhere in the *Iliad*, takes the step of criticizing a sceptre-bearing king and ruler of men and of advising him to do something that he would rather not do. His good intentions are essential to make his criticism and otherwise unpalatable advice acceptable. The attribution of *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*) tells us, here and elsewhere, that Nestor's counsel is driven by concern for the good of the community and not by animosity or personal interests—something that his hearers seem to know and certainly never question. These qualities distinguish Nestor from the egotistical heroes whose quarrel causes so much suffering and also enable him to see the different points of view of those he counsels.

The mediation speech thus points to both cognitive and emotional meanings of Nestor's being *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*). His advice is eminently sensible and, at the same time, infused with sympathy and positive regard for those to whom it is given, and motivated by good intentions—by concern for the welfare of his hearers and the community of Achaean heroes.

One or more of these meanings is prominent on the various other occasions where the descriptor *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*) is applied in the *Iliad*.

In 2.78, where the statement that Nestor is *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneōn*) toward all precedes his explanation of why he believes the lying dream, the term seems to carry predominantly the sense of sympathy and partisanship. His explanation is:

εἰ μὲν τις τὸν δνειρον Ἀχαιῶν ἄλλος ἐνισπε,
 ψευδὸς κεν φαίμεν καὶ νοσφίζοίμεθα μᾶλλον.
 νῦν δ' ἴδεν ὃς μέγ' ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν εὐχεται εἶναι. (2.80 2)

If anyone else of the Achaeans had related this dream we would have said that it was a false thing, and rather have turned away from it. But now he who declares himself to be far the best of the Achaeans has seen it.

On purely logical grounds, this explanation, that the dream must be true because it was Agamemnon, the great king, who dreamt it, seems rather odd. If we see dreams as coming from the gods, as the Homeric muse seems to have done, the

⁴² I have no quarrel with Kirk's 'benevolent' here, insofar as that word is understood as 'doing or wanting to do good'. I have chosen the term 'well intentioned' because it is free of the suggestion of charitableness that inheres in the word 'benevolent'. There is nothing charitable or even necessary in Nestor's *eu phroneōn*.

only logical justification for this explanation is that Zeus, who Agamemnon said had sent the dream, so favoured the king that he would only have sent a truthful dream. Nestor never makes this connection, however, and at various points in the epic he even observes that Zeus is unfavourably disposed toward the Achaeans (for example, 8.140–4).

The explanation makes more sense if we take it as based on Nestor's sympathy with Agamemnon and the other Achaean heroes. In essence, what Nestor seems to be saying justifies his belief that the dream is true is his identification with Agamemnon's desires and aims. Agamemnon has already informed the council that he believes in the dream—indeed, he never expresses doubt—and, moreover, has made it plain that he is eager to bring the conflict, which has dragged on for ten years, to the decisive end that the dream promises. Nestor, like Odysseus and presumably the other heroes, shares his eagerness. He believes the dream because Agamemnon believes it and wants him to believe it, and because, in his identification with the leaders of the Achaeans and their aspirations, he wants to believe it too. Nestor's good intent here points to his total loyalty to Agamemnon, the war, and the values for which it is fought. The concordance of his goals with Agamemnon's is highlighted by the fact that his concluding statement, 'but come, if in any way we may arm the sons of the Achaeans' (ἀλλ' ἄγετ', αἷ κέν πως θωρήξωμεν υἱας Ἀχαιῶν, 2.83) is an exact repetition of Agamemnon's words at 2.72.⁴³

In 9.95 the statement that Nestor is ἐὺ φρονέων (*eu phroneōn*) toward all precedes the long speech where he rebukes Agamemnon for his appropriation of Briseis and tells him that he will have to make amends. Here its primary meaning seems to be: free of malice and motivated by good intentions. The speech has a strong 'I told you so' flavour, as Nestor reminds Agamemnon of the day when he took Briseis from Achilles 'against the will of the rest of us' and even though 'I... urged you strongly not to' (9.108–9). It is a speech in which, before getting to the practical recommendations, that Agamemnon return Briseis and compensate Achilles for the dishonour he had done him, Nestor pours out his pique and frustration that Agamemnon has not listened to his counsel in the first place. Even though, as noted above, Nestor is careful to frame his criticisms in a way that bolsters Agamemnon's standing and avoids shaming or embarrassing him, the things he says are nonetheless a clear and hard rebuke. His characterization as being ἐὺ φρονέων (*eu phroneōn*) ensures that the audience understands that Nestor is not motivated by animosity but, on the contrary, by care and good will and, moreover, that his rebuke is deserved and in good order.

