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PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTIVITY
IN THE HOMERIC CIRCE EPISODE

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For my parents, the musician and the physicist,

from whom I have learnt to appreciate the beauty of art and the rigor of science

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INTRODUCTION

The Homeric Circe episode presents several incongruities that have puzzled generations of scholars. When he arrives on Aiaia, Odysseus, the πολύμητις hero, suddenly cannot orient himself (*Od.* 10.190), and surprisingly claims to have no μῆτις (*Od.* 10.193). He does not use his authority as leader to decide how to explore the island, but draws lots to appoint the leader of the expedition (*Od.* 10.203-7). The oddities continue if we consider Circe's magic: the bodies of Odysseus' men are transformed, but their minds remain steadfast; however, something must happen to their minds, if they completely forget about their fatherland (*Od.* 10.236). As for the effect of Circe's magic on Odysseus, we are not told precisely how Hermes' μῶλυ protects him: we know that his body is not transformed, but he still forgets about his homecoming (*Od.* 10.472). Finally, the reasons why Circe sends Odysseus to the Underworld are unclear: he should consult Tiresias about his homebound journey, but it is Circe herself who then provides the hero with the directions he needs to reach Ithaca (*Od.* 12.37-141). These and other minor incongruities have generally been explained by arguing that a multiplicity of tales was conflated in the Homeric episode as we have it, or by claiming that the audience was expected to know a fuller version of the story.[1]

[1] In general, scholars have not had a very high opinion of the Circe episode. On the hypothesis that the Circe adventure includes some interpolations from the Argonautic saga, see Ameis (1890) 86 ad 137-39 and Meuli (1921) *passim*. Schwartz (1924) 270, following Wilamowitz (1884) 115, considers the author of the Circe adventure a latecomer who worked and imitated the material of others, a poet who owes whole sections to the inventor of Calypso. He thus argues that "the Circe adventure is not far removed from a Milesian tale." Page (1955) 57 claims that the poet of the Circe episode "takes it for

Yet in *Odyssey* 10 through 12, psychological processes seem to be particularly relevant, and many of the incongruities that we can observe in the episode have something to do with mental processes. The study of psychological activity in the Circe episode, therefore, can provide us with a new interpretive key with which to solve some textual problems and thus gain a deeper understanding of the text. Odysseus' disorientation, his helplessness, his encounters with Hermes and with Circe, and his descent to Hades, which have been variously regarded as awkward and confusing, all assume deeper significance if we follow the red thread of Homeric psychological activity, and consider them as part of a narrative whole, embedded in the broader context of the entire poem.

This dissertation thus proposes a new reading of the Circe episode based exclusively on the Homeric text as we have it. Without disregarding the peculiar features of the rhapsodic style such as interpolations and formulae, we will consider the Circe episode as part of a narratological entirety. The broader context of the *Odyssey* will provide us with a deeper insight into the Circe adventure, and conversely the new understanding of the episode will shed light both on Odysseus' character and on Homeric psychology in general.

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granted that you know a fuller story of which this is an abbreviated version." For a survey of possible sources of the Circe episode, including myths, sagas, folktales, and allegedly older Homeric passages, see Beck (1965) 2-4.

Modern scholarship on Circe

Circe, the Homeric mistress of transformation, has herself undergone many metamorphoses in the course of literary history. Attitudes toward her change variously from Homer's time to that of twentieth century authors, according to the fantasies and assumptions of the cultures that produced them. Homer's allegoric commentators, for example, considered the Circe episode as a myth celebrating the triumph of Reason (Odysseus) over the irrational powers of seduction and enchantment (Circe).[2] From Apollonius Rhodius to Virgil, from Ovid to the Renaissance and to the 20th century, various authors and artists have depicted Circe in several different ways: she has represented a sinister otherness, a dangerous natural force, a linkage between the feminine, the natural and the deadly, the Queen of Lust, an aggressive and charming sorceress, the voluptuous embodiment of the forbidden, a witch, a temptress, a whore, a femme fatale.[3]

If we are to trace some common lines in this very brief and certainly partial survey, we can definitely assert that Circe's continual magnetism throughout the centuries is due to her mysterious powers of transformation, which put her in contact with strong, unknown, and uncontrollable natural forces. Her charm is therefore strictly related to mystery and indeterminacy, and precisely these aspects of the Homeric Circe have been studied extensively over the years. Yet various scholars of Homer have been influenced

[2] Antisthenes (455-360 BC), Diogenes of Sinope (400-325 BC), Pseudo-Plutarch *The Life and Poetry of Homer* (2nd century AD), Porphyry (232-305 AD).

[3] On the fortune of Circe in literature, se in particular Yarnall (1994).

by the later developments of the literary character of Circe, and some have been excessively inclined to treat her as a human, rather than mythological, figure, often adding details that produce misleading results for the understanding of the *Odyssey*.[4]

The transformation of Circe's victims into animals has had a quite predictable impact also on the visual arts: although vase painting does not add much to what we already know from the *Odyssey*, several studies have pointed out on the one hand the iconographical similarities between Circe and an oriental Mistress of Animals, and on the other hand the diffusion of images of Circe (and/or of the *Potnia Theron*) in Etruria, which has led archaeologists and historians to treat the myth of Circe as an important instrument of cultural assimilation between mainland Greece and its western colonies.[5]

Throughout the centuries two main aspects of the Homeric Circe have been studied, namely her power of transformation and her connection to the Underworld. Due both to the tame animals that surround her palace in the *Odyssey* and to the metamorphosis of Odysseus' companions into pigs, she has been assimilated to an Oriental/Anatolian

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[4] Segal (1968) 422-25 considers the liaison with Circe weak, immaterial, sensual but not sentimental, while Odysseus would be seeking a very different bond on Ithaca; by humanizing the relationship between the two characters, however, Segal fails to grasp the relevance of Circe in the Odyssean narrative. Hatzantonis (1974) 49, quoting Stanford (1954) 47, attributes to Circe some stereotypical feminine traits that are not present in the Homeric text: Circe would thus be selfish and deluded, convinced both that she represents the center of Odysseus' world, and that Odysseus' welfare corresponds to her own. Marazzi (1982) 35-48 and Marconi (1994) 36-59 even fantasize about Circe's looks and feelings.

[5] On the diffusion of images from Greek myths in Etruscan art, see Camporeale (1964) 428-50; *idem* (1965) 36-53; Dohrn (1966-67) 15-28. Touchefeu-Meynier (1961) 264-70; Brommer (1972) 105-17; Blatter (1975) 76-78; Canciani (1980) 117-20; Connor (1988) 41-53; Ammerman (1991) 203-30; Moret (1991) 227-66; Mugione (2000) n. 756-762 all consider some representations of the Circe myth in visual arts in Etruria and in Magna Graecia. On the broader topic of the reception of Greek myths in Etruria, Magna Graecia, and Rome, see Ampolo (1994) 268-80; Breglia (1997) 245; Ampolo (2000) 27-35; Mastrocinque (1993) 174-95 (esp. 174-81 regarding the myth of Circe); *idem* (1995) 139-60; Gagua (1996) 371-75; Braccesi (1997) 81-95; Mele (1997) 151-64; Malkin (1998) esp. 183-89; Palmucci (2000) 7-38.

Mistress of Animals,[6] while the tentative interpretations of the name Kirke as related to κίρκος, "hawk", have confirmed her connection with the animal realm. Those who have preferred the interpretation of Kirke as related to the stem of "circle," ascribed to her a presiding role both over an alleged circular, magic space, and over the mysterious "round" of birth, death and regeneration that governs life. Alternatively, the "circle" has been interpreted as the circular movement of the Sun, father of Circe.[7]

With regard to her connection to the Underworld, Circe must be considered a liminal character - she is in a condition of betwixt and between. She is not a stereotypical female figure, because she crosses boundaries: she is not married and therefore is not subjugated to a man; she possesses magic powers which render her a worthy opponent of males; in the *Odyssey* she helps Odysseus make an effective transition into a different realm (namely the Underworld) and then reintegrate into society. The liminality of her character is embodied in the fact that Circe's island, Aiaia, is located at the edge of the known world,[8] and the deliberate imprecision of the Homeric geography has produced various (rather vain) attempts to interpret the Homeric text and locate Circe in different Mediterranean sites.[9]

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[6] On the similarities between Circe and an oriental *Potnia Theron*, see Pestalozza (1965) 42-46; Hirvonen (1968) 75-76; Hatzantonis (1974) 43-45; Kerényi (1979); Marazzi (1982) 44; Crane (1988) 63-75; Aguirre Castro (1994) 305-06; Yarnall (1994) 19-20; Marinatos (2000) 32-45 and (2002) 396-411.

[7] On possible interpretations of the name Kirke, see Bérard (1902-1903) vol. II, 1.9, p.264; Lanzuisi (1973) 58; Kerényi (1979) 70; Borzsák (1980) 64-66; Deroy (1985) 186-87.

[8] Marinatos (1995) 133-40.

[9] Philipp (1959) 316 localizes Aiaia in the Azores; Graves (1960) nr.148, 10 in Lussin (Losinj, near Pula); Dion (1971) 479-533 in Tartessos. In general, scholars have tended to localize Circe in the West, and have shown a preference for localizing Aiaia on Mount Circeo. See West (1966) 48-50, 397-99;

Even a brief survey of scholarship on Circe like the present one can show that she has charmed and intrigued generations of scholars from two standpoints. On the one hand, poem-external approaches have studied the relevance of her myth in the Mediterranean sites were she has been variously located, the etymology of her name, the iconography of her myth on vase painting, her power of transformation in relation to actual cults, and the relations of Circe both with Oriental goddesses and with other φαρμακίδες (above all Medea).[10] On the other hand, poem-internal approaches have put her character in relation with other Odyssean figures (Calypso in the first place), and have emphasized elements such as her double role of dangerous and helping figure, and the fact that in the *Odyssey* her relations with Odysseus constitute an introduction to and a conclusion of the hero's descent to Hades.[11] In other words, there has been much consideration of several individual features of Circe. The poem-external approaches have shed some light on various aspects of the mythological figure of Circe, not necessarily related to the *Odyssey*. The poem-internal approaches, instead, have studied individual elements of the Homeric episode, and generally focused on the fact that the

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Lanzuisi (1973) *passim*; Marazzi (1982) 35-48; Hijmans (1992) 17-46; Mastrocinque (1993) 174-95; Ampolo (1994) 271-74. Yarnall (1994) 10 locates Aiaia in the East, founding her theory on Homer's lines that situate it "where the dwellings and dancing floors of early-born Dawn are, and the rising places of the Sun." (*Od.* 12.3-4). For an overview of ancient and modern attempts to localize the *Nekyia*, see Antonelli (1995) 203-22. Breglia (1997) 230-53 and Malkin (1998) 180 ff. put the localization of Aiaia in relation with the colonization of the West. Ballabriga (1998) 139-53 discusses the double localization of Aiaia (in Colchis and in Tyrrenia) in ancient sources.

[10] Kottaridou (1991) has studied the figures of Circe and Medea, especially in visual arts, and emphasized the similarities between them.

[11] Groeger (1900) 206-37 considers the Circe episode beginning at *Od.* 10.133 and ending at *Od.* 12.152, and claims that within these limits the *Nekyia* "bildet ein Stück für sie." See also Schwartz (1924) 270, Focke (1943) 189, Beck (1965) 2-3, Bauer (1972) 41-44, Crane (1988) *passim*, and Reinhardt (1996) 90-99 all consider the relationship between Calypso and Circe, and their possible origin in some pre-Homeric folktale or epic saga.

Circe episode frames the *Nekyia*, which is undoubtedly a key passage in the whole poem. However, no attention has been paid to the narrative reasons for the relevance of the *Nekyia*, and in general to the significance of the Circe episode in a broader narrative respect that would include all Odysseus' wanderings, and possibly the entire poem.

The inclination to deal with individual aspects of various Homeric characters has affected the way in which some narrative episodes are treated. Each and every one of Odysseus' adventures has been variously extrapolated and considered separately and episodically.[12] The Circe episode is no exception, and its connection with the adventures that immediately precede or follow it has been largely disregarded.[13]

Odysseus encounters Circe right after surviving the Cyclops, the Laestrygonians, and the tempest that raged when his crew opened Aeolus' bag of winds, and both the features and the order of these episodes are relevant from a narrative perspective.

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[12] Trahman (1952) 31-43 (Odysseus' lying tales); Marg (1956) 16-29 (the first song of Demodocos); Schadewaldt (1960) 861-76 (Helios' wrath); Podlecki (1961) 125-33 (*Cyclopeia*); Brown (1966) 193-202 (Cyclops); Plass (1969) 104-8 (Menelaus and Proteus); Gresseth (1970) 203-18 (Sirens); Schein (1970) 73-83 (Cyclops); Glenn (1971) 133-81 (*Cyclopeia*); Schmiel (1972) 463-72 (Telemachus in Sparta); Simpson (1972) 22-25 (Cyclops); Dolin (1973) 273-82 (Odysseus in Scheria); Calame (1977) 369-91 (Cyclops); Lidon (1977) 227-36 (Poseidon's wrath); Pucci (1979) 121-32 (Sirens); Clay (1980) 261-64 (goat island); Bergren (1981) 201-14 (Helen's *pharmakon* in *Od.* 4.1-305); Maronitis (1981) 117-34 (Odysseus' first lying tale); Austin (1983) 3-37 (Cyclops); Mondi (1983) 17-38 (Cyclops); Haft (1984) 289-306 (Odysseus' Cretan tales); Friedrich (1987) 121-33 (*Cyclopeia*); Friedrich (1987a) 375-400 (Thrinacia); Goins (1987) 13-14 (Penelope and Melantho in *Od.* 19.91-95); O'Sullivan (1987) 5-24 (Cyclops); Frangoulidis (1993) 45-49 (Polyphemus' prayer); Rijksbaron (1993) 528-29 (Thrinacia and the proem); Byre (1994) 357-67 (the goat island); Brown (1996) 1-29 (Cyclops); Nieto Hernández (2000) 345-66 (Cyclops); Bremmer (2002) 135-52 (Cyclops); Tsagarakis (2002) *passim* (*Nekyia*).

[13] Specific aspects of the Circe episode have been generally taken into account. Bérard (1919) 16-29 (Circe's magic potion/food); Wildhaber (1951) 233-61 (Circe's transformation of men into swine); Ferrari (1955) 12-20 (the *moly*); Philipp (1959) 509-16 (Circe's *pharmakon*); Riddehough (1963) 197 (Circe's wand); Spieker (1965) 57-80 (Odysseus and Elpenor); Mugler (1979) 59-65 (Circe sends Odysseus to Hades); Pellizer (1979) 67-82 (Circe's magic and how Odysseus faces it); Dyck (1981) 196-98 (*Od.* 10.345-74); Schmoll (1987) 22-28 (the stag in *Od.* 10.156-72); Roessel (1989) 31-36 (the stag); Alexander (1991) 520-24 (the stag); Birge (1993) 17-28 (the stag); Scodel (1994) 530-34 (the stag); Brilliant (1995) 165-74 (Circe's transformation of men into swine); Marinatos (1995) 133-40 (Circe's liminality); McClintock (1999) 5-16 (Circe's magic).

Certainly it has been noted that the Circe episode introduces and concludes the *Nekyia*, and her relation with the Underworld, her proximity to the entrance to Hades, and her marginality, all qualify as very plausible reasons for Circe's active role both in sending Odysseus to Hades, and in giving him directions upon his return.[14] Yet, precisely because it is framed by Odysseus' encounters with Circe, the *Nekyia* has been often considered an isolated section and a later interpolation, which has no strong narrative correlation with the Circe episode.[15] In general, there has been scarce consideration of the narrative relation between Circe and other characters that Odysseus encounters in his wandering,[16] and almost no consideration of the relevance of his very encounter with Circe from a broad, narrative perspective.[17]

Not only has the lack of a unitarian perspective caused the extrapolation both of the *Nekyia* and of the Circe episode from their narrative context, but the widespread analytic approach to the entire *Odyssey* has had consequences on a smaller scale within the episode itself, thus generating its fragmentation into shorter narrative and thematic

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[14] Spieker (1965) 57-80 emphasizes the role of Elpenor as the connection between Circe and the *Nekyia*. Mugler (1979) 59-65 on Circe's words that state the necessity for Odysseus' Underworld journey. Antonelli (1995) 203-22 emphasizes the connection between the localization of Circe and that of the *Nekyia*. Marinatos (1995) 133-40 on Circe's liminality and proximity to the entrance of Hades; Reinhardt (1996) 104 acknowledges Circe's role of helper for Odysseus' trip to Hades, but admits not to understand clearly "what task Odysseus is supposed to accomplish among the dead."

[15] Rohde (1901) vol. 2, 268; Bethe (1922) vol. 2, 136ff.; Wilamowitz (1927) 79.

[16] Only the relation Circe-Calypso has been studied extensively, but not so much for narrative reasons, as for the similarities of the characters.

[17] Louden (1993) 5-33 recognizes the limits of a study of the *Odyssey* in terms of many different themes, and proposes to study of whole clusters of themes and extended narrative patterns. Reinhardt (1996) 108-10 approaches the *Odyssey* as a unity, and usefully considers the *Nekyia* as part of the Circe adventure. Yet, his essay leaves out several significant elements that could give further strength to a unitarian approach, such as the effects of Circe's magic and the psychological activity that is described especially in books 10-12.

sequences. Possibly because the Circe episode is at times extremely dense and/or obscure, priority has been given to individual problems, to the point that brief narrative sequences have been tackled separately, and single issues have been treated individually.[18] Yet, instead of clarifying specific points, the fragmentation of the episode has often enhanced rather than dissolved obscurity.

The study of the effects of Circe's magic represents an excellent example of the inefficacy of the analytic approach. The ancient commentators in fact already noted some contradictions about the effects of her magic, inasmuch as her φάρμακα seem to cause oblivion of the homecoming (*Od.* 10.236), but do not affect the νοῦς (*Od.* 10.240). Circe's magic does not affect Odysseus (*Od.* 10.318, 329), yet he seems to forget about Ithaca (*Od.* 10.472). Both Eustathius and the scholia, in the commentary to *Od.* 10.239-40, have attempted to explain these incongruities by focusing on the meaning of νοῦς: the νοῦς that remains steadfast, according to them, is not the entire mind, but only its gentleness. Yet this hypothesis is not supported by any element in the text.

Schwartz is probably right when he notes that these issues troubled ancient commentators of Homer more than modern ones.[19] While Aristarchus suggested expunging 10.329, and Aristonikos (schol. 240) expunged 241-43, for instance, modern scholars have rather preferred to acknowledge the incongruities about Circe's magic,

[18] Examples of such brief sections include Odysseus' disorientation at the beginning of book 10, the killing of the stag, Circe's welcome, her dreadful magic, the nature both of her φάρμακα and of Hermes' μῶλυ, her struggle with Odysseus and their subsequent union, her sudden change into a helping figure, the relationship between Odysseus and his men, and the *Nekyia*. Cf. above, n.13.

[19] Schwartz (1924) 315.

and attribute them to the impossibility of explaining fairy-tale and folkloric elements. The rhapsodes, Schwartz suggests, found that the account of the metamorphosis was too brief; they therefore felt authorized to append different explanations and versions of the story, without even considering that the author might have been intentionally brief.[20]

Modern commentators have generally hypothesized that the combination of different motifs, or simply the fairly-tale context, would be sufficient to generate contradictions and incongruities. In particular, the traditional motif of food that induces forgetfulness would be juxtaposed to the motif of physical transformation.[21] Alternatively, Circe would be simply a later version of the more elaborate figure of Calypso, and the incongruities would be due to the lower quality of the imitation.[22] The rules of what is psychologically possible, according to others, do not matter in the realm of fairy-tales, where "fantastic" and "impossible" are equivalent to "inexplicable."[23]

In the light of these considerations, in the course of this work I will attempt to overcome the limited scope of the studies on Circe. The relevance in the Circe episode of psychological processes is a *Leitmotiv* that will guide us in our analysis of it as a narrative whole embedded in a broader context. Odysseus' disorientation, his unusual helplessness, the effect of Circe's φάρμακα, Odysseus' docile compliance to her

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[20] Schwartz (1924) 317.

[21] Groeger (1900) 219; Heubeck (1989) 57.

[22] Wilamowitz (1884) 115 ff.; Schwartz (1924) 270.

[23] Focke (1943) 189. The first attempt to consider the effects of Circe's magic as a coherent unity is Philipp (1959) 509-16. Yet unfortunately he uses this correct approach to claim quite rashly that the Circe episode describes some hypnotic procedure induced by plants, where people's mental faculties remain steadfast, but are temporarily dimmed. Moreover, he fails to consider Circe's magic in the broader context of the entire poem.

directions, and the encounter with Tiresias in the Underworld are all more or less emphasized in the text, and constitute a significant thread that can be fully grasped only if we consider Odysseus' journey as a narrative whole. This *Leitmotiv* will help us treat the Circe adventure both as a narrative unity, and as an episode in the larger context of the *Odyssey*. The pay off of a unitarian approach will thus be twofold: on the one hand, we will be able to explain the apparent incongruities of the Circe episode, and in particular of Circe's magic. On the other hand, Odysseus' journey will assume the connotation of a psychological itinerary that will guide us towards a better understanding of the poem.