The attribution of the quality of being ἐὺ φρονέων (*eu phroneōn*) here serves also to distinguish Nestor's criticisms of Agamemnon from those levelled earlier in the epic by the upstart Thersites, who, as noted above, serves as Nestor's foil. In trying to persuade the soldiers to sail for home, Thersites had pointed out that Agamemnon 'has dishonoured Achilles' and 'has taken his prize and keeps her' (2.239–40). Substantively, these points are not entirely different from those that Nestor makes, though their nuances and tone are. The differences stem largely from the different motives that drive the two sets of observations. Thersites' observations are part of what is described as an abusive, quarrelsome, and scolding speech (2.221–4), whose aim is to discredit Agamemnon's leadership and foment rebellion. It is the

⁴³ O. Taplin, *Homeric Soundings: The Shaping of the Iliad* (Oxford, 1992), 90, maintains that it is because of Nestor's excessive deference to Agamemnon that the old man fails both in his mediation between Agamemnon and Achilles, and in the case of the false dream.

difference in their intentions that makes Nestor's criticisms acceptable, and even welcome, and Thersites' abhorrent, and that distinguishes Nestor as the good adviser from Thersites as the false one.⁴⁴

Finally, all three meanings of εὖ φρονέων (*eu phroneōn*)—sensible, imbued with sympathy, and motivated by good intentions, in the sense of concern for the welfare of the community—seem to come together in the attribution of this quality to Nestor just before his second speech in Book 7 (7.326). This is a brief speech in which he makes two rather obvious recommendations: that the Achaeans pause in their fighting to bury the dead and that they build a wall and ditch to protect the camp (7.327–43). Burying the dead has deep emotional importance as an act of honour, respect, and closure, even, and possibly especially, in the midst of battle, where failure to do so could have disastrous effects on discipline and morale. Fortifying a military camp is an essential that provides both a psychological sense of safety and a measure of actual protection. (Even though the Trojans destroy the fortifications, the wall obviously slows their entry into the Achaean camp.) Nestor does not, and need not, spell out his reasons for these recommendations. He makes them when the Achaeans (and also Trojans) have been badly bloodied and need space in which to absorb and come to terms with their losses as well as to regroup and reconsolidate so that they can continue the battle. In making these suggestions, Nestor shows his intuitive understanding of the situation and of the needs of the Achaeans, his deep sympathy with them, and his concern for their well-being.⁴⁵

On the whole, the quality of Nestor's advice discussed above seems to reflect both the cognitive and emotional components of being εὖ φρονέων (*eu phroneōn*). Indeed, its good sense may be said to depend on his sympathy and identification with the Achaean heroes and his deep concern for their welfare. In this conceptualization, the sweetness of Nestor's speech and the trait of being εὖ φρονέων (*eu phroneōn*) that is an attribute of both his character and his advice are part and parcel of the

⁴⁴ Of the various meanings of εὖ φρονέων (*eu phroneōn*) in the *Iliad*, 'free of malice' and 'motivated by good intentions' seems to be the most common. The quality is attributed to four other heroes in the *Iliad*: to Odysseus before his speech urging the Greek leaders who had made a run for the ships to stay in Troy to fight (2.283); to Priam (7.367) when, supporting or accepting Paris' refusal to return Helen, he suggests that the Trojans ask the Achaeans for a respite to bury their dead; to Thoas before his speech rallying the Achaean heroes to fight Hector on their own after the ordinary soldiers have been daunted by his victories (15.285); and to Polydamas, Hector's close companion and adviser, before he counsels that the Trojans avoid engaging with Achilles after his return to the battle to avenge the death of Patroclus (18.253). Odysseus' good intentions distinguish his counsel to stay on and fight from Thersites' advice to run, which had immediately preceded it. Priam's words show that he cares not only about Paris, but also about the welfare of the Trojan army and citizens. Thoas' good intentions and lack of self-interest are noted because his advice, like Odysseus', requires self sacrifice and places the hearers who would follow it at risk, and it is important that these sacrifices be made and risks be taken for the general good and not for the honour or interests of the person who urges them; and Polydamas' good intentions are noted because while his advice is anti-heroic and thus totally unacceptable to Hector, he himself remains a valued friend and counsellor. The attribution here distinguishes between his worth as a friend and adviser in general and the ideological (though not necessarily practical) value of the specific advice at hand.

⁴⁵ Nestor's suggestion to build the fortifications is dismissed by many scholars as an anachronism in the tenth year of the war and/or as a later addition to the epic. However, it may be that chronology did not trouble Homer in the same way that it does the modern reader and that what is important to him, rather, is to show Nestor offering the advice that is necessary and appropriate in a war. See note 11 above.

same construct. These attributes characterize virtually all of Nestor's speeches and are the source of the esteem and affection in which he is held.

NESTOR AS PRESERVER OF THE SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

There is, however, one exception to the above pattern: the episode of the lying dream. Here the elements of the construct seem to fall apart. As sympathetic and well intentioned as Nestor obviously is in this episode, it is difficult to accept his credulity as an instance of good sense. As modern readers, our inclination in this instance would be to view his close and sympathetic identification with Agamemnon and the other heroes as impairing his objectivity and ability to see reality as it is and to wonder whether a less-identified adviser would not have considered the evidence for the dream's validity more carefully before adding his bit to stir up the battle fever of the Achaean heroes. If we had to choose, we might well prefer a more distant and objective adviser to such an identified and involved one.

Nestor's counsel in this episode seems so lacking in sense that Aristarchus had atheticized the speech, citing, among other grounds, the point that dreams are not made true or false by the status of the dreamer. Some modern critics would also excise the speech. Leaf, for example, judges it to be 'jeune' and not in Nestor's usual style.⁴⁶ However, once Nestor had been introduced at unusual length in Book 1 and his role as the Achaeans' counsellor emphasized, it seems that his participation in this pivotal episode—which sets in motion the fighting and the tragic events that follow from it—would have been expected, especially since it was his image that the lying dream had borne. Excising the speech would greatly reduce his place in the epic and his stature among the Achaeans. Such a reduction, however, would be inconsistent with Agamemnon's subsequent appeal for his advice and with the great respect Nestor is accorded throughout the epic. Moreover, in terms of the narrative, the speech sets the stage for Nestor's address to the assembly in lines 2.337–68, in which he reproaches the recalcitrant soldiers for their inclination to go home, threatens them with execution if they leave, and, following that, advises Agamemnon to arrange the troops by tribes and clans. Without the support Nestor offers for taking up arms in lines 2.79–83, his intense involvement in the war preparations at this point would seem rather sudden and the force with which he prods the leaders to fight would lack the necessary grounding.

Accepting Nestor's speech as an integral part of the episode, we must ask ourselves what his reasoning tells us about his role as adviser and about the image of the good adviser in the epic. This requires us to step back from our own values and preferences and to entertain the possibility that the *Iliad* does not entirely share them. Indeed, other values are implied by the very fact that, despite the mendacity of the dream and the authorial declaration that the assault will not bring the rapid victory that Agamemnon expects, the call to arms is treated as the right and heroic action. In general, the resumption of the fight against the Trojans is whole-heartedly supported by everyone of worth: by Agamemnon (2.100–41), Odysseus (2.182–210), and the goddess Athene (2.173–81). The only person to object is Thersites, who is depicted as anti-heroic and contemptible, as are the troops who run for their ships.

Nestor's declaration that he believes the dream because it was dreamt by Agamemnon expresses his solidarity with Agamemnon and the community of warriors that he leads. Nestor's unswerving loyalty to both is stressed throughout the

⁴⁶ W. Leaf, *The Iliad I* (Amsterdam, 1900–02 [1960²]), ad 2.82.

Iliad: in his consistent support for Agamemnon's leadership; in his attempt to caution Agamemnon against what he sees, albeit incorrectly, as Menelaus' slacking (10.114–18); in his unerring perception of Agamemnon's moods and wishes, in his warning against the wounded heroes' returning to the battle (14.62–3); in his fatherly worry that the younger heroes Diomedes and Odysseus 'may have suffered some disaster' (10.538) in their espionage mission and then in his rejoicing, also like a parent, in their accomplishment when they return safely with the horses they captured (10.540–53)—to name only the most striking examples.⁴⁷ Next to this loyalty, this solidarity, Nestor's ability to judge the truth of the dream is of secondary importance.⁴⁸ Soothsaying is the job of a seer, not a counsellor.