Modern scholarship on Homeric mental states

Among the topics that have recently interested scholars of Homer, the study of Homeric mental states has certainly generated some of the most lively literary debates. What has attracted great attention in the first place is the plurality of terms that indicate psychological entities: νοῦς, φρένες, θυμός, κραδίη, ἦτορ, and κῆρ. All of these entities can either be agents of mental activity, or the location where activity is carried on, or also the means used to carry on activity: altogether, they are responsible for intellectual, emotional, and volitional activity within a person. The modern reader may find it unusual that Homer does not seem to know a single word for soul, that would

signify the seat of ideas, emotions, and willpower altogether.[24] The absence of such a term led Bruno Snell to the conclusion that the very concept of a unified soul or self was lacking. Snell essentially argued that the Homeric man had no concept either of a unified soul or of a unified body, but only of the parts that compose it.[25] Consequently, he considered the Homeric psychic terms as analogous to organs, hence not allowing for the variety of uses and meanings of psychic terms.[26] Since Homeric man appeared to be so fragmented and unaware of a psychic whole, Snell denied the possibility that he could make free decisions and take moral responsibility for his actions, but he viewed the processes of decision-making as piloted either by the gods or by the circumstances.

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[24] Ψυχή does not become a psychological agent in the living person until after Homer and Hesiod, and certainly by the time of Plato. Relevant studies on ψυχή include: Rohde (1925[8]); Schnaufer (1970); Claus (1981); Garland (1981) 43-60; Dihle (1982) 9-20; Bremmer (1983); Garland (1985); Sullivan (1988) 151-180 and (1989a) 241-62.

[25] The idea that Homer has no term for the whole of a man's mind or soul in our sense is already emphasized by Böhme (1929) esp. 87-92. Snell (1931) 74-86 reviewed Böhme's book supplementing and correcting some ideas. See also Snell (1953) esp. 1-22 for a more complete exposition of this theory. Snell was impressed by the absence in the Homeric language of a word for self, and on this basis he argued as well for the absence of the very notion of self in Homer's time. The multiplicity of words for limbs and psychological entities, according to Snell, is a sign that Homeric man could conceive neither of a body as a unit, nor of a psychic whole, but was able to grasp only the parts that compose them. Consequently, Snell denies that the Homeric man is able to make decisions, or to take responsibility for his actions. Snell's view of the Homeric man as fundamentally fragmented and unaware of a psychic whole has received much attention throughout the years, and has raised a controversial debate on Homeric psychology. Böhme (1929) 87-92; Marg (1938) 43-50; Pohlenz (1947) 10-16; Drexler (1956) 387; Vivante (1956) 113-138; Adkins (1960) and (1970); Biraud (1984); de Romilly (1984) 14-15, all accept, in full or in part, Snell's view. A position like Snell, but even more extreme, is advanced by Jaynes' work of scientific-historical speculation (1976) esp. 69-74. Other scholars have challenged and effectively criticized Snell's opinion, mainly claiming that Snell, not finding in the Homeric world a certain kind of unity where he, on his own assumptions, expected to find one, simply inferred that what the Greeks did recognize were merely parts of that unity. See Long (1970) 122-23, who also criticizes the distinction between competitive and cooperative values advanced in Adkins (1960) 51-52; Lloyd-Jones (1971) 9-11; Sharples (1983) 1-7; Gill (1987) 25-37; Gaskin (1990) 1-15; Williams (1993) esp. 21-49.

[26] Unlike physical organs, for instance, in the Homeric poems psychic parts change location; φρένες can leave or be removed from a person; νοῦς is as unstable and variable as "the day that Zeus sends"(*Od.* 18.130-37); θυμός can be scattered and cause a person to faint, or in other cases it can increase. For this reason, in the course of this work, I prefer to refer to psychic terms as "entities."

Snell's view of Homeric man has greatly affected scholarship on Homeric psychology, and the controversial debate between those who more or less extensively embraced his theories,[27] and those who criticized them,[28] has had the valuable advantage of intensifying the studies of Homeric mental processes. The main criticism of Snell's ideas is the fair claim that Snell, not finding in the Homeric world a certain kind of unity where he, on his own assumptions, expected to find one, simply inferred that what the Greeks did recognize were merely parts of that unity. As the present work will try to point out, the plurality of psychological entities does not hinder the coherence and the accord of the psychological processes described by Homer. Rather, psychic entities seem to function in agreement with each other, and in their totality they are responsible for sensorial, intellectual, emotional, and volitional activity within a person.

However, the fragmentation of the soul argued for by Snell has diverted scholarly attention towards single entities, and has thus generated a number of studies that deal with one entity at a time.[29] Especially when electronic databases became available, numerous studies were published both attempting to identify possible clear differences between psychic entities, and trying to understand how circumstances, disturbances, sensations, and activities were imagined to affect each of them. These publications are a

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[27] Marg (1938) 43-50; Pohlenz (1947) 10-16; Drexler (1956) 387; Vivante (1956) 113-138; Harrison (1960) 65 ; Fränkel (1962^2) 108; Claus (1981); Adkins (1960) and (1970); de Romilly (1984) 14-15.

[28] Long (1970) 122 f.; Lloyd-Jones (1971) 9 ff.; Sharples (1983) 1-7; Gill (1987) 25-37; Gaskin (1990) 1-15; Williams (1993) esp. 21-49.

[29] Von Fritz (1945-46) 12-34 (νοῦς); Ireland and Steel (1975) 183-94 (φρένες); Cheyns (1980) 121-202 (φρένες); Lynch and Miles (1980) 3-9 (θυμός); Sullivan (1980) 138-50 (θυμός); Cheyns (1983) 20-86 (θυμός); Krischer (1984) 141-49 (νοῦς); Sullivan (1988a) *passim* (φρήν) and (1989) 152-95 (νοῦς); Caswell (1990) *passim* (θυμός); Lachterman (1990) 33-39 (νοῦς). Sullivan (1994) 189-99, (1995) 228-40, (1996) 31-51, (1996-97) 129-51, (1997) 9-18 considers various phenomena in each psychic entity.

relevant source of data, but they fail to consider the soul and the mind in their complexity, and are therefore invariably partial. For a study of Homeric mental states to be as accurate as possible, it is crucial to start by considering how a certain condition, sensation, or function is described in the text, and what psychic entities it affects in different passages. The next step, however, should be to consider the plurality of the affected entities, and possibly the type of interaction among them. Snell's view, therefore, proves significant inasmuch as it helps single out different entities that are foreign to our way of considering the human mind. Yet each mental activity may be described in several ways, affecting a different entity each time. In order for us to achieve a clear understanding of Homeric psychological activity, we should therefore take into account the plurality of elements that are mentioned in connection with certain functions. Textual parallels will prove of crucial importance to broaden our perspective on Homeric psychic functions.

Once the plurality of psychological entities in Homer was noted, a linguistic difficulty arose when scholars attempted to identify precisely both the specific functions of each entity, and the precise connotation of each term. Considering the peculiarity of the Homeric style, which uses formulae and necessarily has to take meter into account, two main approaches have been used: on the one hand, priority has been given to metrical, rather than semantic demands, to determine the appearance of different words, although terms in different passages may have been consciously chosen by the poet. On the other hand, words of similar meaning have been regarded as possible substitutes for

one another, following the notion of "functional synonyms."[30] Yet we should argue for semantic interchangeability and metrical predominance extremely cautiously and sparingly, inasmuch as they would in a certain sense destroy the relevance of context. As for the useful notion of "functional synonyms," it should be noted that terms like νοῦς, θυμός, or φρένες often carry on psychological activities in similar ways, but they generally express different aspects of that activity, and still display distinctive traits deserving of notice, which should be considered carefully from case to case.

Although we would like to see a clear distinction among different psychological terms, overlaps are more frequent than scholars have liked to admit, and this undoubtedly constitutes a major difficulty. In certain passages, different psychological terms are used in very similar ways, in very similar mental processes. In other instances, however, different psychic terms are used in rather distinctive ways, and are not simply interchangeable.[31] A further difficulty is represented by the fact that processes that modern languages describe as distinct mental functions, are at times described by Homer using one term. *Lethe* is one such clear example of this discrepancy between English and Greek, inasmuch as it can mean both forgetfulness and lack of attention,

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[30] For the first approach, see Jahn (1987); for the second, see Caswell (1990). See also Sullivan (1996-97) 129-31.

[31] Sullivan (1996-97) 129-31 considers how much early epic can tell us about psychological terminology, and mentions the two different approaches that have been used so far: on the one hand, priority is given to metrical, rather than semantic demands, to determine the appearance of different terms, although terms in different passages may have been consciously chosen by the poet (see Jahn: 1987); on the other hand, words of similar meaning can be substituted for one another, following the notion of "functional synonyms" (see Caswell: 1990). Commenting on these approaches, Sullivan rightly notes that "functional synonyms" still display distinctive traits deserving of notice, which should be considered carefully from case to case.

and will therefore require a careful analysis. In the light of these considerations, we will necessarily approach psychic terms very cautiously, and will proceed on the basis of careful textual analysis, in order to identify both the psychological entities involved in a mental process, and the function of a specific entity in a process of the mind.

Dissertation outline

This dissertation intends to be a reconsideration of *Odyssey* 10 through 12 as a psychological journey for Odysseus, from his sudden and unusual condition of helplessness at the beginning of book 10, through the adventures on Aiaia and in Hades, to the regaining of his mental faculties in the last part of his journey.

In the first chapter, I start my argument by considering the psychological effects of Circe's magic, that are manifest in the Homeric text. My starting point will be a problem that has troubled generations of scholars, namely the explicit mention of induced forgetfulness as an effect of Circe's magic, and the simultaneous presence of a "steadfast mind" in her human victims. An analysis of the processes of memory and forgetting in Homer will lead us to the conclusion that the contradiction is only apparent, inasmuch as different psychological entities are involved. Circe's victims thus forget about their homecoming, but when they are subsequently turned into pigs their other mental faculties remain unchanged.

As for Odysseus, Hermes' μῶλυ protects him from Circe's transformation, and the text points out how both his body and his mind are able to resist her charm. Yet

Odysseus seems to be subject to the preliminary λήθη, since he spends an entire year on Circe's island until his men have to remind him about the homecoming. Λήθη and bodily transformation, we will observe, do not appear to be two separate charms. Rather, they seem to be the two phases of the same incantation, where λήθη works as preliminary remedy against the pain caused by the subsequent physical metamorphosis. Λήθη in the Homeric poems happens consistently through the φρένες. In the *Odyssey* it seems to function as pain-reliever and preliminary remedy against painful memories and thoughts. Induced forgetfulness aims to ease impending suffering, I will argue, and does not affect the intellectual functions of the νοῦς.

In chapter 2 I broaden my perspective to investigate what purpose λήθη may have for Odysseus. In his case, in fact, the forgetfulness induced by Circe does not aim to ease the anguish related to the metamorphosis, since Hermes' help allows the hero to avoid any bodily transformation. Moving backwards in the Homeric text, I look for possible causes for the hero's mental disturbances, which would require a remedy such as λήθη at this point in the story. What I observe is that right after Odysseus' demonstration of μῆτις, courage, and forethought in the Cyclopean adventure, his νοῦς suddenly does seem inadequate and unstable at the beginning of book 10, when the hero appears very much to lose control both over the topography of his journey, and over himself. I interpret Odysseus' dimmed μῆτις as a disturbance of the νοῦς, and suggest that some recovery was indeed needed for his distressed νοῦς. My suggestion is therefore that in the Circe episode λήθη has some therapeutic function too, inasmuch as

the oblivion of the homecoming allows Odysseus to concentrate on his νοῦς and thus recover from what previously upset it.

In chapter 3 I look for indications of what upset Odysseus' νοῦς, what type of disturbance affects him after his last manifestation of self-sufficient μῆτις in the *Cyclopeia*, and the possible reasons why this happened. I start by considering the accusations of Eurylochos (*Od.* 10.437), who considers Odysseus' ἀτασθαλία responsible for all the sufferings of the entire crew. Although Odysseus is certainly guilty of ἀτασθαλία, I conclude that this fault is not directly responsible for the damage to his νοῦς. Rather, ἀτασθαλία may only be envisaged as a temporary and partial obliteration of μῆτις. What seems to be more directly responsible for the dimming of Odysseus' μῆτις is the ὕβρις he displays in his proud boasting against Polyphemus. Odysseus' ὕβρις seems to originate directly from his excessive confidence in his own μῆτις, and paradoxically represents its utmost obliteration. The hero's hybristic behavior provokes the divine wrath that deprives him of the gods' help, while his human faculties suddenly appear inadequate and insufficient. Odysseus is thus left alone in distress to realize how limited human μῆτις is, if one disregards the boundaries of the mortal condition. In this picture the forgetfulness induced by Circe's magic is an essential element in Odysseus' process of recovery from his condition of helplessness, inasmuch as it allows the hero to focus on his νοῦς in order to recuperate the sharpness that it lost.

Finally, in chapter 4 I consider Odysseus' recovery. After Circe's magic has provided him with the forgetfulness that would alleviate the pain involved in this process, he needs to recuperate his full mental faculties to face both the last part of this journey and his arrival at Ithaca. In order for the hero to regain full power over his νοῦς, he is forced to explore what the boundaries of human mental faculties are. In this respect the *Nekyia* appears to be an essential part of Odysseus' journey, and constitutes the core of Odysseus' recovery. His journey to Hades, in fact, allows the hero to talk to some dead spirits and in particular to Tiresias, who is the only one of the dead who is allowed to retain a steadfast νοῦς. Thanks to his condition of seer, Tiresias is able to speak Fate to Odysseus, and gives him a strong moral lesson that should guide him in the future. Through his dialogues with the dead spirits, Odysseus gradually recuperates his self-awareness, and in particular the awareness that πολυμηχανία and μῆτις are an essential part of himself.

The second and equally important part of his recovery is guided by Circe. The goddess suggests to Odysseus some practical μῆτις to survive the Sirens and other dangers. However, her instructions do not seem as precise and detailed as those before the trip to the Underworld, and she seems to leave the hero more and more free to make his own decisions. Her advice completes Tiresias' warning, and reminds Odysseus of the undefeatable power of the divine. Once he regains his self-awareness, the πολύμητις hero thus has to realize the limits within which human μῆτις should express itself, without challenging the superiority of the gods.

This dissertation thus begins by observing a textual difficulty, and proceeds by finding possible explanations in the context of the *Odyssey* as a narrative whole. In the course of my study I treat the text as a specific literary work, which may reflect society – but does not represent it accurately and entirely. However, while the features of literary fiction may influence – at least in part – the psychological processes described or hinted at in the Homeric poems, it is likely that the poems reflect some actual beliefs. The conclusions that I draw are hence primarily limited to the Homeric poems, and only with extreme care should they be extended to include assumptions regarding archaic Greek thought in general.

CHAPTER ONE

THE EFFECTS OF CIRCE'S MAGIC

Circe's transformations in the *Odyssey* appear to be twofold: they affect the victim's mind and body. The psychological effects may be less noticeable to the audience than the physical ones, but they are unmistakably pointed out in the Homeric text. On Circe's island, Odysseus divides up his crew into two groups, one of which will explore the island. Eurylochus' group is selected to go off on the exploration. They arrive at Circe's palace, which is surrounded by tame lions and wolves "that she had charmed with an evil φάρμακον" (*Od.* 10.213) and that wave their long tails and fawn on the human visitors. Eurylochus prudently waits outside, while the goddess welcomes the rest of the group. She offers them a κυκεών to drink, to which she added a φάρμακον aimed to induce forgetfulness of their fatherland (*Od.* 10.234-36). She then touches them with her wand, and transforms their bodies into swine, while "their mind remained steadfast" (*Od.* 10.240). Eurylochus runs back to the ships to tell Odysseus what happened, and the hero immediately leaves for Circe's palace to rescue his companions. Along the way, he encounters Hermes, who gives him precise instructions on how to overcome the goddess' magic, and provides him with the herb μῶλυ, which should work as counter-φάρμακον. Circe welcomes Odysseus, offers him the κυκεών, then touches him with her wand and commands him to join his companions in the pigsty. Odysseus, however, thanks to Hermes' help, resists her magic and is not transformed; still following Hermes' advice, he threatens to kill Circe, who recognizes the hero, and offers him her

love. Odysseus obtains from her the promise that she will not harm him, and also that she will turn his men back into humans. When Circe touches each of the pigs with an ointment, they are turned back into humans, though "much bigger and more beautiful than they were before" (*Od.* 10.394). Odysseus and his men then remain with Circe for an entire year, until his companions have to remind him of their return (*Od.* 10.472-74).

Circe's magic thus causes both physical metamorphosis and psychological transformation, inasmuch as she is able both to turn her victims into pigs, and to induce forgetfulness in them. Homer, however, treats such interesting matters as the details of Circe's magic, the real nature of the tame beasts, and the use of the μῶλυ, very rapidly and vaguely. Various scholars have pointed out the scarcity in the Homeric poems of elements and episodes that belong to the realm of fables, magic, and irrationality.[1] The Circe episode, in spite of its unquestionable mysterious and magic atmosphere, is no exception.

Consequently, in the course of the centuries, the physical transformation of Circe's victims that is the most evident and strikingly peculiar effect of her magic, has been viewed quite predictably as the predominant feature of her transformations. In addition to presenting less entertaining and visual features than the physical transformations, the

[1] Murray (1960[4]) 120-23 claims that Homer mostly eliminates from his version of the rhapsodic poems the crudest erotic, magic, and gory elements; the process of dignifying the text was then continued by all the editors of the poems (Zenodotus, Aristophanes, Aristarchus). Following this line of thought, Murray claims that the expunged passages would form some sort of coherent, alternative counter-text. Page (1973) 51-69 notes the scarcity of magic elements in the Circe episode. McClintock (1999) 6 considers the scarcity of magical and erotic elements a distinctive feature of epic poetry, and regards this observation as an old achievement of literary criticism ("una vecchia acquisizione della critica"). More specifically on the tame animals surrounding Circe's palace, Heubeck (1989) 56, in his commentary to *Od.* 10.213, writes: "Though it may be natural to interpret these lines in terms of the familiar folk-tale motif of the men transformed into beasts (cf. 239), in fact the poet has at this point deliberately excluded that traditional element of magic from his story." Heubeck's opinion is shared by Ferrari (2002) 27.

psychological effects of her magic also suffered from a major textual problem that has troubled generations of scholars,[2] and turned the psychological issue in this scene into a philological question for specialists, rather than for a broader audience. When Odysseus' companions are turned into pigs, their mind expressly remains steadfast (*Od.* 10.240), despite the fact that the purpose of Circe's φάρμακα is clearly stated as the oblivion of their homeland (*Od.* 10.236). Later on, Odysseus explicitly resists Circe's charms (*Od.* 10.291-92, 318, 326), but something unquestionably happens to his mind, since his companions have to remind him of their homecoming (10.472-74). In the case of the companions, forgetfulness, which is a sort of mental transformation (though Homer does not refer to it as θέλξις) seems to contradict the statement that their mind remains steadfast; in the case of Odysseus, instead, his failed transformation is expressly connoted as θέλξις (*Od.* 10.291, 318, 326), but his resistance to Circe's charm still allows for oblivion.

Our study of the effects of Circe's magic will begin by considering the meaning of θέλγειν in Homer, and by pointing out its relevance in the Circe episode. Once we demonstrate that θέλξις indicates psychological (rather than physical) transformation, we will proceed to consider whether or not θέλξις is a component of the different charms used by Circe, namely the enchantment of Odysseus' companions, and Odysseus' failed metamorphosis that nonetheless involves forgetfulness. The brief hints regarding the enchantment of the tame beasts around her palace are too vague to

[2] Eustathius and scholia *ad Od.* 10.239-40; Wilamowitz (1884) 115 ff.; Schwartz (1924) 270, 315-17; Focke (1943) 189; Heubeck (1989) 57.

constitute an additional case study, but we will mention them in passing to reinforce our understanding of θέλξις as psychological charm.

Both in the comrades' successful transformation and in Odysseus' failed metamorphosis, forgetfulness seems to constitute the mental effect of Circe's magic. Λήθη will therefore be the focus of the second part of this chapter, in which we will attempt to demonstrate that the contradiction between *Od.* 10.236 and 10.240 is only apparent, since oblivion and steadfast mind are not incompatible. Moreover, we will hypothesize that the oblivion in the Circe episode may have a therapeutic, rather than destructive, purpose.

Λήθη has generally antiheroic connotations in the epic world, inasmuch as both the lack of mention in heroic songs and the oblivion of the heroic life are usually considered baneful, and opposed to the heroic κλέος.[3] In the *Odyssey,* forgetfulness is destructive both among the Lotus Eaters and when facing the Sirens, and Odysseus refuses Calypso's offer of immortality because eternal life with the "Concealer" would be equivalent to eternal obscurity and oblivion.[4] Yet Circe's λήθη seems different: in the final analysis it does not have destructive effects on Odysseus, and she is the one who makes the hero's homecoming possible. Her magic apparently does take the form of the

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[3] The Muses were the daughters of Mnemosyne, "memory," and their song was aimed to preserve the memory of heroic deeds. On the motif of κλέος in the *Odyssey*, see Segal (1996) 201-21.

[4] For the etymology of Calypso's name as the "Concealer," see Güntert (1921) *passim.* On the immortality of oblivion that Calypso offers Odysseus, see Anderson (1963) 79-86; Dimock (1963) 60-62; Simondon (1982) 139. In the *Iliad,* Achilles chooses to die with κλέος rather than living without glory (*Il.* 9.410-16, 18.90-96). Odysseus's choice with Calypso (*Od.* 5.214-24) is quite different from that of Achilles, inasmuch as his alternative is between the immortal life of a god and the mortal life that grants glory through endless suffering: still, when confronted with the alternative κλέος-obscurity, the epic hero chooses κλέος.

traditional love magic used by powerful females to get men away from their wives or their natal families by inducing forgetfulness in them.[5] Yet the fundamental assumption of the present work is that Circe's magic represents a rupture both with the tradition of erotic magic, and with the heroic tradition that rejects λήθη. Her enchantments, and the oblivion that they produce in fact function more as a therapeutic help than as a baneful barrier to be overcome: rather than suddenly becoming a helper after her magic on Odysseus failed, we will suggest that she is a helper precisely because of her magic.[6]

1.1. Θέλγειν

From a strictly lexical point of view, the term used to indicate the transformations produced by Circe is (κατα)θέλγειν (*Od.* 10.213, 291, 318, 326).[7] We do not know the details about the transformation of the animals around Circe's palace, but we are just presented with the result of her action of καταθέλγειν (*Od.* 10.213), namely ferocious beasts that behave like tame animals and fawn on the visitors. The verb θέλγειν then occurs three times regarding Odysseus' failed transformation: Hermes tells him that the μῶλυ will protect him against Circe's φάρμακα (*Od.* 10.291), Odysseus himself tells the Phaeacians about his failed transformation (*Od.* 10.318), and Circe is surprised that

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[5] Faraone (1999) 86-88, and n.182 on the Homeric description of Calypso as reflecting love magic practices.

[6] Traditional scholarship on the *Odyssey* generally considers Circe a barrier to be overcome: Beck (1965) esp. 4; Taylor (1961) 572-73; Segal (1968) 420-21; Hogan (1976) 190; Dyck (1981) 196-98; Aguirre-Castro (1994) 304-6; Reinhardt (1996) 93; McClintock (1999) 7-16.

[7] The compound καταθέλγειν occurs only once in Homer, regarding the enchantment of the animals that surround Circe's palace (*Od.* 10.213). Since no precise conclusion can be drawn from the use of the prefix κατα- in that passage, I will include the compound καταθέλγειν in my word study of θέλγειν in Homer.

her magic has no effect on the stranger (*Od.* 10.326). The range of meaning of θέλγειν, therefore, is certainly "enchant." Yet a study of the term will indicate that it belongs more broadly to the sphere of bewilderment, seduction and illusion; it is not necessarily obtained through magic, but it consistently affects the mind.

In the *Iliad* it generally indicates the bewilderment generated by some divinity on human eyes (*Od.* 13.435), θυμός (*Od.* 15.322, 15.594), or νοῦς (*Od.* 12.255). This disorder, which functions to influence the combat, is often obtained through some more or less explicit deceit (*Od.* 21.276; 21.604). In the *Odyssey*, on the other hand, θέλγειν is used in a similar, and quite material, connotation in only one instance, namely when Odysseus ensures Telemachus that Athena and Zeus will fight on their side and will bewilder the suitors (*Od.* 16.298). It is not surprising that, in such a combat context, θέλγειν appears to be used with the same connotation that it generally has in the Iliadic fights. When θέλξις is brought about by some divinity, it generally indicates a temporary mental confusion that has destructive effects on the charmed person. This is precisely what Telemachus fears when Odysseus reveals his real identity: he cannot believe that *Odysseus* is really his father, and is afraid that some daemon is deceiving him (*Od.* 16.195).

In most of the other occurrences in the *Odyssey,* the agent of θέλγειν is human, and the bewilderment is always restricted to erotic seduction and more broadly to persuasive words: Calypso enchants Odysseus with sweet words to make him forget about Ithaca (*Od.* 1.57); Aegisthus seduces Clytemnestra with charming words (*Od.* 3. 264); the Sirens enchant sailors with their voice (*Od.* 12.40, 44); Eumaeus begs Odysseus not to

charm him with lies (*Od.* 14.387); Eumaeus tells Penelope how fascinating Odysseus' stories are (*Od.* 17.514, 521); the suitors are seduced by love (*Od.* 18.212) and by Penelope's charming words (*Od.* 18.282). To this brief survey we should finally add Hermes' powers that enable him to enchant people's eyes,[8] and Circe's magic both over the tame beasts that surround her house (*Od.* 10.213), and over Odysseus (*Od.* 10.291, 318, 326).

The verb (κατα)θέλγειν thus seems to indicate a mental transformation, rather than a physical one, which can be either bewilderment (mainly in the *Iliad*) or seduction (mainly in the *Odyssey*). As Heubeck puts it, "it always means an activity producing the alteration (usually temporary) of normal thought and consciousness, not magical transformation of the outward form or appearance."[9] The incantation of the Sirens, especially if contrasted to the inspiration of the Muses, provides a good model to understand better the nature of θέλξις, which at times comprises both bewilderment and seduction.

On the one hand, the Muses provide real knowledge, and as daughters of Mnemosyne they are the custodians of the memory of past events. They inspire the poet

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[8] Τῇ τ' ἀνδρῶν ὄμματα θέλγει / ὧν ἐθέλει, τοὺς δ' αὖτε καὶ ὑπνώοντας ἐγείρει. The same set of formulaic lines is repeated three times: *Il.* 24.343-44; *Od.* 5.47-48; *Od.* 24.3-4. The recurrence of the same set of lines at the two ends of Odysseus' journey (on Calypso's island and after the slaughter of the Suitors) has been pointed out by Segal (1967: 326), who considers the entire *nostos* under a great metaphor of sleeping and awakening: "On the one hand Hermes is connected with sleep, dormancy, death – that which Odysseus experiences in his 'concealment' on Calypso's island. On the other hand, he is connected with the hero's reawakening to conquest over beautiful enchantresses (it is he who shows Odysseus how to overcome Circe) or with conquest (of a different kind) over treacherous enemies."

[9] Heubeck (1989) 55, commentary to *Od.* 10.213. Parry (1992) 24 claims that the verb θέλγειν initially "connotes the mysterious, deceptive power of erotic feelings and acts," before it was used to describe more general kinds of beguilement. Walsh (1984) 16 claims that the enchantment effected by song represents "the suspension of self-consciousness and personal feeling," with the consequent suspension of the listener's sense of purpose.

to recollect past deeds for a present audience, and make him actualize states of mind that people previously experienced. Their omniscience appeals to the poet's νοῦς, which is able to elaborate their knowledge and transmit it to the audience: the bare existence of the poems proves the effectiveness of their inspiration, and the pleasure they offer is inextricably related to their truthfulness.[10] The Sirens, on the other hand, seem to charm sailors directly in a pre-verbal way, which does not necessarily affect the νοῦς.[11] In the *Odyssey*, they ascribe to themselves the attributes of the Muses, namely omniscience, power of memory, and pleasurable song, and they must indeed have at least some partial knowledge of what happened at Troy, if they can recognize Odysseus at sight. Yet their intention to sing about the Trojan war remains an empty promise, and we can only wonder whether they would indeed be able to elaborate some appealing and truthful story. Our reluctance to believe that they would is based on the fact that Homer, who is well aware that the poet always enchants (*Od.* 1.337; 17.518-21), and is subject to the inspiration of the Muses himself (*Il.* 1.1, 2.484-93, *Od.* 1.1), repeatedly

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[10] Thus Odysseus comments on Demodocus' inspiration, when he sings the truth about Troy: "Either the Muse, daughter of Zeus, taught you, or Apollo taught you, for you sing the doom of the Achaeans so accurately, and what the Achaeans did and suffered and what they endured, as though either you yourself were present there or you heard it from another" (*Od.* 8.488-91). Before the Catalogue of ships in the *Iliad,* Homer claims that the poets do not know anything, and only the inspiration of the Muses can grant them knowledge and the capacity to actualize past events (*Il.* 2.484-93). On the traits that identify the Muses in the Homeric poems, see also *Od.* 8.63, 73; 24.60-62; Hes. *Theog.* 97-103.

[11] Most likely sensing this distinction between the two types of seduction, the ancient grammarians named one of the Sirens Thelxiepeia (or Thelxiope), thus forging a compound of θέλγειν and of the stem *ep- / op-*, meaning voice or word (scholia *Od.* 12.39; Apollod. *Ep.* 7.18; Eustathius *ad Od.* 1709.45; Hyginus, *Myths*, preface 30). This compound is probably modeled on the name of one of the Muses, Thelxinoe (Aratus, in Tzetzes, scholia *ad Hes., Op.* 23). The names of other Sirens are also built on stems indicating voice or song: Himerope, Aglaope (or Aglaphone), Molpe. Yet Thelxinoe is also the name of a Siren in scholia *ad Ap. Rh.* 4.892. On the Sirens' names, see Gresseth (1970) 205-6, n.7.

terms the song of the Sirens a ruinous incantation (*Od.* 12.40-54; 12.158-64), thus emphasizing the distance between Sirens and Muses.

The Sirens typically enchant their audience with their voice and without any intermediary, while the prerogative of the Muses is to appeal to the audience through the mediation of the poet's νοῦς. At first sight, therefore, the Sirens' voice could be considered sheer voice with no νοῦς,[12] outward appearance with no content, which enchants *per se*, without necessarily appealing to the intellectual faculties of the auditor.[13]

Homer's Sirens, however, do claim to have knowledge similar to that of the Muses, namely knowledge of all that happened at Troy (*Od.* 12.184-90; cf. *Il.* 2.485-86), which is what was immortalized in the *Iliad*.[14] Moreover, as Margalit Finkelberg quite justly noticed, enchantment, θέλξις, in Homer is generally aroused by hearing a new story, that is to say by the content, while the voice has rather some entertaining effect

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[12] Mancini (2005) 72 calls the Homeric Sirens "la voce senza *nous*, la voce che incanta per se stessa, senza fare appello alle facoltà intellettuali dell'uditore."

[13] On the relation between Sirens and Muses, see Buschor (1944) esp. 45, Koller (1963) 45-48, Otto (1971[3]) 57-58, Pucci (1998) 6-9. Buschor's attempt to identify the Sirens with Muses of a special sort has been criticized by Pollard (1952) 60-63, and Gresseth (1970) 203. For a lexical study of "voice" in Homer, see Laspia (1996) 81-86. For a thorough study of the Sirens, see Mancini (2005) esp. 72-75.

[14] The Sirens call Odysseus "renowned Odysseus, great glory of the Achaeans," thus using an expression that is referred to Odysseus only in this passage of the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad*, however, the same expression is used twice in reference to the hero (by Agamemnon, 9.673, and by Nestor, 10.544). Pucci (1979) 121-22, and (1998) 1-2 observes that the most remarkable feature of the Sirens' speech to Odysseus is the "Iliadic" diction of the text, which identifies Odysseus as the warrior of the *Iliad*, rather than the hero of the *Odyssey*. Musti (1999) 59-65 suggests interpreting the Sirens' song as a declaration of literary poetics: in the song of the Sirens, the author of the *Odyssey* would thus polemically depict the "old" epic, its vast subject and its slow, and almost hypnotic rhythm, as opposed to the more limited scope and the adventurous subject of the *Odyssey*. See also Vernant (1986) 61, and Parry (1992) 91.

(τέρπειν).[15] This incongruity is solved by the observation that the Sirens' song is unquestionably characterized as a deceitful lie: they claim to know all that happens on earth (*Od.* 12.191), but then do not even realize that Odysseus and his crew are either unable to hear them or unable to follow their provocation. They promise knowledge and a safe navigation (*Od.* 12.188), but the sailors who listen to them generally give up their navigation and are captured by the Sirens' song, to the point that their island is surrounded by the rotten remains of the sailors that they seduced (*Od.* 12.45-46).

In other words, the Sirens seem to enchant with some new content of their song, but, given their lies at *Od.* 12.191 and 12.188, we have good reasons to suspect that they are just faking knowledge instead. A mere beautiful voice would not be able to attract humans so irresistibly: in fact, the Sirens' θέλξις ultimately consists of the enchantment aroused by the promise of some new story. Their charm paralyzes the listener, who expects to acquire knowledge and consequently to be delighted by it. In the end the Sirens do appear to be sheer voice, which accords with our previous observation. Yet they, the destroyers of memory and family bonds, present themselves as the custodians

[15] When θέλγειν refers to the effect of poetry, or more broadly either to a song's enchantment or to the persuasive influence of a speech, it can be assumed to be "an insatiate desire to hear, directed towards the narrative content of a song." (Finkelberg 1985-88: 3). Finkelberg also notices that, whether or not the word θέλγειν is used, enchantment appears to be very much a typical effect of storytelling in the *Odyssey*. Enchantment and pleasure are the emotions aroused by storytelling, and Finkelberg leaves open the possibility that enchantment may be simply an intense term for pleasure (p.5, n.10). Yet enchantment, concludes Finkelberg, seems to be originated by the new content of a story (namely by the knowledge of the narrator), while pleasure and entertainment are the effect of the voice (p.8). This conclusion decisively expands and improves Stanford's view (1961^2, *ad Od.* 12.184-91), which put the love of music and poetry on the one hand, and the love of new information on the other, on the same level for ancient Greeks. See also Maehler (1963) 33, and Walsh (1984) 9: "the *shapeliness* of song indicates its truthfulness because both qualities arise from a single and indivisible competence of the poet." For some disquieting, uncontrollable effects of θέλγειν, especially with reference to Odysseus who hears songs about Troy, see Walsh (1984) 3-6, and Pucci (1987) 214-27.

of memory and knowledge. Regardless of the sincerity of their assertion, the mere claim of some superior knowledge is enough to enchant the listener, and as such it is called θέλξις twice by Circe (*Od.* 12.40, 44). This θέλξις is thus the (real) seduction of some (fake) knowledge, which turns out to be a deceitful illusion.

What is relevant to the present discussion is that θέλγειν, which may (as in the case of human narrators) or may not (as in the case of the Sirens) be generated by some actual new knowledge, certainly has some deep effect on the hearer's mind, deeper than some superficial emotion or sheer entertainment. Not only words, but more broadly songs (*Od.* 12.49), deceit (*Il.* 21.504; *Od.* 14.387), and love (*Od.* 18.212) charm people's minds and temporarily modify their habitual mental disposition.[16] This observation has brought some scholars to the very plausible conclusion that Circe's process of θέλγειν also affects the mind only, and does not indicate any physical metamorphosis. The tame beasts that surround her house and fawn on her visitors, therefore, would simply be wild animals whose natural νοῦς, and – consequently – behavior, has been altered by Circe's θέλξις (*Od.* 10.213).[17]

In the Circe episode the term θέλγειν is used only in regard to the tame beasts (*Od.* 10.213) and to Odysseus' failed transformation (*Od.* 10.291, 318, 326). In the light of our considerations, these four instances of θέλξις certainly imply some sort of mental

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[16] Walsh (1984) 14-15 justly observes that "the charm worked by things other than song is often deceptive or destructive: by giving pleasure, enchantment makes men neglect their advantage or their purpose. (...) As enchantment is dangerous in every other instance, it can be dangerous also when it comes from song."

[17] See Heubeck (1988) 56; McClintock (1999) 6, n.6; Rohdich (2003) 1. For θέλγειν as beguilement, see Parry (1992) 24. For an interpretation of the tame beasts as originally human beings, see Ameis (1890) 90 ad *Od.* 10.213; Schönbeck (1979/80) 43.

transformation, both of the tame animals and of Odysseus. The text is too brief for us to draw definite conclusions on the tame beasts, but a comparison between Circe's attempted θέλξις on Odysseus and her successful magic on his comrades will help us understand the precise meaning of Circe's θέλξις; in particular, we will consider how it affects humans, and how it combines with the transformation into pigs.

1.1.1. The enchantment of Odysseus' companions

The metamorphosis of Odysseus' companions into swine presents two major difficulties. First of all, it is the only instance of Circe's magic for which Homer does not use the term θέλγειν, although some psychological transformation does occur. When dealing with the effects of Circe's magic on their mind, Homer simply states that the purpose of Circe's φάρμακα was to produce oblivion of their homeland (ἵνα πάγχυ λαθοίατο πατρίδος αἴης, *Od.* 10.236). No θέλξις is mentioned. Yet we know that something happens to their mind, since they "utterly forget their fatherland." Secondly, the Homeric text seems to present an incongruity: in *Od.* 10.234-36, we hear that Circe mixed φάρμακα λυγρά into the κυκεών she has prepared for them, "so that they will utterly forget their native land". Only two lines later, however, we find their bodies transformed into swine, αὐτὰρ νοῦς ἦν ἔμπεδος ὡς τὸ πάρος περ (*Od.* 10.240). They look like pigs, but their mind remains steadfast. Their steadfast mind may explain why their transformation is not referred to as θέλξις, but we can hardly reconcile it with forgetfulness. A word study of ἔμπεδος, and the consideration of their

mental transformation together with their physical metamorphosis, will help us solve these difficulties by suggesting a possible reason for Homer not to refer to Circe's charm on Odysseus' comrades as θέλξις.

When Homer uses the adjective ἔμπεδος, he mostly refers it to physical strength (βίη, μένος, ἴς), material objects or living beings.[18] What is more interesting, ἔμπεδος seems to indicate persistence, steadfastness, stability, and resistance to disruptive external forces, as well as firmness deriving from some constrictive force. In other words, whenever Homer describes something as ἔμπεδος, he consistently mentions or hints at some destabilizing force that threatens a steady situation. The resistance to such a disruptive attack is precisely what makes an object ἔμπεδος. Therefore, we are not dealing with idleness, but rather with a static strength that is able to counteract threatening and dynamic forces, be it actual or potential. Quite predictably, therefore, ἔμπεδος mostly indicates physical strength.

When ἔμπεδος refers to objects or living beings, a threat is always present, which endangers (or endangered) the stability and the continuity of a certain situation or condition.[19] Also in the few instances in which ἔμπεδος describes a psychological

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[18] Βίη: *Il.* 4.314; 7.157; 11.670; 23.629; *Od.* 14.468; 14.503. Μένος: *Il.* 5.254; 5.527; 15.406; 15.622; *Od.* 7.259; 11.152; 11.628; 19.493; 21.426; 22.226. Ἴς: *Od.* 11.393. Φυλακή: *Il.* 8.521. Γέρα: *Il.* 9.335 (similarly, πάντα, *Od.* 2.227; 11.178; 19.525). Τεῖχος: *Il.* 12.9, 12. Πέτρη: *Il.* 13.141. Γυῖα: *Il.* 13.512; 23.627. Στήλη: *Il.* 17.434. Χρώς: *Il.* 19.33, 39. Πρίαμος: *Il.* 20.183. Κομιδή: *Od.* 8.453. Μῆλα: *Od.* 19.113. Λέχος: *Od.* 23.203. Σήματα: *Od.* 19.250; 23.206; 24.346. When used adverbially, ἔμπεδον means continually, stably, firmly, without moving, or always.