Nestor's role as adviser is above all to foster and preserve the solidarity of the community of which he is a part and to reinforce and sustain its values.⁴⁹ In one way or other, most of his advice pursues these aims. His advice in the mediation speech seeks to restore the violated social compact, whereby the leader accepts voluntary constraints on his power in exchange for recognition of and respect for his superior status by his followers or supporters. Much of his tactical advice is more social than military in nature. His threat to execute deserters is aimed at protecting the social consensus from a minority of one or two who 'think apart from the rest of the Achaeans' (τοί κεν Ἀχαιῶν νόσφιν βουλεύωσ', 2.346–7). He justifies his advice that Agamemnon organize the soldiers by tribes and clans with the idea that such organization will increase the accountability of the forces and Agamemnon's power of supervision (2.362–8).⁵⁰ But such organization also increases cohesion by making it more likely that soldiers who fight together know each other. His instructions that the chariot drivers not let their horses become entangled with other chariots, that they stick together, and that they avoid both showing off and precipitate retreat (4.301–9) emphasizes teamwork and the need for the individual to accommodate his behaviour to the needs of the group. His placing of the cowards 'in the middle' (ἐς μέσσον, *es messon*, 4.299) makes the group responsible for the individuals within it and gives it a certain power to control them. His warning to the Achaeans in Book 6 not to pause in the fighting to plunder the corpses of the Trojans they had killed (6.67–71) reminds them of the primacy of their joint mission over their personal interests. In similar vein, much of his advice entails the performance of rituals (for example, eating together, 9.65–75; burying the dead, 7.327–38) that create and deepen the bonds in a collective. The severity of his warning against divisiveness in Book 9 (9.63–4) and the fact that it is addressed to the troops in general, not only to Diomedes, emphasizes the vital importance of social solidarity.

Nestor's counsel is strikingly unoriginal. Much of his advice consists of commonly accepted solutions to problems in Homer's day (for example, to rectify injustices, compensate for personal injuries, build fortifications, send spies into the enemy camp). Much of his speech repeats or supports what other speakers had said before him. In the mediation speech, for example, Nestor repeats Achilles' earlier charges

⁴⁷ His parental approach is most evident when he calls Achilles τέκος (*tekos*)—'child' (23.626).

⁴⁸ Martin (n. 1), 52, suggests: 'We may well imagine that Dream's persuasive disguise—as Nestor—restrains the self regarding elder hero from dismissing the message entirely.'

⁴⁹ Whitman (n. 38), 166: 'The latter's [Nestor's] age and eminence render him the acknowledged guardian of the ideals, as socially conceived and accepted.'

⁵⁰ From what we know of warfare, soldiers fight better, are less vulnerable to shell shock, and better retain their morale when their comrades are close to them than when they are among strangers. Homer and his audience probably knew this too.

that Agamemnon had appropriated the prize given to him by the Achaean warriors (1.125–6, 161–2) and echoes Agamemnon's earlier warning that Achilles not oppose him 'even though you are brave' (1.131–2). His address to the Achaean leaders in Book 2 (2.337–68) reinforces the speech that Odysseus had made just moments before.⁵¹ His address to the warriors in Book 7 supports Agamemnon's earlier call for an Achaean to accept Hector's challenge to a fight in single combat (7.116, 124–60). In Book 9, he supports Diomedes' opposition to leaving for home, even as he tempers the young man's tone (9.32–49, 53–78). His suggestion that spies be sent into the enemy camp (10.102–18) had already been raised by Menelaus (10.37–41).⁵² The lack of originality emphasizes not only Nestor's participation in and loyalty to the consensus that he supports, but also the paramount importance of that consensus.

In support of social solidarity, Nestor does more than offer counsel. He also calls for consultation (for example, 9.74–5, 112–13, 14.61) and shows readiness to take counsel—although he frequently contends that his advice is superior to that of others (for example, 1.259–74). Thus, even as he urges Agamemnon to placate Achilles with words and gifts, he asks Agamemnon and the rest of the assembly to consider exactly how this is to be done (9.103–13), and leaves it to Agamemnon to decide on the details of the gift offerings. After he erroneously accuses Menelaus of slacking, he accepts Agamemnon's explanation that this is not the case, retracts his accusation, and reinforces Menelaus' authority as a leader who is not to be faulted or disobeyed (10.119–30). After cautioning the wounded warriors not to return to the battlefield on the grounds that 'a wounded man cannot fight in any way' (14.63), he raises no objections to Diomedes' suggestion that they should return, but keep out of the path of the enemy weapons (14.128–32); he is implicitly included among those who the text says 'listened to' and 'obeyed' Diomedes.⁵³ This behaviour ensures that decisions are communal and consensual, not those of a single person. They also demonstrate Nestor's freedom from the ego-interference that drives the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon and that imperils both the solidarity and survival of the Achaean forces.