[19] A watch must be ἔμπεδος in order to prevent the enemies from entering the city in arms (*Il.* 8.521); Achilles' horses do not react to whipping and urging, but remain as firm as a funerary column (*Il.* 17.434); Odysseus' bed may be cut off and moved (*Od.* 23.203); Patroclus' cadaver may rot (*Il.* 19. 33-39); wealth and gifts may be dissipated or dispersed (*Il.* 9.335; *Od.* 2.227; 11.178; 19.525); by some

entity (φρένες, ἦτορ, νόος, or νόημα) it implies some resistance of the mind to external forces: not only age or death represent a threat for the stability of the intellectual and emotional faculties (*Il.* 20.183; *Od.* 10.493), but also worries and anxiety (*Il.* 10.94), physical wounds (*Il.* 11.813), the pressure of malevolent people (*Od.* 19.215, 230-31), and Circe's φάρμακα (*Od.* 10.240).[20]

Returning to Circe's transformations, we think at first that the potion aimed to induce forgetfulness, but then we hear that the νοῦς of Odysseus' companions resists and remains firm (ἔμπεδος), and we suddenly hear of their physical metamorphosis, instead. An easy way out of this difficulty would be to argue that the Homeric narration may include two versions of the Circe myth, which present two different explanations for the capture of Odysseus' men: one implying physical transformation, the other claiming their mental metamorphosis, namely λήθη. The Homeric narrator initially seems to prefer λήθη. However, when he turns to the physical transformation, he must necessarily assert their mental steadfastness, because a complete (that is to say mental and physical) metamorphosis would transfer the companions unambiguously to the

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divine decision, the fortification wall around the Achaeans' ships does not resist for a long time, and is torn down (*Il.* 12.9-12); Poseidon's horses, once fettered, do not run away (*Il.* 13.37) and neither do Ares and Aphrodite, trapped in Hephaestus' unbreakable chains (*Od.* 8.275); limbs may grow old and weak (*Il.* 13.512; 23.627, 629); shield (*Il.* 16.107) and spear (*Il.* 16.520) may slip from a warrior's hand; Odysseus may escape from the bonds and thus be a victim of the Sirens (*Od.* 12.161); he may fall down when Antinoos hits him (*Od.* 17.464); finally, the signs that Odysseus reveals both to Penelope and to Laertes are clear and unmistakable, and able to counteract any possible ambiguity, doubt, or misunderstanding (*Od.* 19.250; 23.204; 24.346).

[20] Conversely, shame and public reproach may help straighten up one's mind and make it firm (*Il.* 6.351-53).

animal realm. Instead, they cry (κλαίοντες, *Od.* 10.241) about their animal condition, which proves the actual, and at least partial, survival of their human νοῦς.[21]

Yet if their νοῦς is locked within animal bodies, which also involves having animal voices (*Od.* 10.239-40), it is unable to express itself. And a constrained νοῦς is equivalent to an inactive, useless one.[22] A similar idea, though unrelated to enchantments, seems to dominate the Proteus episode as well. In *Od.* 4.371 ff., Eidothea, Proteus' daughter, suggests to Menelaus to interrogate the divine old men of the sea about his return back to Sparta. Proteus' most distinctive feature is the capacity to change his aspect into several forms, which made it difficult to catch him. Eidothea advises Menelaus, and recommends that he interrogate the sea-god only when he would finally assume his normal aspect, after transforming himself in various ways.[23] On the one hand, Proteus would likely be unable to utter his knowledge while looking like either some inanimate object (water or a tree, *Od.* 4.458), or even some animal (a lion, a snake, a panther, or – with a rather interesting parallel with the Circe episode – a pig, *Od.* 4.456-57).[24] On the other hand, we may hypothesize that the truthfulness of

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[21] Renehan (1981) 254 considers the transformation of Odysseus' companions as an indication that pigs do not usually have νοῦς. Heath (2005) 42 n.10, however, justly notes that Homer emphasizes that the transformed men retain "the same νοῦς as before." If animals obviously had no νοῦς, and if νοῦς were a human prerogative, this last expression would be superfluous. The major point of Circe's transformation is that, while the men received pigs' bodies and voices, they did not receive pigs' minds (whatever they may be), and retained human νοῦς.

[22] Heath (2005) 41-42.

[23] On Proteus in relation to other mythological shape-shifters, see Forbes Irving (1990) 174-79.

[24] Never in Odysseus' wandering do we find talking animals. Scylla can only bark monstrously like a puppy from her six awful heads (*Od.* 12.85-87); the meat of Helios' cattle prodigiously bellows upon the spits like live animals (*Od.* 12.395-96); Polyphemus wishes his ram could speak and reveal where Nobody is hiding (*Od.* 9.456-57): he talks to him, but he certainly does not expect a response. The only

Proteus' words would depend very much on the truthfulness of his aspect. In fact, although Homer does not mention whether or not Proteus' νοῦς was affected by his physical transformations, he emphasizes that Odysseus should interrogate the god's νοῦς (*Od.* 4.493) only when his aspect would be back to normal. In any case, even if we want to avoid this unverifiable (though fascinating) hypothesis, we can at least claim that Proteus' physical metamorphoses would affect his capability to express νοῦς, whether or not it was affected by the transformations.

The transformation of Odysseus' companions is thus configured in these terms: in the first place they experience λήθη of their fatherland; in a second moment, their bodies are transformed so that their νοῦς remains idle and inexpressible. The fact that their minds remain steadfast is irrelevant, if their physical transformation makes them unable to express it. And this is why Circe does not need to charm (θέλγειν) them: she does not need to enchant their minds, if the bodily transformation blocks the expression of the νοῦς anyway. In order to understand more deeply the significance of λήθη in Circe's transformations, and the reasons why induced forgetfulness does not seem to be considered a form of θέλξις, we should undertake a thorough analysis of the term λήθη. Before we do so, however, we should consider the possible reasons why Odysseus'

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example of a talking animal in the Homeric poems is Achilles' horse (*Il.* 19.404-18), which not only talks but prophesies his master's fate. Although the horse is granted the gift of speech only temporarily (*Il.* 19.407, 418), and we may consider it as Hera's momentary instrument of fate, the *Iliad* still appears less realistic than the *Odyssey* in this respect, in spite of the folk-tale world of Odysseus' distant wandering. Johnston (1992) 87 claimed that Achilles' horses could always speak, but this theory has been convincingly criticized by Pelliccia (1995) 105-7 and Heath (2005) 39-42, who very appropriately notes that "even this brief, god-sanctioned violation of the rules of the Homeric world is so serious an offense to universal order that the Erinyes themselves immediately step in to put a halt to the human voice of the animal." (p.40).

failed metamorphosis can indeed be viewed as a failed θέλξις, and how his incantation was supposed to differ from the enchantment his companions were subject to.

1.1.2. Was Odysseus really not charmed?

In the previous section we have introduced the textual difficulty presented by *Od.* 10.234-36 and 10.240, namely the apparent incongruity between the claim that Circe's magic aimed to induce forgetfulness on the one hand, and on the other hand the subsequent assertion that the comrades' mind remained steadfast, while their bodies were transformed. We should now present an additional problem that arises once we add to the picture Circe's attempted charm on Odysseus. Her surprised assertion that the hero's νοῦς is beyond incantation (*Od.* 10.329) seems to contradict her lack of surprise when the comrades' minds remained steadfast. In order to disentangle this difficulty, a word study of the term ἀκήλητος (*Od.* 10.329), which Circe uses to connote Odysseus' enchantment-proof mind, will prove particularly helpful for us to understand the possible implications of Circe's intended incantation of the hero.

Thanks to Hermes' divine help, Odysseus appears immune to Circe's magic. The μῶλυ counteracts the effect of the φάρμακα, the sword opposes the wand, and the request of a solemn oath resists her invitation to join her in bed (*Od.* 10.316-47). Hermes foretells to Odysseus that

> οὐδ' ὥς θέλξαι σε δυνήσεται· οὐ γὰρ ἐάσει
> φάρμακον ἐσθλόν, ὅ τοι δώσω

even so she will not be able to bewitch you, for
the potent herb that I will give you will not allow it.

(*Od.* 10.291-92).

Subsequently, when Odysseus drinks the κυκεών, he immediately remarks that it does not charm him (οὐδέ μ' ἔθελξε, *Od.* 10.318). At this point, Circe has not yet realized that her φάρμακα have no effect on the hero, but of course she becomes aware of the situation when she touches him with her wand (*Od.* 10.319), and his bodily transformation fails to happen. Only at that point she declares:

θαῦμά μ' ἔχει, ὡς οὔ τι πιὼν τάδε φάρμακ' ἐθέλχθης.
οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδέ τις ἄλλος ἀνὴρ τάδε φάρμακ' ἀνέτλη,
ὅς κε πίῃ καὶ πρῶτον ἀμείψεται ἕρκος ὀδόντων·
σοὶ δέ τις ἐν στήθεσσιν ἀκήλητος νόος ἐστίν.

Amazement holds me that, although you drank these *pharmaka*, you were not bewitched.
For no other man ever resisted these *pharmaka*,
once he has drunk it, and it has passed the barrier of his teeth;
But in your breast you have a mind that cannot be beguiled.

(*Od.* 10.326-29).

Odysseus' νοῦς is thus "enchantment-proof," and his failed bodily transformation seems to indicate the failure of the θέλξις too. The poetic discourse is not precise at all on this point, and we are left with a double possibility: either the φάρμακα had a psychological effect and the ῥάβδος a physical one, or rather the ῥάβδος validated and condensed in one instant the invisible effect of the φάρμακα. In any case, physical and mental metamorphosis appear as two aspects of the same charm, both of which Odysseus manages to resist.

This passage has raised numerous doubts and problems: already Aristarchus, who saw a contradiction between *Od.* 10.329 (Circe's surprise that Odysseus' νοῦς is unchanged) and *Od.* 10.240 (when the mind of Odysseus' men remains ἔμπεδος after their bodily transformation), suggested expunging line 329. On the other hand, the assessment of both passages as authentic would generate one major difficulty: if the νοῦς of Odysseus' companions resists Circe's magic and remains ἔμπεδος (*Od.* 10.240), why does she now say to Odysseus that his mind is beyond enchantment, as though her magic would normally change the νοῦς too? The solution advanced by some scholiasts is a rather mechanical and naïve one: the whole νοῦς does not remain ἔμπεδος, but only the part of it that likes human beings, namely the gentleness, remains so.[25] This would explain the behavior of the changed animals around Circe's palace, which fawn upon the human visitors like dogs around their master.

In other words, when Homer writes "your νοῦς is beyond enchantment" he may actually use a synecdoche for "you are beyond enchantment," or he can mean "part of your νοῦς is beyond enchantment."[26] Yet this solution reveals all its weakness if we consider in the first place that νοῦς is never explicitly described as divisible or diminishable in the Homeric poems; secondly, the hypothesis of the scholia would raise

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[25] Scholia *Od.* 10.240: οὐχ ὁ σύμπας, ἀλλ' ὁ κατὰ τὸ φιλάνθρωπον μόνον; scholia *Od.* 10.329 also contemplates the possibility that "your νόος" is used as a synecdoche for "you": ἢ γὰρ παραφραστικῶς λέγει "σοὶ δέ τις ἐν στήθεσσιν ἀκήλητος νόος ἐστίν" ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀκήλητος εἶ, ἢ τὸ "ἀτὰρ νοῦς ἔμπεδος ὡς τὸ πάρος περ" οὐκ ἐπὶ παντὸς λέγεται τοῦ νοῦ, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἡμερότητος.

[26] Combellack (1987) 210, 216-17 seems to embrace this solution. See also Heath (2005) 42, n.10.

the consequent, yet unanswerable, issue of how much of the human νοῦς needs to change or to be lost in order to become animal νοῦς.

The apparent contradiction between *Od.* 10.329 and *Od.* 10.240 can be explained and overcome in a much more productive way if we consider the diversity of the three metamorphoses operated by Circe in the *Odyssey*. While the companions' transformation does not seem to involve any θέλξις, and their νοῦς remains ἔμπεδος though trapped within animal bodies, θέλξις is expressly mentioned as a danger that Odysseus only escapes thanks to Hermes. We may raise the question whether Circe had different kinds of φάρμακα, which might or might not θέλγειν her guests, and consequently we may wonder what made her decide to use one type rather than another one, but these issues would be rather idle ones. What we should rather consider at this point are simply the different mental effects of Circe's magic, as described by Homer: on the one hand, the wild animals that she charmed, which are most likely affected in their νοῦς and thus behave like tame animals;[27] on the other hand, Odysseus' companions, whose νοῦς remains steadfast, though ineffable; finally, Odysseus, who resists the charm, but apparently was supposed to be transformed both physically and mentally, if we follow literally Hermes' and Circe's words. In the first case, Circe's magic transforms the νοῦς alone; in the second instance, only the bodies are affected; in Odysseus' case, both were expected to occur, although all we have are hints to an intended θέλξις and to a physical metamorphosis that, to Circe's amazement, never actually took place.

[27] On the mental incantation of the wild animals around Circe's house, see above, n.17.

In *Od.* 10.329 Circe does not call Odysseus' νοῦς "ἔμπεδος," like that of his companions, but she uses the *hapax* ἀκήλητος instead.[28] While the adjective ἔμπεδος indicates firmness as a result of resistance to Circe's φάρμακα *tout court*, as we have seen above, ἀκήλητος seems to have a radically different and significant nuance. The scholia and the lexica consistently define and explain words with the stem κηλε- by using words with the stem θελγ-, but not vice versa.[29] Therefore, while θελγ- indicates psychological enchantment in a broader sense, κηλε- seems to be more limited. Circe is not surprised simply because Odysseus' νοῦς remains steadfast, but because he is not affected by a very precise type of charm.

The occurrences of κηλε-, both in the Homeric poems and in later authors, seem to suggest a very specific type of enchantment, namely incantation with words or songs, and often means simply "to calm down, to soothe." Odysseus' words, for instance, produce κληθμός in his Phaeacian audience (*Od.* 11.334, 13.2).[30] The effect of κηλεῖν

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[28] Line 329 is modeled on Paris' praise of Hector in *Il.* 3. 63 (ὡς σοὶ ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἀτάρβητος νόος ἐστί): while ἀτάρβητος indicates the resistance a warrior must demonstrate, ἀκήλητος indicates a completely different type of resistance of the νοῦς, as we will see.

[29] *Etymol. Gudianum* (p. 306 line 49) and *Etymol. Magnum* (p. 510 line 39): Κατεκήλησε· κατεπράϋνε, κατέθελξε ἢ κατεμάρανε. *Et. Gudianum* (p. 319 line 49): Κληθμὸς· θέλξις, τέρψις, χαρήθυμός τις. Hesychius, *Lex. A* 2370: ἀκήλητον· ἄθελκτον. *Idem, K* 1608: κατεκήλησε· κατεπράϋνεν, ἔθελξεν. Κηλεῖσθαι γὰρ λέγεται τὸ ὑπὸ αὐλῶν θέλγεσθαι. *Idem, K* 2490: κηλαίνειν· θέλγειν. Scholia *in Il.* 15.744b: τὸ κηλεῖν θέλγειν ἐστὶ καὶ τέρπειν. Scholia *in Od.* 10.329: ἀκήλητος· ἄθελκτος. Scholia *in Od.* 13.2: κληθμῷ· τῇ δι' ἀκοῆς ἡδονῇ, θέλξει, τέρψει.

[30] The incantation of Odysseus' words over the Phaeacian audience constitutes the only occurrence of the root κηλε- in the Homeric poems, beside Circe's remark on the hero's ἀκήλητος mind. Both these limited occurrences and the definitions of κηλέω in the *Lexica* and scholia reported in the previous note unquestionably indicate an enchantment of the mind, rather than a transformation of the body. Although the verb κηλέω is never used in relation to the Sirens in the Homeric poems, it will be variously used to describe their incantation in later works: Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* 228; Plato,

is often regarded as a prerogative of Orpheus,[31] the mythical Thracian singer who played the lyre to such perfection that nothing could withstand the charm of his music. Not only human beings, but also wild beasts were softened by his strains, and even trees and rocks were sensible to the charm. His music was so sweet and so moving that it softened the heart of Hades himself, and the spirits in the Underworld were moved. Orpheus' music, therefore, was believed to have some psychagogic effect, inasmuch as it attracted, persuaded, and allured all sorts of creatures. Along the same line of thought, in *Hecuba* 535, Euripides mentions κηλητερίους in relation to raising the dead.

In the light of these considerations, let us return to Odysseus' failed transformation. Although an explicit psychagogic connotation of κηλεῖν is not attested in the Homeric poems, we may reasonably assert that Circe's intention seems very much to move, and almost charm out the hero's νοῦς. Quite remarkably, in fact, Circe accompanies her charm to Odysseus with words, while this does not seem to occur when she transforms his crew. The vocal element is thus consistent with Circe's expectation to charm (κηλεῖν) the hero.[32]

Phaedrus 259b1; *Cratylus* 403e1; Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 2. 1230 b. 35. For a thorough discussion of Sirens and Keledones, see Mancini (2005) 52-61.

[31] Ap. Rh. 1. 515; Eur., *Alcestis* 359; Plato, *Protagoras* 315b1 all describe Orpheus' incantation by using the verb κηλεῖν.

[32] In his commentary to *Od.* 10.316-20, Heubeck (1989) 61 considers Circe's command to Odysseus ("Now go to the pigsty, and lie with the rest of your comrades") some sort of spell, in spite of the fact that it does not contain any explicit reference to the metamorphosis. On the strong charming role of Circe's voice, see Nagler (1977) 77-85, who investigates the expression δεινὴ θεὸς αὐδήεσσα (*Od.* 10.136; 11.8; 12.150 and 449). Dumézil (1987^2) 129 mentions a type of "enchantment" medicine, in a tripartite system that he defines "médicine des herbes, médicine du couteau, médicine des charmes." This tripartite structure of medicine is also present in Pindar, *Pyth.* 3.51-53, 4.217 (where Asclepius is able to heal any disease by using φάρμακα, surgery, or charms) and in Plato *Rep.* 426b (where, various among healing instruments, he lists φάρμακα, incisions, cauterizations, and also charms and amulets). Sophocles, *Ajax*

In addition, just one line before the mention of Odysseus' ἀκήλητος νοῦς, Circe remarks that no other men before him ever resisted her φάρμακα, once they "had passed the barrier of his teeth" (ἀμείψεται ἕρκος ὀδόντων, *Od.* 10.328). According to the scholia, the teeth form a fence, the ἕρκος ὀδόντων, that marks the boundary between exterior and interior man. Yet food, drinks, and air must necessarily enter from the outside: no barrier is needed in these cases, and in fact no barrier is ever mentioned in connection to these vital functions. If we examine the occurrences of the expression ἕρκος ὀδόντων in the Homeric poems, we notice it in connection either with incautious or ill-advised words that slip out of somebody's mouth,[33] or in one instance with the life force (ψυχή) of a dying men that exits his body (*Il.* 9.409). The barrier of the teeth, therefore, seems to have constraining and enclosing strength, inasmuch as it normally prevents inappropriate words, or even the spirit that keeps men alive, from escaping outside. In other words, it keeps in something whose escape would be

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581-82 presents the alternative between surgery and incantations as a controversial one: "It is not for a skilful doctor to moan incantations over a wound that craves the knife." In only one instance Homer mentions explicitly ἐπαοιδαί that appear to have some healing function (*Od.* 19.457-59: when he was a child, Odysseus was injured by a wild boar, and his uncles stop the bleeding by using a charm). Yet Heubeck's suggestion about Circe's alleged spell in *Od.* 10.316-20 is certainly intriguing.

[33] When Homer mentions words slipping out of somebody's mouth, he does so only in the formulaic expression ποῖόν σε ἔπος φύγεν ἕρκος ὀδόντων (*Il.* 4.350; 14.83; *Od.* 1.64; 3.230; 5.22; 19.492; 21.168; 23.70). The person who uses this formula consistently stands as parent or parental figure to the addressee, and always expresses surprise at the interlocutor's mistake in letting words escape. The expression sounds as a rebuke to the addressee to take measures against further errors of the same sort. See Lateiner (1989) 20.

irreplaceable and would harm the subject, and it is expressly noted in the Homeric poems when it has failed in its task, as Lateiner justly notes.[34]

Nowhere else in the entire corpus of Greek literature handed down to us do we find any mention of anything passing the ἕρκος ὀδόντων from the outside to the inside. Circe's φάρμακα represent the only occurrence. Since her φάρμακα are baneful, we may hypothesize that a barrier would indeed be necessary to block them. But there is also a more intriguing explanation. Although with neuter plural subjects Homer uses verbs in the singular form much more often than in the plural,[35] the scholion to *Od.* 10.328 regards the verb in the singular form (ἀμείψεται) with a neuter plural subject (φάρμακα) as an anomaly. The scholiast ascribes this alleged irregularity to the similarity with *Il.* 9.409 (ἀμείψεται ἕρκος ὀδόντων), where the verb has a singular subject (ψυχή), and is therefore regularly conjugated in a singular form. Yet the similarity between the two passages, which the scholion points out based on quite weak grammatical reasons, may be indeed valid and significant. As we have mentioned above, *Il.* 9.409 is the only occurrence in the Homeric poems of the "barrier of the teeth" both in connection with the verb ἀμείψεται, and in relation to the spirit of a dying person leaving the body. If the expression ἀμείψεται ἕρκος ὀδόντων in *Od.* 10.328 forces the grammar of the verb form and thus more powerfully recalls *Il.* 9.409,

[34] Both ψυχή and ἔπεα are commonly referred to as winged (πτερόεις), and they are thus able, if they are not appropriately constrained, to fly away. See Lateiner (1989) 20; Griffith (1995) 1-2.

[35] Smyth (1984[3]) 264, §959a.

the ingestion of Circe's φάρμακα may as powerfully recall the spirit of a dying person irrevocably escaping through the mouth.

This analogy is all the more fascinating if we put it in relation with the ἀκήλητος νοῦς that immediately follows. The audience of the Circe episode is subtly reminded of the removal of the breath that keeps a person alive in *Il.* 9.409,[36] and immediately afterwards they hear of Circe's failed charm on Odysseus, which is described in terms of a psychagogic process. Following this line of thought, what the Homeric text seems to suggest is that Circe's magic almost aimed to pour into Odysseus some new breath of life, after charming out his νοῦς.[37] If we follow Circe's words, according to her failed design the hero's νοῦς should be removed, and his body transformed, which indicates a complete metamorphosis and in ultimate analysis the death of the hero as we know him.[38] In their overturning of natural barriers, Circe's φάρμακα, and their remarkable passing over the barrier of the teeth from the outside in, almost mark the proposed replacement of the human life, which she tried to charm out of the hero, with some new breath of life. If this suggestion is correct, we may infer

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[36] Ψυχή does not become a psychological agent in the living person until after Homer and Hesiod. In epic poems it is simply the breath that keeps a person alive, and its departure brings death or, in one case, fainting (*Il.* 22.467). On the removal of ψυχή, see Sullivan (1994) 198-99. Relevant studies on ψυχή include: Rohde (1925[8]); Schnaufer (1970); Claus (1981); Garland (1981) 43-60; Dihle (1982) 9-20; Bremmer (1983); Garland (1985); Sullivan (1988) 151-80 and (1989a) 241-62.

[37] Cf. Semonides, fr.42 (= Simonides, fr.20 Page): "the gods easily steal the νοῦς of human beings." The removal of νοῦς signifies the removal of the capacity in people to think or to make judgments. On the removal of νοῦς, see Sullivan (1994) 193-94.

[38] Possibly for this reason Hermes tells Odysseus that the μῶλυ "will ward off from his head the evil day" (κακὸν ἦμαρ, *Od.* 10.288): the double transformation of mind and body would basically signify Odysseus' complete metamorphosis, and therefore his death, since nothing of his person would survive.

that what connotes and determines human life are the human body and the capacity to think and make judgments (νοῦς): transforming the first, and removing the latter at the same time, signifies the end of life as a human being and the beginning of some new kind of life.

The hero's resistance, however, is remarkably accompanied by the insistence on his mental steadfastness: Hermes foretells it, Odysseus notices it, Circe is surprised by it. Odysseus is definitely not affected by θέλξις. Yet Homer suggests unmistakably that Odysseus forgets about Ithaca while on Aiaia. After one year has passed by, his companions have to tap him on the shoulder to remind him of their destination, and the word they use is precisely μιμνήσκεο, "remember!" (*Od.* 10.472). We are therefore tempted to suppose that the magic effect of the μῶλυ would only protect Odysseus from physical or mental metamorphosis. Hermes makes sure that neither Odysseus' mind nor his body are transformed, but his remedies do not seem to prevent the hero from forgetting about his fatherland. As in the case of Odysseus' companions, λήθη appears to be the standard preliminary phase of Circe's enchantment.

1.2. Λήθη

Our investigation of θέλξις in the Homeric Circe episode has explained on the one hand why the enchantment of Odysseus' comrades is not phrased in terms of θέλγειν, and on the other hand it has described Circe's failed θέλξις on the hero in terms of a psychagogic process. Yet the comrades' enchantment does involve a psychological

effect, namely forgetfulness of their homecoming, while Odysseus' resistance to Circe's magic still allows for λήθη. The term θέλξις thus indicates some psychological enchantment, although not all psychological incantations fall into the broader category of θέλξις. Induced forgetfulness, for instance, is not qualified as θέλξις in the Homeric poems, though it clearly represents a mental change.

At this point two major issues are raised: in the first place, can λήθη and νοῦς ἔμπεδος (or ἀκήλητος) coexist at all in one being? And secondly, what function does λήθη have within Circe's magic? This second part of the present chapter will thus focus on λήθη in Homer, and in particular in the Circe episode. I will begin with a word study of the root ληθ-/λαθ-, that will point out both the broad meaning of the term λήθη and its interaction with various mental entities, including νοῦς, in order to demonstrate that the coexistence of λήθη and νοῦς ἔμπεδος in one being is not contradictory. Yet, since forgetfulness is not considered a form of θέλξις, but it is still a clear part of Circe's magic, we will finally examine the role and the function of λήθη within her charms.

The Homeric text suggests the possibility of forgetfulness in an otherwise steadfast mind, which leads to three possible explanations: either memory was not considered a function originated and located in the νοῦς, or memory and forgetfulness (regardless of their location) were in any case not believed to affect its steadfastness, or both things together. Our examination of λήθη in the Homeric poems should therefore begin by considering how the processes of memory and forgetfulness are described (or hinted at)

in the Homeric poems; we will then inquire what psychological entities are mentioned in different passages as the location, the agent, and/or the instrument of memory and forgetfulness; finally, we will consider how λήθη seems to affect Odysseus and his companions in the Circe episode.[39]

Our first observation, when considering the Greek root ληθ-/λαθ-, should be that its meaning appears to be much broader than what we would attribute to processes of memory and forgetfulness. Oftentimes, in fact, it simply means "to miss," or "to escape:" to escape somebody's sight or hearing (i.e. not notice, or vice versa be unseen/unheard),[40] or somebody's mind (i.e. just not think about something, not know, or not be considered),[41] or simply miss, avoid, or elude something or somebody.[42] When somebody deliberately causes somebody else's unawareness, then λανθάνω can simply signify "to deceive."[43] The broader spectrum of this stem is quite significant: λήθη, in fact, is thus configured not only as forgetfulness of some previous knowledge,

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[39] The noun λήθη occurs only once in the Homeric poems, in *Il.* 2.33, and the process of forgetfulness is often referred to by a form of the verb λανθάνω. Our examination will therefore have to broaden, and take into consideration the occurrences of the root ληθ-/λαθ-.

[40] E.g. *Il.* 3.420; 9.477; 10.279; 10.468; 12.390; 13.273; 13.560; 13.721; 14.1; 14.296; 15.541; 15.583; 16.232; 17.1; 17.89; 17.676; 20.112; 22.191; 22.193; 22.277; 23.326; 23.388; 24.331; 24.477; 24.566; 24.681; *Od.* 4.527; 8.93; 8.532; 11.126; 12.17; 12.181; 12.220; 13.393; 16.156; 17.305; 19.88; 19.91; 22.179.

[41] E.g. *Il.* 1.561; 15.461; 17.626; 23.323; 24.563; *Od.* 13.270.

[42] E.g. *Il.* 23.416; 24.13; *Od.* 22.198.

[43] E.g. *Il.* 24.563; *Od.* 2.106; 9.281; *Od.* 19.151; 24.141.

but also as lack of perception. Something can escape somebody's mind or sight both after having been perceived, and without ever being noticed at all.[44]

If these two processes are designated by the same stem ληθ-/λαθ-, we can reasonably assume that "escape" and "forget" were conceived as quite similar ideas. Even when the stem ληθ-/λαθ- refers to memory and forgetfulness in the modern sense of cognitive processes, Homer does not seem to consider them as necessarily conscious actions: something slips out of somebody's mind, just as it can escape somebody's senses. The subject of λανθάνω, in fact, can either be the one who forgets, or the person or thing that is not noticed; either who/what leaves some impression, or who receives that impression. The object of both memory and forgetting, on the other hand, can either be a person, or a thing, or a circumstance, or a state of mind (e.g. courage, virtue, rage, war-fury, deceitfulness), or an action (e.g. the homecoming, the defence, the flight, the weeping). Just as memory is either the recollection from the past, or the awareness of the opportunity of certain present or future actions, or the actualization of certain mental dispositions, so forgetfulness is described either in terms of loss of (past) knowledge, or as lack of consideration (towards future actions), or as failed recollection of particular states of mind. Thus λήθη is not only the cancellation of previous notions, but also the absence of forethought, or the loss of awareness, or the complete lack of awareness, or the failure to even think about something: so, for instance, the soldiers flee without even *thinking about* their virtue (*Il.* 17.759), the sentinels can fall asleep

[44] Conversely, "memory" is conceived both as recollection of past events or familiar people (e.g. *Il.* 15.662 "remember your children, your wives, your riches, and your parents"), and as actualization of previously experienced states of mind, or simply of a particular disposition (e.g. *Il.* 6.112 "remember the fury of war").

disregarding their duty (*Il.* 10.99), a mother's breast can *stop* a baby's weeping (*Il.* 22.83).

In the light of these considerations, let us now examine what psychological entities are affected by or involved in forgetfulness in the few Homeric passages that mention some entity explicitly. In *Il.* 15.461 νοῦς appears directly involved, but if we look closer at the context it is evident that Zeus is simply noticing that Teucer is about to draw an arrow against Hector.

> ἀλλ' οὐ λῆθε Διὸς πυκινὸν <u>νόον</u>
>
> but he did not escape the wise mind of Zeus,
>
> (*Il.* 15.460)

As sometimes is the case in the Homeric poems, νοῦς is here used as an organ of perception, rather than a psychological entity that operates some kind of elaboration on the perceived sensations.[45] This example is therefore no evidence for the relevance of νοῦς as psychic entity involved in the process of forgetting.

A very eloquent and useful element in our investigation is provided by *Il.* 9.536-37.

> οἵη δ' οὐκ ἔρρεξε Διὸς κούρη μεγάλοιο.
> <u>ἢ λάθετ' ἢ οὐκ ἐνόησεν</u>· ἀάσατο δὲ μέγα θυμῷ.
>
> it was only to the daughter of great Zeus that he did not make offerings,

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[45] In a similar way, νοεῖν sometimes means "to perceive," not so much with the senses, as through a mental perception or realization (e.g. *Od.* 1.58, where Odysseus desires "to *see* [νοῆσαι] the smoke leaping up from his own land," thus implying the sensorial perception of the smoke followed by the intuition of that given situation). Νοεῖν indicates a sensation, or a realization, which is not necessarily accompanied by some sensorial perception. See Bona (1959) 6-7, Collobert (2002-2003) 203-5. For the description of psychic terms (and especially νοῦς, θυμός, and ψυχή) as "analogous to organs" *tout court*, see Snell (1953) esp. 15, Dodds (1951) 16, Fränkel (1962^2) 85-89. For the claim that psychic terms are not simply analogous to organs, but instead refer to specific physical organs, see Justesen (1928) *passim*; Larock (1930) 377-406; Rüsche (1930) *passim*; Onians (1954^2) *passim*; Harrison (1960) 63-80.

whether he forgot, or he did not think about it; he was greatly blinded
[in his heart.

(*Il.* 9.536-37)

This passage clearly poses an alternative between λάθετο and οὐκ ἐνόησεν, which must therefore indicate different processes.[46] Moreover, νοέω and λανθάνω are juxtaposed here to a damaged θυμός, possibly to signify the complete mental destruction of the subject. Λάθετο seems to mean quite superficially "escaped from his mind" (which may mean either that it never occurred to his mind, or that it was present in his mind but then escaped), while οὐκ ἐνόησεν can indicate either the lack of immediate mental (rather than sensorial) grasp, or the absence of a more elaborate, conscious process of thinking, as if the subject failed either to understand or to retain a certain idea. The interpretation of οὐκ ἐνόησεν as less sensorial and more involving some mental realization and awareness than λάθετο may be corroborated by the parallel with another passage where νοέω indicates a more elaborate process than simple perception:

ταῦτα δ' ἐγὼν αὐτὸς τεχνήσομαι ἠδὲ <u>νοήσω</u>
στεινωπῷ ἐν ὁδῷ παραδύμεναι, <u>οὐδέ</u> με <u>λήσει</u>.

and this I will contrive and plan myself,
that we slip past them in the narrow way; I will not miss it.

(*Il.* 23.415-16)

[46] The Homeric language presents a conspicuous number of formulae, which constitute a major difficulty for a textual analysis like ours. Although extreme caution is necessary, neither formulaic language nor meter can supersede meaning. In the specific case of λάθετο and οὐκ ἐνόησεν, they do not appear in formulaic lines, which reasonably confirms the assumption that they indicated two distinct processes.

This time νοέω unquestionably appears as a voluntary and conscious process of thinking and contriving, which seems to negate the possibility that something escapes from one's senses and awareness.

On the other hand, a sign that is immediately easy to grasp, and thus does not escape somebody's notice, seems to have an impact on the φρένες, rather than on the νοῦς, which would confirm our hypothesis that οὐκ ἐνόησεν presupposes the absence of some deeper impact on a person's senses, or involves the lack of some deeper mental realization, than simple inattention, as is the case with λανθάνω.

> σῆμα δέ τοι ἐρέω μάλ' ἀριφραδές, οὐδέ σε λήσει.
>
> I will tell you a manifest (i.e. easy to grasp) sign, it will not escape you
>
> (*Il.* 23.326)

In any case, οὐ νοέω and λανθάνω in our initial passage appear as distinct processes; if νοῦς and λανθάνω are therefore also distinct, as we can reasonably assume,[47] a psychological entity other than νοῦς must be involved in λανθάνω. Our assumption is confirmed both by the fact that nowhere in Homer do we find λήθη depicted as "escaping from the νοῦς,"[48] and by the other Homeric passages that

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[47] For the identity of meanings and functions of νοῦς and νοέω, see Bona (1959) 7.

[48] The only instance of νοῦς that "forgets" something in Homer shows up in a negative sentence, in which the νοῦς thus ends up not letting anything escape (*Il.* 15.460 quoted above). See also *Il.* 23.415-16 also quoted above. The main difficulty presented by these passages is that the negative makes it impossible for us to understand whether or not the νοῦς would ever be able to let something escape. Due to this obscurity, and to the lack of clarifying passages, I believe that no decisive conclusion should be drawn from them. I reported these passages for the sake of completion, but I prefer to base my arguments on more solid ground.

mention a psychological entity in relation to forgetfulness, which all undoubtedly and remarkably indicate φρένες as strictly related to that process.[49]

Yet how are the φρένες involved in forgetfulness? The Homeric passages that relate λήθη to φρένες refer to φρένες as the seat of forgetfulness, rather than either the agent originating it, or the affected organ.[50] In the light of these considerations, we can argue that forgetfulness in Homer is conceived of as "to escape from the φρένες," without necessarily affecting the νοῦς (intended as psychic entity, not as "idea," or "character," or "attitude").[51] In other words, when an idea, an image, or a proposition, leave somebody's φρένες, this does not affect the person's intellectual capacities.[52]

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[49] The singular form φρήν is never attested in Homer. The passages that explicitly mention φρένες in relation to λήθη, either in the sense of failure of attention, or in the sense of forgetfulness proper, are: *Il.* 2.33-34 (i.e. the only instance of the substantive λήθη in Homer); *Il.* 6.284-85; *Il.* 12.233-36; *Il.* 15.59-61; *Il.* 19.136-37; *Il.* 23.326; *Il.* 24.563-64; and *Od.* 10.552-57: when Homer recounts the death of Elpenor, he does not tell us anything significant about him, except the manner of his death, phrased in terms of λήθη, and his lack of the qualities which instead distinguish Odysseus: he lets something escape from his φρένες precisely because he is not well endowed (ἀρηρώς) in his φρένες. On Elpenor in the *Nekyia*, see below, §4.4.

[50] However, φρένες cannot be reduced to this rather limited meaning. The term is extremely rich, and sometimes appears to indicate a location, while in other instances it can signify "that which thinks," and also "thoughts, ideas." For the supposition of a gradual change from a predominantly physical use of the term to one more abstract, see Sullivan (1988a) 7-10 and *passim*. Claus (1981) esp. 20-21, following Snell's model, expressly claims that φρένες and the other psychic entities in origin are "bodily parts;" yet he somewhat tendentiously wishes to argue that φρένες are treated as bodily parts because "something not originally concrete has undergone personification" (21). Claus rejects the interpretation of human life in Homer as a field on which a variety of physical organs compete with one another. In place of Snell's "organic model," Claus considers "soul words" in Homer as meaning (somewhat interchangeably) either "thought," or "life force," or a personification of the first two. Austin (1975) 81-129, instead, rejects the "organic model" by suggesting that Homer structures psychic entities after the pattern of man and society. In other words, by embracing the methods of Levi-Strauss' modern structural anthropology, Austin considers the multiplicity of psychological terms in Homer as corresponding to the Homeric community of heroes, whose virtues and qualities overlap and differ within certain limits, and who all act in concert.

[51] For a thorough study of νοῦς, see Bona (1959). At pp. 4-9, Bona considers all the different meanings of νοῦς in archaic poetry: understanding, character, attitude, intuition, perception, scheme, soul as the organ of experience, the behavior that follows from a certain intuition, the capacity to turn one's own will into practice. Basically, νοῦς can either vary according to the circumstances, or remain steadfast

Also the passages where the process of forgetfulness is not explicitly phrased in terms of "escaping the φρένες," the subject's mental faculties do not seem to be affected in any way. Thus Thamyris, deprived by the Muses of his ἀοιδή and κιθαριστύς, is not affected in any other way that we know of (*Il.* 2.594-600; Hes. fr. 85 MW); sleep and tiredness may cause the sentinels to forget about keeping watch, but this would be their only effect (*Il.* 10.99); Calypso "with soft and wheedling words charmed Odysseus" in order that he might forget his homecoming (*Od.* 1.56-57), but she seems to leave his mental faculties intact;[53] Helen's νηπενθές φάρμακον induces forgetfulness of painful memories, rage, and pain (*Od.* 4.220-26), but Telemachus and Menelaus, after drinking of it, still remember past events in detail, and are able to carry on the conversation (*Od.* 4.265-95); hunger temporarily distracts from painful memories, and without any consequences of any sort simply urges people to eat (*Od.* 7.221);[54] finally, Odysseus may forget about Circe's advice not to wear his armor

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to indicate the distinctive nature of somebody's intellect. This last connotation is the predominant one in the Circe episode, where the νοῦς of bewitched people is expressly defined "steadfast."

[52] Thus Hector wishes Paris' death and the consequent oblivion of painful trouble, but he certainly does not wish any mental disturbance for himself (*Il.* 6.284-85). In *Il.* 15.321-22 the soldiers' distressed θυμός causes them to flee without thinking about the battle anymore, not vice versa (that is to say, it is not λήθη that upsets the θυμός or any other psychic entity).

[53] The Homeric description of Calypso's charm is reminiscent of the erotic spells whose aim is expressed as an attack on the victim's family bonds or on their mindfulness of their families. Forgetfulness, in fact, is often an important part of the magic used either by men to get young women away from their natal families (as in the case of Jason's spell on Medea in Pind. *Pyth.* 4.213-19) or by courtesans (i.e. powerful female heads of households) who co-opt the same spells to get rich young men out of the houses of their natal families or their wives (as in Lucian, *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 4.1). Such spells that aim at the victim's memory of their spouses or families, which are reflected in the Homeric descriptions both of Calypso's and of Circe's charm, are part of the oldest extant instances of Greek erotic magic, and continue to appear in later spells throughout the Roman period. Faraone (1999) 86-88, 143, 150; Petropoulos (1988) 218-20.

[54] On the relationship between λήθη and λιμός, see Mazzocchini (2001) esp. 265.

against Scylla (*Od.* 12.226), but his precise directions to his crew imply the steadfastness of his νοῦς, which he explicitly refers to when he addresses them (*Od.* 12.211). When something escapes the φρένες, the person's mind remains perfectly sound. Moreover, when some negative feeling, trouble, painful memory, or even incredulity is forgotten and leaves the φρένες, λήθη can even bring about a sense of relief (e.g. *Il.* 6.284-85, *Il.* 15.60-61, *Od.* 24.394).[55]

To summarize: Homer is far less consistent when he describes how sensations, perceptions, and notions are acquired, than when he illustrates how they are lost or forgotten. A plurality of entities is involved in the acquisition process, while the loss/forgetfulness consistently happens in or through the φρένες. When a sensation is not even perceived, the φρένες let it slip away without even letting the subject realize it; on the other hand, when memory or cognitive processes are erased, the φρένες just do not retain them any longer for various reasons.[56]

Interestingly enough, νοῦς can work at times as an organ of perception, but it never lets anything leave. Νοῦς in this respect seems to be more actively involved with

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[55] Only the complete destruction or the removal of φρένες, quite understandably, affect the person's intellectual capacities, as in *Il.* 12.233-36 and in *Il.* 19.136-37. In the first passage, the destruction of φρένες makes it impossible to think properly (νοῆσαι), while in the second one Agamemnon claims to have been blinded by Ate: Zeus supposedly removed his φρένες, thus originating the baneful and sterile hostility between him and Achilles. Such processes, however, though clearly relating φρένες to λήθη, are not illustrated in terms of forgetfulness, but rather of (temporary) insanity. On Agamemnon ascribing his wrongdoing to Ate, see Redfield (1975) 97-98.