The counsellor's ability to create consensus and preserve unity are so important because these values are vital to the Achaeans' physical survival. The breach of this solidarity at the beginning of the epic through the ego-driven quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles threatens not only the success of the Achaeans' mission, but also their lives. With Achilles' withdrawal from the collective aim, the Trojans practically reach the Achaeans' ships, where they would be able to cut off their only avenue of escape and slaughter them all.

Nestor's role in promoting the community's survival is highlighted by the epithet *οὔρος Ἀχαιῶν* (*ouros Akhaion*, 8.80, 11.840, 15.370, 659)—'the Achaeans' watcher' or 'guardian'. The term, which is applied to him four times in the *Iliad*, is attached to no other character in the epic.⁵⁴ The first time it is used (8.80) is in the episode where Nestor's horse becomes entangled in the reins, so that he can no longer fight independently, and where he cautions Diomedes against fighting Hector. This use makes it

⁵¹ Cf. Kirk (n. 2, 1987), on 2.336–68.

⁵² Hainsworth's (n. 35), comment on lines 10.204–10: 'As usual Nestor is made to come up with an idea, cf. 2.360–8 and nn.' is therefore inexact. Menelaus has already come up with the same idea.

⁵³ For further discussion of this episode, see H. M. Roisman, 'Kerdion in the *Iliad*: profit and trickiness', *TAPA* 120 (1990), 23–35.

⁵⁴ In the *Odyssey*, it is used only once, and there too of Nestor, 3.411.

clear that the community's protection depends not only on military might but also on the right counsel. In the second appearance of this phrase, by Patroclus as he tells of the message that he is carrying from Nestor to Achilles (11.840), the description is associated with Nestor's efforts to bring Achilles back into the Achaean fold and to heal the deadly rift in the community. It is used a third time when the authorial voice describes Nestor praying to Zeus (15.370), and a the fourth time (15.659) when it describes him begging the terrified soldiers, in the names of their parents and children back home, to 'stand strongly and not be turned to fear' (15.666). Both these instances come as the Trojans are on the verge of reaching the Achaeans' ships, and thus link Nestor's role as guardian of the community with his efforts to ward off the life threat it faces, through procurement of divine favour and promotion of cohesion and morale.

To some extent, these are qualities of Nestor's great age, which puts him out of the competition with the younger heroes. Nestor no longer needs to prove himself and he can accept with grace and honour the younger heroes' superiority in strength, agility, and the other virtues of youth. In fact, he must accept it if he is not to become a laughing stock. (When his competitive urge does surface, as in his long and digressive stories of his youthful achievements and in his insistence on advising his son on how to win a race that he himself had not won in his youth [23.334–45, 626–50], he comes across as a bit comic.) But his ability to stand above his personal agenda and to set his sights clearly on the good of the community is presented not only as a feature of his age, but also as a feature of his disposition, which makes him, unlike other old men, such as those at the gate, suited to be the Achaeans' counsellor.

CONCLUSIONS

Scholars have pointed to the individualism of the heroes of the *Iliad*, where the very definition of being a hero means to excel and to prove one's superiority over one's fellows. Indeed, Achilles, the great hero of the epic, declares in no uncertain terms that he has no reason to participate in a war fought for the honour of Agamemnon's house unless he is personally rewarded (1.149–71, 225–44), and returns to the battle not for the greater good, but to avenge the death of his friend (18.98–126). But it is precisely because of the centrality of individual honour and individual excellence to the heroic ethos that the counterbalance of communal solidarity is so important. Nestor's being a social adviser is not to be scorned, as Finley thinks. The *Iliad* unfolds the disastrous consequences of splitting the ranks in the name of personal glory.

In his words and person, Nestor is both a facilitator who brings together persons of divergent minds and dispositions for the good of the whole, and a preserver and conservator of the society. The sweetness of his speech, in both manner and matter, are essential to these tasks, as are his being *εὖ φρονέων* (*eu phroneôn*) in the full sense of the term: imbued with sympathy and positive regard, and motivated by concern for the welfare of his hearers and the community of Achaean heroes.