[56] Reasons for λήθη in the Homeric poems include the intervention of some god (e.g. *Il.* 2.600; 12.235; 15.60; 15.322; *Od.* 3.224), the effect of wine (*Il.* 6.265; *Od.* 10.557), slumber (*Il.* 10.99), seduction (*Od.* 1.57), φάρμακα (*Od.* 4.221; 10.236), hunger (*Od.* 7.221), the lotus (*Od.* 9.97, 102), unstable φρένες (*Od.* 10.553-57), death (*Il.* 22.389; *Od.* 22.444). The notion that forgetfulness affects the φρένες helps explain why Pindar says that Jason attacks the φρένες of Medea with his love magic (*Pyth.* 4.219).

mental processes of perceiving, understanding, interpreting, elaborating, and devising, than φρένες, which sometimes are described as the instrument used to carry on some mental activity (e.g. *Il.* 24.114), but more frequently are the location where some emotion or mental activity takes place (e.g. *Od.* 4.825), or the gateway through which thoughts and perceptions leave somebody's mind (e.g. *Il.* 6.285).[57] We do not have indications that φρένες were pictured as more external and thus vulnerable entities than νοῦς, but we can definitely argue that in the Homeric poems they are a psychic location (or, less frequently, instrument) that is not necessarily active in the elaboration of thoughts.

The result of this examination of λήθη in the Homeric poems thus provides us with a very plausible explanation for the nature of Circe's transformations. The simultaneous presence of λήθη and νοῦς ἔμπεδος in Odysseus' companions should not baffle us, nor should it be considered as an overlap of different mythical versions. On the one hand, in fact, processes of forgetfulness concern φρένες, rather than νοῦς; on the other hand, λήθη does not generally affect the subject's intellectual capacities. Before their physical transformation, Odysseus' companions are caused to forget about their homecoming, but their psychic abilities are not affected: when they are subsequently turned into pigs, in fact, they are aware of such a horrific transformation, and their reaction is very human weeping (*Od.* 10.241). When Circe turns them back into humans using a

[57] Very often, in fact, φρένες appear in the dative case, which can be either locative or instrumental. For φρένες as location, instrument, accompaniment, see Sullivan (1988a) esp. ch. 4.

counter-φάρμακον (*Od.* 10.391-92),[58] the preliminary λήθη dissolves together with the metamorphosis. In fact, the companions seem to remember about the homecoming, while Odysseus does not (*Od.* 10.472-74).

Conversely, Odysseus explicitly resists Circe's θέλξις: his body is unchanged, and so is his νοῦς. We have no evidence in the Homeric poems of θέλξις affecting the φρένες: when an object of θέλγειν is expressed, it is either the eyes, or the νοῦς, or the θυμός. The fact that Odysseus' νοῦς remains steadfast,[59] therefore, does not tell us anything about his φρένες. We infer from the text, however, that something indeed happened to his φρένες, if he has forgotten about the homecoming. Circe started off her transformation of Odysseus in her customary way, namely by inducing forgetfulness. Hermes' remedies seem to protect Odysseus' body and νοῦς, which according to our analysis connote his life as a human being, but obviously did not do much about the φρένες. The preliminary λήθη is therefore the only effect of Circe's magic on him. Yet

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[58] Circe's *anti*-φάρμακον, which she rubs on each man in order to turn them back into human, is the only example of a smeared φάρμακον in the *Odyssey*, and is explicitly an ointment (προσάλειφεν, *Od.* 10.392). This use of the term φάρμακον reminds of the *Iliad*, in which (in seven out of nine occurrences of the word) φάρμακον indicates a remedy to heal combat wounds: *Il.* 4.218, 5.401, 5.900, 11.515, 11.830, 15.394, 16.28. The Iliadic use of the term φάρμακον and its frequent association with the verb πάσσω seem to signify that the medication was applied directly on the wound in the form of an ointment, or dried herbs, or a decoction. Similarly, when Circe turns Odysseus' men back into human, she is healing a physical condition, which – no less than a wound – requires physical contact with the healing φάρμακον.

[59] The fact that θέλξις may affect the νοῦς, while λήθη affects the φρένες, and that consequently Odysseus' resistance to Circe's θέλξις may still allow for λήθη, does not change depending on the specific meaning that we may give to νοῦς, be it understanding, character, attitude, intuition, perception, scheme, soul as the organ of experience, the behavior that follows from a certain intuition, the capacity to turn one's own will into practice, or, in this specific case, Odysseus' "purpose" of returning home. For the different meanings of νοῦς in archaic poetry, see Bona (1959) 4-9.

why not protect him against λήθη too? Why make him forget about his homecoming? In other words, what is the function of induced λήθη in the *Odyssey*?

1.2.1. The function of λήθη

Before turning to Odysseus himself, let us consider the enchantment that affects his companions. As we have observed above, they first experience forgetfulness of their fatherland, and are then turned into pigs. When they are turned back into humans, they regain awareness of their homecoming, as if λήθη dissolved together with their transformation. In the case of Odysseus, instead, the hero resists Circe's magic, but he does not seem to resist the forgetfulness that accompanied it. What we will investigate in this section is therefore the precise role of λήθη within Circe's magic, and its relation to the other effects of her enchantments. In particular, we will point out the positive nuance that Homer seems to give to forgetfulness, thus challenging the heroic tradition that rejects λήθη.

Although Circe's φάρμακα are expressly defined "baneful," there is no doubt that full awareness of their return would most likely make their sufferings even more excruciating. Λήθη, if we consider the condition of Odysseus' companions, would rather ease their pain: they will suffer from their metamorphosis, but at least they will not suffer thinking that their transformation has made their return impossible. The expression κακὰ φάρμακα, therefore, most likely refers to Circe's magic as a whole,

inasmuch as it seems to aim to overturn human nature, but λήθη is not necessarily negative, in the context of her transformations.

Before transforming Odysseus' companions, Circe thus seems to alleviate the pain that the metamorphosis involves by making them forget about their fatherland. A similar function of λήθη as remedy is also evident in the episode of Telemachus at Sparta. Λήθη of all evil and distress is the effect of Helen's φάρμακον in *Od.* 4.221: it is not explicit in the Homeric text, but we may reasonably hypothesize a relation of causality between the effects of the νηπενθὲς φάρμακον, namely oblivion of evil things on the one hand, and consequently removal of pain and of rage. Λήθη is here presented as a powerful remedy against painful memories alone, which does not seem to affect any other mental faculty, not even the faculty of remembering. It enables Telemachus to hear about his father without excessive pain, and Menelaus to hear Helen's account of some episode of the Trojan war, including the mention of her own responsibilities. Λήθη, therefore, seems to indicate some sort of detachment, and the ability to connect what is related or represented with oneself without emotional impediments.[60]

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[60] The emotional distress caused to the audience by the representation of facts that actualize painful memories is a standard theme in reflections on the effects of storytelling. Aristotle mentions for example Odysseus' tears when he hears Demodocus sing about the Trojan war at the Phaeacian court (*Od.* 8.521-31; Arist., *Poetics* 1455a1), and a scene in Dicaeogenes' *Cyprians*, in which Teucer, returning to Salamis in disguise and seeing a portrait of his dead father Telamon, burst into tears and was thus discovered (Arist., *Poetics* 1455a1). Herodotus talks about Phrynichus' tragedy *The Fall of Miletus*, which was staged in Athens only two years after the events with which it dealt actually occurred. The play, therefore, presented something that the audience members themselves remembered, and in so doing brought about and confirmed this living recollection. Herodotus says that the Athenian audience in the theater was so deeply upset that they burst into tears, and the author was fined a thousand drachmae "for *reminding them* of a disaster which *touched them so closely.*" A law was subsequently passed forbidding anybody ever to put the play on stage again (see also Strabo 14.1.7; Aelianus, *VH* 13.17.3; *De sublim.* 24.1; Schol. *ad Aristoph. Vespas* 1490a; Tzetzes, *Chiliades* 7.156). While the ban and the fine may have been imposed

As in the case of Odysseus' companions, λήθη alleviates psychological distress and prevents further suffering, but it does not affect mental activity in any way.[61] Moreover, as in the case of Odysseus' companions, the νηπενθὲς φάρμακον does not affect the memory of past events, but rather erases the ability to suffer:

> ὅς τὸ καταβρόξειεν, ἐπὴν κρητῆρι μιγείη,
> οὔ κεν ἐφημέριός γε βάλοι κατὰ δάκρυ παρειῶν,
> οὐδ' εἴ οἱ κατατεθναίη μήτηρ τε πατήρ τε,
> οὐδ' εἴ οἱ προπάροιθεν ἀδελφεὸν ἢ φίλον υἱὸν
> χαλκῷ δηϊόῳεν, ὁ δ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὁρῷτο.
>
> whoever should drink this down, when it is mixed in the bowl,
> would not in the course of that day let a tear fall down over his cheeks,
> not even if his mother and father should lie there dead,
> or if before his face men should slay with the sword his brother
> or dear son, and he saw it with his own eyes.
>
> (*Od.* 4.222-26)

As this scene from the Spartan banquet emphasizes, induced λήθη seems to break the connection between image and self, and in so doing it eliminates possible emotional obstacles to the reception of Helen's speech. Moreover, since rage (χόλος) is

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for political reasons, the immediate reaction of the audience is the most striking element, inasmuch as "the tears described by Herodotus do not appear to be a manifestation of *katharsis*, nor do the tears seem to result primarily from the mimetic force of Phrynichus' play. (...) Rather, it seems that their lamentation was the result of a shared recollection of a suffering that was theirs—*oikeia kaka*; the play "reminded them" [*anamnesanta*] of what they already remembered." Kottman (2003) 84-85. We may at this point wonder how come Aeschylus' *Persians* and Phrynichus' *Phoenician Women*, which both dealt with the defeat of the Persians, were staged successfully after an interval of only fifteen years or so from the battle of Salamis, but the comparison between an extant text and two lost ones would prove rather precarious. We should point out, however, that significantly enough no known Greek tragedy after Aeschylus' *Persians* dealt with a contemporary theme centered on historical events.

[61] An additional example of forgetfulness that alleviates pain and distress is provided by Hecamede's κυκεών in *Il.* 4.642-43. Although λήθη is not expressly mentioned there, is it clear that the κυκεών regenerates Nestor and Macaon, to the point that they linger upon a long and pleasant conversation, and seem not to remember either the battle or (what is more surprising) Machaon's wound. Ridgeway (1997) 327 rightly observes that Machaon's wound is not even washed until the beginning of book 14 (1-8), when Nestor returns to the battlefield. On the quite unmotivated hypothesis that Hecamede's κυκεών is "an *intoxicant* or *hallucinogen*," see Watkins (1978) 16.

mentioned among these obstacles, and it was believed to disturb the νοῦς,[62] we shall infer that the νηπενθὲς φάρμακον, by eliminating possible disturbances of the νοῦς, would preserve its intellectual functions. Without elements of disturbance such as pain and rage, the νοῦς is able to concentrate on Helen's words without letting emotions corrupt its reception. In other words, the νοῦς is preserved and remains ἔμπεδος.[63]

Memory of past events is explicitly considered painful in another passage of the Circe episode, which thus reinforces our theory that forgetfulness can be healthy and helpful.

> ἀλλ' ἄγετ' ἐσθίετε βρώμην καὶ πίνετε οἶνον,
> εἰς ὅ κεν αὖτις θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι λάβητε,
> οἷον ὅτε πρώτιστον ἐλείπετε πατρίδα γαῖαν
> τρηχείης Ἰθάκης· νῦν δ' ἀσκελέες καὶ ἄθυμοι,
> αἰὲν ἄλης χαλεπῆς μεμνημένοι· οὐδέ ποθ' ὔμιν
> θυμὸς ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ, ἐπεὶ ἦ μάλα πολλὰ πέποσθε.
>
> Come, eat food and drink wine,
> until you once more get spirit in your chest,
> such as when at first you left your native land
> of rugged Ithaca; but now you are withered and spiritless,
> always remembering the rough sea; and your spirit is never
> peaceful, for you have indeed suffered a lot.
>
> (*Od.* 10.460-65)

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[62] In *Il.* 9.553-54, rage (χόλος) "swells the νοῦς in the breasts also of others, even though they are wise (πύκα φρονεόντων)." If χόλος can have a bad influence even on the νοῦς of people who are in command of their mental capacities, and Helen's drug prevents that from happening, we can reasonably deduce that her νηπενθές φάρμακον actually preserved the νοῦς from possibly disturbing factors like χόλος.

[63] Λήθη is configured in terms of a physical remedy, and the process of forgetfulness in general has bodily traits, which reinforces Claus' theory that psychological entities were originally considered physical organs (Claus: 1981, see above, n.50). Claus' theory in this respect seems very plausible, and would explain how come psychological processes are described in the Homeric poems in rather bodily and mechanic terms. Memory is imagined as some sort of physiological imprint on the mind, the cancellation of which would obviously require some physical remedy.

Circe seems to imply that the sufferings and the ἀθυμία of Odysseus and of his companions are related to their unvarying "memory" both of the sea and of their own past afflictions. She urges them to eat and drink, in order to recover their θυμός, or rather until their θυμός is once again as it was before they left Ithaca for Troy (*Od.* 10. 462).[64] There is no mention of νοῦς here, but distress seems to have obvious consequences on the θυμός. Forgetting all the pain both of the long war and of the following journey is thus necessary for Odysseus and his companions to concentrate their mental energies in the present, and thus recover their θυμός. It is quite obvious that Circe considers λήθη a remedy against anguish, but in this case she pushes towards harmless, though weaker and temporary, food-induced λήθη.[65]

The only other episode in the *Odyssey* that mentions some induced forgetfulness is the oblivion caused by the Lotus Eaters (*Od.* 9.91-104). Λήθη here is not brought about by a φάρμακον, but simply by their food, which is described as a flower (ἄνθινον εἶδαρ, *Od.* 9.84), and which is offered to Odysseus' scouts as is customary in

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[64] For λήθη related to food and drink, see also *Od.* 7.221, where hunger is able to distract people from their afflictions, and directs all their thoughts towards eating and drinking only. See also Pucci (1987) 165-72.

[65] This idea of a preliminary function of λήθη was presumably very widely acknowledged, and traces of it survive also in some later cultic contexts, like the consultation of the oracle of Trophonius at Labadaea. Before entering the sanctuary of Trophonius, the individual wishing to consult the oracle paused at two neighboring springs, called *Lēthē* and *Mnēmosynē*: the water from the first obliterated the memory of human life, while the water from the second allowed the individual to retain memory of what he would see and hear in the otherworld. See Pausanias 9.39.5ff.; Detienne (1996) 63-64. I do not necessarily agree with Detienne, when he considers the water of *Lēthē* "the water of death that opened the gates of Hades" (p.64). Rather, preliminary oblivion was most likely traditionally regarded as necessary in various mental processes: as such it appears in the Homeric Circe episode, and as such it was later used at Labadaea to obliterate all those memories which would hinder the reception of the oracular response. On the relevance of *Lēthē* in the Underworld, see ch. 4, n. 40.

hospitality scenes. The Lotus Eaters do not design to kill anybody (οὐδ' ἄρα Λωτοφάγοι μήδονθ' ἑτάροισιν ὄλεθρον, *Od.* 10.92), and no purpose is mentioned for the oblivion caused by their food. We are just told what the effect of the lotus flower is: whoever eats of it, desires to remain there, does not feel like returning to the homeland with stories to tell (οὐκέτ' ἀπαγγεῖλαι πάλιν ἤθελεν οὐδὲ νέεσθαι, *Od.* 10.95), and forgets about his own homecoming (νόστου τε λαθέσθαι, *Od.* 9.97). We do not even know whether this λήθη was temporary or permanent. What we know is that no preventive remedy is necessary at this point of the narrative, and no impending pain needs to be eased. Consequently, forgetfulness both of one's own roots and of one's own responsibility is simply a danger, though not a mortal danger. Foreseeing the threat, Odysseus intervenes effectively and drags his companions away from the empty blandishments of the lotus flower. What is significant is that he is not even tempted to taste of it: no knowledge, no use, no advantage can come from it, and therefore it has no appeal for the hero.[66]

In general, λήθη in the *Odyssey* seems to be intended to ease impending suffering, thus preserving the intellectual functions of the νοῦς, and possibly restoring the θυμός.

[66] Interestingly enough, Odysseus is now able to confront such danger with measures that are very similar to those he will use on himself to face the Sirens (*Od.* 12.178-80): he drags them beneath the benches and binds them fast in the ships. Yet, when facing the Sirens, those measures will have to be suggested by Circe (*Od.* 12.50-51), as we will observe in ch. 4, pp. 242-43. Moreover, as Odysseus made sure to rescue his companions from the Lotus Eaters, so they remind him of the fatherland on Aiaia, once Circe's counter-φάρμακον has turned them into even better men than before. The difference between Odysseus' forceful behavior with the Lotus Eaters and his helpless and unaware condition on Circe's island is striking, and will be the subject of our next chapter.

Λήθη can thus be considered some sort of preventive remedy. However, if λήθη is not guided by a precise purpose, as in the case of the Lotus Eaters, oblivion *per se* is pointless and therefore dangerous.

In the Circe episode, the condition of Odysseus seems very different from that of his comrades. As we have pointed out in the course of this chapter, he is neither subject to physical metamorphosis, nor affected by Circe's θέλξις, but he does forget about the homecoming until his companions remind him of Ithaca. The λήθη that Circe induces in the comrades, rather than constituting some further pain, seems indeed to ease the suffering of a subsequent metamorphosis. Yet since Odysseus is not going to be subject to it, because the μῶλυ protects his νοῦς from possible disturbances, then either his λήθη is baneful (like in the case of the Lotus Eaters), or it must have some different purpose.

The limited context of the Circe episode is not sufficient to provide us with a possible explanation. The hero's νοῦς, in fact, is not affected by Circe's magic, but it is not invulnerable in general. In order to pursue the suggestion that in the Circe episode λήθη has some therapeutic function for Odysseus too, we should therefore broaden our perspective, and consider the *Odyssey* as a whole, to investigate whether his forgetfulness indeed had some purpose, whether some recovery was needed, and from what disturbance.

CHAPTER TWO

ODYSSEUS' LOSS OF *ΜΗΤΙΣ*

That Odysseus is almost the embodiment of cunning is common knowledge, both among the audience and readers of the Homeric poems, and among the Homeric characters – including Odysseus himself –, who often refer to the hero as the πολύμητις one, the master of tricks, the most calculating and persuasive of all mortals, and second to none where cleverness is concerned.[1] While Achilles' preeminent quality is certainly βίη (e.g. *Il.* 11.787), the heroic worth of Odysseus is in fact his outstanding μῆτις (e.g. *Il.* 3.202; *Od.* 9.19-20).[2] These two qualities, which Achilles and Odysseus possess to the highest degree, play a fundamental role in various Trojan combats, inasmuch as physical might and cleverness can be equally crucial to overcoming the enemy. Thus Lycurgus takes Areithoos by surprise, and explicitly kills him "by cunning, not by strength" (δόλῳ, οὔ τι κράτεΐ γε, *Il.* 7.142); in a similar way, Odysseus triumphs over the Cyclops δόλῳ οὐδὲ βίηφιν (*Od.* 9.408); for nine years the

[1] Πολύμητις, πολύφρων, πολυμήχανος, ποικιλομήτης all refer to Odysseus' cunning intelligence and are used in frequent formulae. See Austin (1981) 40-52 and Ferrari (2002) 31.

[2] Nagy (1979) 45-46 refers to an epic tradition that contrasted the heroic value of Odysseus with that of Achilles in terms of an opposition between μῆτις and βίη. The quarrel between the two heroes about whether Troy should be taken by might or by artifice (*Il.* 9.346-52; *Od.* 8.75-78) would thus reflect this fundamental contrast. While other scholars - like Girard (1902) 253 and Rüter (1969) 249-51 - have emphasized the opposition between μῆτις and βίη in the quarrel between Odysseus and Achilles, Nagy has gone as far as arguing for the existence of an epic tradition, independent from our *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, about the quarrel between the two heroes. Marg (1956) 20-22 had expressly rejected this possibility. In *Od.* 9.507-16, once Odysseus reveals his identity to the blinded Cyclops, Polyphemus reveals that he always expected Odysseus to be strong and handsome, whereas he turns out to be small, worthless and weak, and was only able to subdue him with the help of wine. As De Jong (2001) 248 points out, "this is Polyphemus' contemptuous version of the 'cunning versus force' theme:" what allows Odysseus to defeat the Cyclops is not βίη, but μῆτις. The contrast between βίη and μῆτις is most evident in the dialogue between Polyphemus and the Cyclopes at *Od.* 9.396-414.

Greeks have shut in their enemies in a network of ambushes of every sort, yet none of them could equal Odysseus in μῆτις (*Od.* 3.119-21), and it is finally his own cunning that designs the wooden horse and thus finds a way to overcome the Trojans definitively (*Od.* 8.492-95, 502-4).

In the Homeric Circe episode, however, Odysseus' μῆτις appears rather dim, and at times even absent: upon arrival on Aiaia, he loses his orientation (*Od.* 10.190), and he even addresses his companions with a rather odd appeal for μῆτις, claiming to be at a loss for ideas himself (*Od.* 10.193). This helplessness is extremely unusual for Odysseus for two main reasons: first of all it is remarkable that the πολύμητις hero *par excellence* admits his loss of resources explicitly. This unusual admission could theoretically be a form of μῆτις itself, in the sense that the hero could simulate helplessness to reach his own goals. Yet his behavior seems indeed to correspond to this sudden and vulnerable condition, thus precluding the possibility that Odysseus is for some reason pretending to have no μῆτις. Secondly, the instances in which the hero's cleverness seems to fail are all concentrated in the same narrative section of the *Odyssey*, and thus suggest that something is indeed happening to his mind at that precise moment.

Our study of Odysseus' remarkable and sudden loss of μῆτις in book 10 will begin by considering the complex mental processes usually generated by μῆτις, paying particular attention to the psychological entities that it affects. Once we demonstrate the relevance of νοῦς in the mental processes involving μῆτις, we will then consider all the

manifestations of Odysseus' lack of μῆτις and interpret the hero's dimmed faculties as some disturbance of the νοῦς. Within the scope of this dissertation, this chapter aims to shed some new light on the Homeric conception of the psychological processes involving μῆτις, thus limiting Odysseus' evident disturbance to his νοῦς. We will hence be able to narrow down the assumption that we made in the previous chapter, namely that Circe's magic had some sort of therapeutic function on Odysseus, inasmuch as we can reasonably infer that some recovery was indeed needed for the hero's νοῦς.

2.1. Μῆτις

The term μῆτις, although it occasionally indicates the stratagems of other men and even gods,[3] characterizes Odysseus in particular. In both Homeric poems, he is typically described with the epithets πολύμητις ("of diverse cunning") and ποικιλομήτης ("of varied craftiness"),[4] and he is frequently referred to as Διὶ μῆτιν ἀτάλαντος ("equal

[3] The classic example of μῆτις in the *Iliad*, which Detienne and Vernant (1978) 11-26 have studied at length, is that of Antilochus' chariot race: also in this case, as in the conflict between Odysseus and Achilles in the *Iliad*, the superiority of μῆτις is determined in terms of an opposition between μῆτις and βίη, where the cunning is celebrated at the expense of physical might.

[4] The less frequent ποικιλομήτης is only referred to Odysseus in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (*Il.* 11.482; *Od.* 3.163; 7.168; 13.293; 22.115; 22.202; 22.281), while in the *Homeric Hymns* it connotes Zeus (*HH to Apollo*, 322) and Hermes (*HH to Hermes*, 155). The much more frequent πολύμητις is used to describe the hero in almost the totality of cases, except for one instance where it is referred to Hephaestus (*Il.* 21.355); in the *Homeric Hymns*, also Athena (*HH to Athena*, 2) and Hermes (*HH to Hermes*, 319) are called πολύμητις. On the use of -μητις compounds in Homer, the *Homeric Hymns*, and Hesiod, see Guido (1975-76) 10-12. Austin (1975) 11-80 claims that the epithet πολύμητις, far from being merely ornamental, emphasizes that "when Odysseus speaks he is usually pleading a case, marshalling his most persuasive arguments." On Odysseus' epithets connoting his knavishness, see Pucci (1987) 59-61. On the idea that in archaic Greek poetry μῆτις is originally a female characteristic, see Holmberg (1997) 1-33.

to Zeus in artifice").[5] Moreover, Odysseus is the Homeric character who is described with the highest number of πολυ- compounds, which reflects the multiplicity, adaptability, but also ambiguity, of the most cunning hero.[6]

Cunning is unquestionably of crucial importance in early Greek mentality, and our investigation of Odysseus' μῆτις in the Circe episode will certainly benefit from some preliminary considerations of this very complex and rich notion. As Detienne and Vernant have pointed out, μῆτις "combines flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, various skills and experience acquired over the years."[7] In the Homeric poems, some individuals appear to be naturally endowed with μῆτις, which grants them a state of vigilant premeditation, and enables them to think quickly and seize the καιρός (Odysseus); in other instances, μῆτις is originated by experience and age (Nestor).[8]

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[5] The adjective μητιόεις and the indeclinable μητίετα are exclusively referred to Zeus both in the Homeric poems and in Hesiod, and emphasize "die Macht und Weisheit des Gottes," as Ameis, Hentze and Cauer wrote (1965) I 508.

[6] Πολύαινος, πολυκερδείη, πολυκερδής, πολυκηδής, πολυμήχανος, πολύτλας, πολύπικρα (adv.), πολύτροπος are referred uniquely to Odysseus. For other πολυ- compounds that are referred both to the hero and to others, as well as πολυ- compounds that are referred to others but not to Odysseus, see Stanford (1950) 108. For a careful analysis of Odysseus' epithets, see Austin (1975) 26-53.

[7] Detienne and Vernant (1978) 3-4, 44. Their work has expanded substantially the study of μῆτις in Greece, and constitutes the most complete contribution to the subject. Before them, Wilamowitz (1927) 190, n.1 claimed that μῆτις had some relevance only in the Homeric poems, and later survived only as poetic reminiscence. Jeanmaire (1956) 12-39 emphasized the aspect of μῆτις as practical intelligence. Diano (1967[3]) 56 considered the opposition of Odysseus and Achilles, and identified some relevant aspects of μῆτις. Guido (1975-76) 5-23 recognized the relevance of μῆτις in the Greek world, and studied its importance in archaic Greek poetry.

[8] The gods themselves at times resort to cunning and even to forms of trickery, for instance when they lure men into the nets of ἄτη. The gods – most frequently and explicitly Zeus, Hermes, Hephaestus,

Some of the essential and consistent features of μῆτις are mobility, ambiguity, flexibility, multiplicity, polymorphy, and diversity, which allow a πολύμητις individual to seize opportunities, dominate changing situations, and take advantage of various circumstances, usually by means of deceit.[9] Very often in the Homeric poems cunning is simply referred to as δόλος, rather than μῆτις: some tricks, in fact, are just clever acts, and do not necessarily involve the complexity of μῆτις. In other words, μῆτις is unquestionably a power of cunning and deceit, and it often involves disguise, illusion, and beguilement; yet by no means can it be reduced to sheer trickery, since δόλος is only one of its several components. Conversely, not all the instances of cunning should be considered as examples of μῆτις. Δόλος, especially in the singular

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Aphrodite, Hera and Athena – seem to be endowed with μῆτις, and are particularly fond of tricks. In *Od.* 13.296-99, Athena emphasizes the close relationship between herself and the hero, inasmuch as they are both endowed with outstanding μῆτις, one among mortals, and the other among gods. Athena's words also point out that Odysseus' μῆτις finds its natural expression in words (μύθοισιν). See Pucci (1986) 7-28. On human μῆτις and divine μῆτις as they are presented by Athena, see Guido (1975-76) 9. Hesiod, on the other hand, refers to the tradition according to which Athena was born from Zeus and the goddess Metis (*Theog.* 888-89). See Detienne (1965) 443-50. On the goddess Metis in Hesiod's *Theogony*, see Guido (1975-76) 14-17. Μῆτις also plays some role in the animal realm, and some species, such as the fox and the octopus, are traditionally considered particularly endowed with it. Hence Eustathius' explicit mention of Odysseus as "octopus" (1381.36). See Detienne and Vernant (1969) 291-317, *eidem* (1978) 27-54, Slatkin (1996) 236. On μῆτις as natural attribute of shape-shifters such as Proteus, Nereus, and Thetis, see Slatkin (1996) 235.

[9] Detienne and Vernant (1978) 20: "In order to seize upon the fleeting καιρός, μῆτις had to make itself even swifter than the latter. In order to dominate a changing situation, full of contrasts, it must become even more supple, even more shifting, more polymorphic than the flow of time: it must adapt itself constantly to events as they succeed each other and be pliable enough to accommodate the unexpected so as to implement the plan in mind successfully." Plato, in *Conv.* 203 B 3, mentions Πόρος ("Expedient") as the son of Metis (ὁ τῆς Μήτιδος υἱός). Both in Hesiod's *Theogony* and in Herodotus' *Histories* we find frequent instances of a quite aggressive type of μῆτις that does not play a significant role in the Homeric poems, which specifically aims to seize power and command. See Hes. *Theog.* 160-80 (Cronos overcomes Uranos); Hes. *Theog.* 624-739 (Titans); Hes. *Theog.* 820-69 (Typhoeus). On the motif of μῆτις in relation to the accession to power in Herodotus' *Histories*, see Dorati (1998) 203-11.

form, generally refers to quite specific and limited guile, while μῆτις is rather a broader category, not so much indicating particular acts of deception, as rather general cleverness that lies behind the single acts of trickery.

Yet μῆτις does not always have the versatility and complexity that are desirable to seize opportunities, get a good grip of the present and be aware of the future. In some instances, for example that of the young Antilochus, who wins a chariot race thanks to the tricks that his father Nestor suggests to him (*Il.* 23.305-449), we are confronted with immature and flawed types of μῆτις, as Antilochus himself admits (*Il.* 23.586-95). In other cases, even Odysseus, the πολύμητις one *par excellence*, appears at times to be abandoned by his wily intelligence: his boasting against Polyphemus (*Od.* 9.523-25), for instance, does not prove any particular ability to foresee the consequences of his action. Μῆτις therefore appears to have certain qualitative and quantitative limits, inasmuch as it can either be flawed or inconsistent in time.[10]

The ancient Greeks greatly admired μῆτις, and were inclined to accept and even appreciate trickery much more than modern moral standards would allow for.[11] Yet imperfect and immature μῆτις are at times problematical, and the texts do not always represent them as admirable. Antilochus' ruse, for instance, is significantly criticized by

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[10] When mature and consistent μῆτις fails, like in the case of Odysseus in *Od.* 9 and 10, we have no indication of it being self-dysfunctional, but rather it seems to be overpowered by other forces, for example by ἀτασθαλία, as we will see in chapter 3.

[11] Detienne and Vernant (1978) *passim* have explained at length the Greek admiration for cleverness and trickery. See also Guido (1975-76) 5-23.

Menelaus, who harshly reproaches him, and emphasizes his unfair maneuvers by calling them δόλος (*Il.* 23.585); Odysseus' companions on Thrinacia plot (ἐμητίσαντο, *Od.* 12.373) to kill the cattle of Helios, which will cause their own destruction; finally, Irus' evil schemes against Odysseus in disguise (κακὰ μητισαίμην, *Od.* 18.27) do not seem to involve any particular astuteness, and the subsequent fight has a miserable outcome for him.

Considering the Greek fondness for cunning, we might ask what makes some expressions of μῆτις imperfect and reproachable, and what the limits of μῆτις are. Since πολύμητις Odysseus appears at a loss of μῆτις on Aiaia, in fact, even his outstanding μῆτις seems to have certain limits. The processes and trajectories of μῆτις are as diverse, supple, and polymorphic as the fluid and changing situations that they want to dominate: a precise study of the processes of μῆτις would therefore require a careful analysis of each occurrence of the term, which would lead us astray. What is relevant for the present investigation is rather that the psychological quality of μῆτις often expresses itself through a series of mental processes that frequently lead to the elaboration of a scheme, or simply urge a person to seize various occasions. In order for us to interpret Odysseus' μῆτις (or rather, lack of μῆτις) on Aiaia, we should first of all investigate the mental processes generated by μῆτις in the Homeric poems.

2.1.2. Μῆτις and δόλος

Before we consider individual elements of μῆτις, a preliminary and general distinction is necessary. So far we have talked about μῆτις as a psychological quality; yet its occurrences in the Homeric poems do not always indicate a mental disposition. The rich variety of possible nuances both of the term μῆτις and of its cognates may in fact be divided into two major categories: on the one hand, Homer uses μῆτις in the abstract sense of cleverness, wily intelligence, foresight, skillfulness, trickery, and resourcefulness that involves a cunning predisposition to success, thus indicating somebody's mental quality; on the other hand, μῆτις often refers to the concrete result of that cleverness, and simply means plan, project, design, thus implying some prior mental elaboration.[12] Precisely this mental elaboration, which is both the manifestation of μῆτις as mental disposition, and the backdrop of μῆτις as scheme, is what ties together the various nuances of μῆτις, and will be the focus of our investigation.

The most common term associated with μῆτις is probably δόλος: although the quality of μῆτις does not necessarily evolve into deceitfulness, tricks are certainly a

[12] In the abstract sense of mental characteristic: *Il.* 2.169 (= 2.407; 2.636; 7.47; 10.137; 11.200); 7.45; 10.226; 23.313; 23.315; 23.316; 23.318; 23.590. *Od.* 2.279; 3.120; 4.678; 4.739; 9.414; 13.299; 19.326; 20.20; 23.125. In the sense of actual plan: *Il.* 7.324; 7.447; 9.93; 9.423; 10.19; 10.497; 14.107; 15.509; 17.634; 17.712. *Od.* 3.18; 9.422; 13.303; 13.386; 19.158. In this sense μῆτις is very close in meaning to βουλή, like in *Il.* 7.44-45; 20.153-54; *Od.* 1.234. When the verbs μητιάω and μητίομαι are used, the distinction between abstract and concrete meaning frequently and obviously becomes very thin, since the verbs mean "to plot", namely "to use μῆτις in devising a plan:" *Il.* 3.416; 10.48; 10.208; 10.409; 12.17; 15.27; 15.349; 18.312; 22.174; 23.312. *Od.* 1.234; 6.14; 8.9; 9.262; 12.373. The same ambiguity connotes the adjectives πολύμητις, ποικιλόμητις, and μητίετα, where the μῆτις component can mean either cunning in general or actual trick.

frequent outcome of cleverness.[13] While δόλος in the singular form generally refers to the abstract category of guile, in the plural form it indicates concrete instances of treachery such as ambushes, mousetraps, and lies. Δόλος therefore indicates the cunning and deceitful component of μῆτις, while δόλοι are the outcome and the concrete expression of such deceitfulness.[14]

Δόλος is not necessarily considered admirable, in spite of the general Greek fondness for trickery.[15] The denigration of certain expressions of δόλος depends of course on who condemns them: the tricked person, in fact, is likely to express disapproval of what has duped them. Thus the Suitors repeatedly talk about Penelope's weaving trick in rather negative terms,[16] although Penelope herself claims that a god inspired her ruse (δόλους, *Od.* 19.137-38), and she is otherwise considered to have a

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[13] Less often, with the nuance of cunning intelligence skillfully oriented towards a personal gain, μῆτις is associated with κέρδος. See Guido (1975-76) 9. Πολυκερδίη, "ruse of all sorts," is attributed both to Odysseus (*Od.* 23.77) and to Penelope (*Od.* 24.167), and emphasizes their like-mindedness: see Diano (1963) 419, Foley (1978) 7-26, Pucci (1979) 125-26, Goldhill (1991) 53. Pucci (1987) 58-59 and n.13 justly points out that in Homer the plural κέρδεα means "wiles," "cunning," and "deceit" (*Il.* 23.515), while the singular κέρδος means "advantage," "gain" (*Il.* 10.225, *Od.* 16.311, 23.140).

[14] In the specific case of Odysseus, when the text presents the hero in a formulaic sort of portrait, the δόλοι become his prominent characteristic (*Il.* 3.202, *Od.* 3.119, 122). Some other passages, however, such as *Od.* 9.422, attribute δόλοι to Odysseus in specific instances. I agree with Pucci (1987) 62 that cunning is such an intrinsic component of Odysseus' character that even the plural δόλοι "seems to go beyond the idea of military stratagem or ambush – which δόλος often means – and suggests trickery and simulations of all sorts." Δόλοι thus generally characterize and confirm the image of Odysseus as the man of trickery.

[15] Conversely, as Pucci (1987) 61 notes, when δόλος is viewed "as a weapon or as a resource for self-protection from, or self-enhancement amid, enemies it has in itself no derogatory meaning." See also Stanford (1954) 13 and n.17.

[16] *Od.* 2.93 = 24.128 (ἡ δὲ δόλον τόνδ' ἄλλον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μερμήριξε); 2.106 = 24.141 (ὣς τρίετες μὲν ἔληθε δόλῳ).

higher degree of μῆτις than any other woman (γυναικῶν / ἀλλάων περίειμι νόον καὶ ἐπίφρονα μῆτιν, *Od.* 19.325-26). Similarly, Zeus harshly attacks Hera's deceitfulness towards him, and refers to her as κακὰ μητιόωσα (*Il.* 15.27): he thus considers Hera's δόλος (*Il.* 15.14) as the result of her evil schemes, which allegedly made her challenge his decisions. When Agamemnon mentions Hera's ruses against Zeus, however, he seems to give a different interpretation of this episode: while he quickly refers to women's untruthfulness (Ἥρη θῆλυς ἐοῦσα δολοφροσύνῃς ἀπάτησεν, *Il.* 19.97), he ascribes the deception of Zeus to Ate, rather than to Hera's tricks (*Il.* 19.91-113).

The condemnation of δόλος is due to a personal point of view also in the cases in which trickery derives from intentionally wicked plans, when the trickster's advantage deliberately corresponds to the victim's destruction. The Suitors, for instance, intentionally devise a dreadful scheme to kill Telemachus for their own advantage (κακὰ φράσσονται ὀπίσσω,/ὥς κε δόλῳ φθίῃς, *Od.* 2.368-69); and Hephaestus, in rage against Ares and Aphrodite, and pondering evil in his heart, designs an inescapable trap for them (τεῦξε δόλον, *Od.* 8.275). These instances of δόλος are despicable exclusively from the rather subjective point of view of the victims, and do not generate any harm for the tricksters.

When δόλος (and δόλοι) appear despicable, or at least problematical, from a more objective point of view, they are condemned by people other than the victims, and at times end up harming the tricksters too. A careful analysis of the passages that present

δόλος in negative terms seems to point out the crucial importance of guiding, mature, and purposeful μῆτις, from which only positive and useful δόλος derives. Thus Odysseus' expertise in every kind of trick is never connoted negatively, inasmuch as he is the πολύμητις hero *par excellence*, and all his deceits derive from and are guided by his highest level of μῆτις.[17]

Baneful tricks, on the other hand, seem to originate either from flawed μῆτις, or from a complete lack of μῆτις. Thus Antilochus' cheating during the chariot race, which is condemned by Menelaus, is justified as the result of youth and immature μῆτις (*Il.* 23.570-95). Aegisthus is not only repeatedly described as unwarlike and fraudulent, but the text also points out his scarce or flawed foresight: the seduction of Clytemnestra, in fact, appears to his crooked mind as a great deed, which he would not have even hoped to achieve (ἐκτελέσας μέγα ἔργον, ὃ οὔ ποτε ἔλπετο θυμῷ, *Od.* 3.275). Just as he fails to expect that Agamemnon's wife would give in to his seductive words, so he fails to expect a great punishment for his crimes: his treacherous deeds are therefore just baneful contrivances (ἐμήσατο οἴκοθι λυγρά, *Od.* 3.303). Since they do not seem to be guided by any reasonable and sound μῆτις, but lack foresight of possible consequences, Aegisthus acts disregarding completely the risk that his schemes may eventually trigger Orestes' vengeance against him.

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[17] For Odysseus' admirable expertise in δόλος, see *Il.* 3.202; 4.339 (where his δόλοι are admirable even if they are explicitly called κακοί); 23.725; *Od.* 3.122; 9.422; 13.293; 18.51; 21.274.

Achilles' words of reproach to Apollo at *Il.* 22.15-20 indirectly confirm the necessity for sound μῆτις in order for δόλος to be successful and effective.[18] In *Il.* 21.599, Apollo deceitfully leads the hero away from the battle field, thus allowing several Trojans to escape back into the city walls. When Achilles realizes the god's deceit, he accuses him of having deprived him of glory "easily, because you do not fear revenge in the future" (ῥηϊδίως, ἐπεὶ οὔ τι τίσινγ' ἔδεισας ὀπίσσω, *Il.* 22.19). When a god deceives a mortal man, therefore, he does not need any particular μῆτις, and his δόλος can be casual, careless, and even capricious:[19] the gods, in fact, can afford to carry out tricks against humans without fearing any harm for themselves. Thus Achilles explicitly claims that he would avenge himself on Apollo, if he had the power (*Il.* 22.20).

Our initial observation that δόλος is only one of the several components of μῆτις is reinforced by Homer's use of two δόλος compounds, namely δολοφρονέων and δολομήτης (or δολόμητις). The first adjective does not seem to have particularly negative connotations (*Il.* 14.197, 300, 329), and it certainly has a positive nuance when

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[18] In *Od.* 13.296-99, Athena points out that both men and gods can be endowed with cunning. She explicitly mentions her own μῆτις and assimilates it to Odysseus' cunning ("But come, let us no longer talk of this; we are both crafty, you are by far the best of all men in counsel and in speech, and I among all the gods am famed for μῆτις and schemes"). Yet the opposition between divine and human deceitfulness here is phrased using distinct terms: on the one hand, her μῆτις and κέρδος, on the other hand the hero's βουλή and μύθοι. Since it is attributed to a goddess, μῆτις may reasonably express a higher form of cunning, but more than anything else this opposition points out that human cleverness is mainly expressed in the form of μῦθοι, namely deceitful or just careful and pondered words. Βουλή is used a synonym for human μῆτις also at *Il.* 7.324-25 and 18.312-13.

[19] On the carelessness and recklessness of the gods' tricks against humans, which do not need to be guided by μῆτις, and have no dreadful consequences for the immortals, see also *Od.* 5.356; 7.245 (Calypso); Circe's magic is repeatedly referred to in terms of δόλος: 9.32; 10.232; 10.258; 10.339; 10.380; 23.321.

it is combined with πολύμητις (*Od.* 18.51; 21.274): δόλος alone, in fact, may be either positive or negative, but when it is guided by mature and persistent μῆτις, it generally has a positive connotation. Δολομήτης, instead, consistently has a negative nuance. In the *Iliad* this adjective occurs only once, in the irate words of Hera who feels tricked by Zeus whom she calls δολομήτης (*Il.* 1.540): her rage and disappointment certainly give the term a rather negative tone, and make it sound almost like an insult. If we extend our examination to the *Odyssey,* we note that δολομήτης is consistently used in a very negative sense, and it describes exclusively the plots of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.[20] The strong negative connotation of δολομήτης almost suggests that the treacherous component of δόλος prevails over the complexity, mobility, multiplicity, and foresight implied in the μῆτις element. The term δολομήτης thus specifies the nature of μῆτις as tricky, and almost means "whose μῆτις is constituted by δόλος," with all the limits and flaws that δόλος implies: hence the strong and consistent negative undertone.

If we want to simplify this rather nuanced issue, we can thus reasonably assert that the quality of μῆτις, in the Homeric poems, is generally connoted in positive terms,

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[20] It refers to Aegisthus at *Od.* 1.300; 3.198; 3.250; 3.308; 4.525; and to Clytemnestra at *Od.* 11.422. The crimes of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are consistently described in very negative terms, and at *Od.* 3.310 Orestes is said to offer a funeral feast "over his hateful mother and the unwarlike Aegisthus" (μητρός τε στυγερῆς καὶ ἀνάλκιδος Αἰγίσθοιο). Not only does Aegisthus represent the opposite of the heroic strength (ἀλκή), but his deceitfulness is twofold: first he enchants (θέλγεσκεν, *Od.* 3.264) Clytemnestra with sweet words, and then, together with her, he treacherously kills Agamemnon (δόλῳ, *Od.* 3.235). On the tradition that Aegisthus used a love charm to seduce Clytemnestra, see Faraone (1999) 6.

except when it is immature or corrupted. Δόλος, instead, as well as specific examples of cunning, seem to be positive only as long as they are guided by μῆτις. There seems to be a tendency to consider despicable, rather than admirable, those instances of δόλος that make somebody prevail when he would never prevail otherwise. In other words, if one resorts to δόλος only because he knows that otherwise he will succumb, the δόλος is generally considered negative, as in the case of Antilochus' race (*Il.* 23.570-95) or in that of Aegisthus being consistently called δολομήτης. Vice versa, if δόλος simply speeds up a victory that one could or would obtain anyway, then it is connoted in positive (or at least neutral) terms, as long as it is guided by μῆτις.[21]

This distinction would also explain why Odysseus repeatedly justifies his blinding of Polyphemus (*Od.* 9.414, 420-23; 20.20) asserting that his life was at stake, and that μῆτις saved his life: his fight with the Cyclops was certainly uneven, and by no other means could he have overcome the monster. He therefore risks incurring both public reproach and divine punishment, and has to assert strongly that he was not guided by the sheer desire to defeat Poseidon's son; rather, his life was at stake, and only his exceptional μῆτις saved him and his companions.

[21] *Il.* 21.559, 604 (Apollo would have defeated a man anyway); 23.725 (Odysseus demonstrated physical strength too at 23.720); *Od.* 1.296 (Telemachus can decide whether he would face the Suitors openly or deceitfully: in any case Athena will be on his side); 9.406 (the Cyclopes assume that somebody might be hurting Polyphemus either with physical strength or with trickery, and both seem to be equally acceptable); 11.120 (Tiresias seems to consider equally acceptable the use of strength and that of trickery in confronting the Suitors).

2.1.3. Psychological entities and processes of μῆτις

As our analysis has pointed out, trickery and single acts of cunning were accepted and admired only if guided and controlled by μῆτις. Yet what exactly does this rational principle involve? What type of processes does μῆτις generate, and what psychological entities does it affect? In order to answer these questions we should consider the verbs that most commonly describe the elaboration of μῆτις, namely ὑφαίνω and φράζω, and more specifically the entities that seem to elaborate the processes of μῆτις, namely φρένες and νοῦς. What will emerge from this investigation is that psychological activity is certainly possible even without μῆτις, yet μῆτις makes mental processes more elaborate and more aware.

In Homer μῆτις can be the object of either ὑφαίνω or φράζω with no relevant difference between the two verbs: while the latter specifically refers to a mental process, the first one metaphorically assimilates the psychological activity of plotting to the actual action of weaving.[22] The proximity in meaning of two verbs that originally seem to belong to different semantic spheres is worthy of note and can provide us with some crucial information about the processes of μῆτις. We might speculate that either the

[22] In individual occurrences, also εὑρίσκω (*Od.* 19.158), ἐμβάλλω (*Il.* 23.313) and εἰμί (*Od.* 10.193) are used in relation with μῆτις; yet no elaboration at all is involved in any of these instances, which makes them less interesting for the present study of the mental processes related to μῆτις. Μῆτις is the object of ὑφαίνω at *Il.* 7.324; 9.93; *Od.* 4.678; 4.739; 9.422; 13.303; 13.386. It is the object of φράζω at *Il.* 9.423; 17.634; 17.712. In spite of the fact that ὑφαίνω strongly recalls a picture of weaving, when this verb is used metaphorically in connection with μῆτις, it is not necessarily referred to a woman (*Il.* 7.324 and 9.93: Priam; *Od.* 4.678: Suitors; 4.739: Laertes). Both φράζω and ὑφαίνω, in fact, appear to be used transgender. On the frequent association of μῆτις with terms that recall techniques of weaving, see Slatkin (1996) 235-36.

metaphoric value of ὑφαίνω was not felt anymore, or φράζω was a richer and more lively term than it looks at first; yet it is practically impossible for a modern reader to come to a definite answer to this question. A more productive way to investigate the proximity in meaning of ὑφαίνω and φράζω is rather to consider what elements they have in common, and more specifically what they can tell us about the psychological processes that lead to the elaboration of a cunning plan.

The metaphor that is intrinsic in ὑφαίνω tells us a lot about the type of process that it describes: it indicates an organizational ability, an elaboration similar to what takes place in the act of weaving, rather than a deep analysis of situations. As a matter of fact, never in the Homeric poems is the adjective βαθύς used metaphorically, and the concept of "depth" is never associated with any psychological activity.[23] In the previous chapter we have pointed out that when sensations, perceptions, and notions are lost or forgotten, the loss/forgetfulness consistently happens in or through the φρένες, while

[23] The term βαθύς occurs in the Homeric poems only with very concrete meanings: with reference to rivers and the ocean (*Il.* 7.422; 13.32; 13.44; 14.311; 20.73; 21.8; 21.15; 21.143; 21.195; 21.212-13; 21.228; 21.239; 21.329; 21.603; *Od.* 5.413; 6.116; 10.511; 11.13; 12.214; 19.434), gulfs (*Il.* 2.560), shores (*Il.* 2.92), sheep-yard walls (*Il.* 5.142; *Od.* 9.239; 9.338), dust (*Il.* 5.587), ditches (*Il.* 7.341; 7.440; 8.336; 15.356), land ploughed up anew (*Il.* 10.353; 18.547), whirlwind (*Il.* 11.306), air (*Il.* 20.446), mountain glens (*Il.* 20.490), thick fog (*Il.* 21.7; *Od.* 9.144), and Tartaros (*Il.* 8.14; 8.481). It often indicates thick and luxuriant crops and vegetation (*Il.* 2.147; 4.383; 5.555; 9.151; 9.293; 11.415; 11.560; 15.606; 16.766; 20.491; 21.573; *Od.* 9.134; 17.316), and in the compounds βαθύκολπος and βαθύζωνος it is referred to women (*Il.* 9.594; 18.122; 18.339; 24.215; *Od.* 3.154). Only once are the φρένες called "deep:" yet the sentence simply means "deep inside the φρένες," and does not refer to depth in relation to a psychological process (*Il.* 19.125). Unlike Homer, Heraclitus indeed uses the term βαθύς with respect to the λόγος of the soul (fr. 45 DK): the limitless of the soul would thus be understood in terms of impenetrable depth. Cf. Democritus fr. 117: "we know nothing truly, for truth lies at the bottom (ἐν βυθῷ)." According to Wilamowitz (1931) I, 375 "Heraclitus is the first to have given serious thought to, and had something to say about, the soul in men." On Heraclitus fr. 45DK, see Marcovich (1967) 366-67 and Kahn (1979) 44, 126-30.

νοῦς, when it works as an organ of perception, never lets anything escape. The modern reader might picture these different levels of perception and elaboration both of sensations and of thoughts in terms of depth, where the φρένες would correspond to a more superficial level of elaboration, and the νοῦς to a deeper one. Yet, in the Homeric poems, what makes the difference is rather a different level of complexity, of situation management, of organizational ability.

Just as in the processes of λήθη, so also in the acts of μῆτις, the φρένες seem to represent the seat of mental activity, rather than an active psychological entity.[24] Both when μῆτις is the object of ὑφαίνω and when it is the object of φράζω the φρένες are at times explicitly indicated as the location for the mental activity of plotting;[25] moreover, the verb φράζω *per se* suggests some activity involving the φρένες. The νοῦς, on the other hand, seems to be capable of elaborating sensations and thoughts to a higher degree, to the point that it does not let them escape anymore. What matters for the contrivance of μῆτις are not so much knowledge, memory, or elaboration of past events, as the capacity of organizing the present situation. Both ὑφαίνω and φράζω, therefore, indicate both the ability of making sense of the present situation, and the

[24] Only once is θυμός considered the seat of μῆτις, at *Il.* 23.313. Nagy (1979) 45 §5 n.1 points out that φρένες is an attribute of μῆτις, and refers to the epithet ἐπίφρων that applies to μῆτις at *Od.* 19.326. Yet, rather than as "having φρένες," I prefer to consider the adjective ἐπίφρων as meaning "using φρένες," or "being able to use φρένες." In other words, μῆτις appears to be the object of φρένες, rather than a subject that is endowed with μῆτις.

[25] In *Il.* 9.423 urges the other Achaeans to think about a better plan (ἄλλην φράζωνται ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μῆτιν ἀμείνω); in *Od.* 4.739 Penelope sends a servant to Laertes to ask him whether he is devising some plan in his mind (εἰ δή πού τινα κεῖνος ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μῆτιν ὑφήνας). In both cases, φρένες are explicitly the seat of the mental activity indicated by the verbs ὑφαίνω and φράζω.

capacity of using this grasp of the present towards the elaboration of schemes and ideas, just as the weaver is able to elaborate a project by using and organizing certain threads.[26]

In the previous chapter we have noted that when an idea, an image, or a proposition, leave somebody's φρένες, this does not affect the person's intellectual capacities. This quite independent activity of φρένες and νοῦς also explains how the latter is not necessarily involved in the elaboration of μῆτις, while the φρένες are the consistent location for its activity. The νοῦς can at times play some role in the contrivance of μῆτις, and in the light of our considerations we can reasonably assume that the νοῦς can provide a plot with additional complexity, inasmuch as it is able to retain both sensory perceptions and ideas. To remain within the metaphor of weaving, if the φρένες organize the threads, the νοῦς can provide additional material, that comes from the elaboration and the memory of past situations.

The relationship between νοῦς and μῆτις appears to be equally strong when μῆτις is used in the abstract sense of rational ability, rather than in the concrete sense of scheme. The term νοῦς, as we have previously pointed out, generally presents a variety of meanings: on the one hand, it indicates a psychological entity, and on the other hand

[26] The observation that the Homeric heroes do not demonstrate any psychological "depth," and do not seem to be influenced by their previous history, has lead Auerbach to claim that they "wake up every morning as if it were the first day of their lives: their emotions, though strong, are simple and find expression instantly" (1953: 12). Auerbach's claim appears to oversimplify the psychological activity of the Homeric characters, that at times demonstrate a level of self-awareness much higher than what Auerbach seems to allow for. Yet ὑφαίνω and φράζω indeed appear to indicate rather superficial processes of elaboration.

it can mean "idea," "character," "intent," or "attitude."[27] In the Homeric passages where νοῦς is related to μῆτις, it consistently occurs in this latter sense: it never indicates an entity, but it refers either to an idea or to an attitude. When it occurs in the hendiadys νόος καὶ μῆτις, for instance, it indicates a careful and well pondered plan. Μῆτις, in these examples, seems to complete the sense of νοῦς by adding to it the idea of rational pondering, careful analysis of events, and at times – thought not necessarily – craftiness, deceitfulness, and secret contrivance of schemes.[28]

When νοῦς, in other instances, means "perception" or "temperament," μῆτις seems to indicate the ability to create a plan based on the data collected by the νοῦς. Thus Diomedes claims that

> σύν τε δύ' ἐρχομένω καί τε πρὸ ὃ τοῦ ἐνόησεν
> ὅππως κέρδος ἔῃ· μοῦνος δ' εἴ πέρ τε νοήσῃ
>
> ἀλλά τέ οἱ βράσσων τε νόος, λεπτὴ δέ τε μῆτις.
>
> When two men are together, one of them sees before the other
> when there is some opportunity; but if a man is alone, he may see,
> but his perception is weaker, and his wits are weaker.
>
> (*Il.* 10.224-26)

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[27] Cf. above, ch. 1 n.51. For a thorough study of νοῦς, see Bona (1959) esp. 4-9.

[28] Thus *Il.* 7.447 (Poseidon fears that humans will no longer reveal their plots and intentions to the gods); 15.509 (Ajax urges his comrades to defend the ships from Hector's attack, claiming that it is the best plan they can have); *Od.* 19.325-26 (Penelope mentions her reputation of outstanding prudence and good counsel). In a word-study like the present one it is quite risky to try and draw conclusions from instances of hendiadys: oftentimes, in fact, Homer does indeed string together near synonyms merely to fill out the line emphatically. Guido (1975-76) 7, for example, claims that the hendiadys νόος καὶ μῆτις in the passages mentioned above emphasizes "il persistere e il ripetersi di un unico concetto." As we will illustrate in the course of this section, however, νόος and μῆτις do not appear to be synonyms, but rather seem to complete each other's meaning.

When Antilochus apologizes to Menelaus for his own deceitful behavior during the chariot race, he uses a very similar line, and justifies himself by appealing to the temperament of young people:

> κραιπνότερος μὲν γάρ τε νόος, λεπτὴ δέ τε μῆτις.
>
> for hasty is the purpose, but weak[29] is the wit.
>
> (*Il.* 23.590)

In the first example, in which νοῦς and νοεῖν indicate the ability to process some sensorial perception, μῆτις represents the intelligence that allows the interpretation of the perceived elements, and its complexity follows directly the intensity and precision of the perception itself. In the second instance, where νοῦς refers rather to the temperament of a person, μῆτις is more broadly the rational faculty that grasps the present and prudently foresees the consequences of present actions in the future: in young people like Antilochus the νοῦς is hasty, and the capacity of designing a well constructed, pondered, and prudent plan is quite weak. Once again, there is a clear parallel between νοῦς and μῆτις, inasmuch as weak μῆτις corresponds to rushed νοῦς.[30]

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[29] The scholion to *Il.* 23.590 explains the adjective λεπτή as ἀσθενής. Although λεπτός generally means "thin, tenuous," my translation of both *Il.* 23.590 and *Il.* 10.226 reflects the suggestion of the scholion.

[30] Also in *Il.* 15.348-50 μῆτις directly follows νοῦς, when Hector threatens: "If I see (νοήσω) any man keeping back on the other side away from the ships, I will devise (μητίσομαι) his death." Schemes thus follow the sensorial perception and the grasp of the situation.

Thus far our investigation has pointed out that μῆτις, namely the rational principle that allows men and gods to be fully aware of the present, and consequently act prudently and cunningly, taking into account possible future consequences, may or may not involve deceitfulness (δόλος), and provides the νοῦς with additional cunning and foresight; when μῆτις indicates more specifically a cunning scheme, it is generally the object of some psychological elaboration (ὑφαίνω, φράζω), to which the νοῦς may or may not participate by adding further complexity. With these conclusions in mind, let us now consider the awkward and unusual condition of Odysseus on Circe's island.

2.2. Odysseus' loss of μῆτις on Circe's island

In the course of this section we will focus on Odysseus' strange admission of helplessness: in particular, we will show that it should be considered a genuine, rather than a counterfeit confession that hides some clever and unexpressed goal. In order to demonstrate the authenticity of Odysseus' unusual state of mind, we will follow the events as the Homeric text presents them to the audience: we will start off by considering the preceding events that lead Odysseus to such a shocking realization; we will then linger upon his sudden and surprising claim to be at a loss of μῆτις, and finally we will follow his subsequent behavior on Circe's island in order to examine how this new awareness modifies his conduct. As this survey will show, book 10 as a whole represents for the hero a moment of unusual and undeniable lack of μῆτις,

examples of which are not limited to the island of Aiaia, but are scattered throughout the entire book.

The picture of Odysseus as πολύμητις hero is his permanent characteristic in both Homeric poems. Yet in the *Odyssey* it coexists with his equally important image of the long suffering and wandering victim, as the proem (*Od.* 1.1-5) clearly points out.[31] The trickster, in other words, is at the same time represented as the most troubled and suffering hero. In no other episode of the *Odyssey*, however, does the tormented aspect of his character hinder his μῆτις. In fact, the direct experience of anguish and pain generally ensures his survival, inasmuch as Odysseus resorts to trickery to escape from dangers and ultimately to cheat death itself.[32]

This intriguing combination and balance of themes suddenly breaks off after the *Cyclopeia*. At this point in the narrative the hero's μῆτις appears to be overcome by his suffering, and he is left with sheer endurance with no expedients. Pietro Pucci

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[31] The relevance of the epithet πολύμητις in the proem of the *Odyssey* has been variously emphasized throughout the centuries, starting from Antisthenes (see scholia *ad Od.* 1.1). For a complete overview of literature on the proem of the *Odyssey*, see Walsh (1995) 385-410. Pucci (1982) 39-62 and (1987) 56-62 notes that the formulaic expressions that are typical for Odysseus in the *Odyssey* and mark him as "one persecuted by fateful destiny" are the same expressions that characterize Achilles in the *Iliad*. This formal parallelism emphasizes the opposite direction of their lives: while Achilles' suffering leads him to premature death, Odysseus' pain "is the consequence of his attempts to preserve life – his companions' and his own." (1987: 57). As we will point out in ch.4, p.239, Odysseus' labors make him a spiritual brother of Heracles in *Od.* 11.617-19. On Odysseus' μῆτις, see Detienne and Vernant (1978) 30 and Pucci (1987) 58. On the connection of the hero's resourcefulness and his ability to return home, see Frame (1978). Friedrich (1991) 22 emphasizes the role of τλημοσύνη combined with the hero's intellectual strength.

[32] In spite of his shrewd self-control, or possibly thanks to his cleverness, Odysseus at times realizes that he is indeed facing death. For instance on the raft at *Od.* 5.305 he realizes that death is imminent. Yet his skillfulness and cleverness guide him in the decision-making process at *Od.* 5.358-59, and finally allow him to survive and reach the land of the Phaeacians. On the traditional representation of death as being uncheatable, see Kahn (1980) 119-20. On the textual pleasure for the audience to see the hero approach and baffle death and then survive, see Pucci (1987) 68.

convincingly claims that "μῆτις sometimes must be not-μῆτις to produce the cycle." Odysseus' unwise decision to visit the Cyclops, for instance, allows Homer to represent him as a man of suffering, of resistance to suffering, and in the end of μῆτις: the narratological effect is that Odysseus' μῆτις is finally enhanced. Enduring pain and suffering in fact is not the hero's inevitable fate, but "enduring is a premise and an accomplice of his μῆτις."[33] Yet, quite significantly in my view, nowhere else in the *Odyssey* does the combination of μῆτις and endurance appear as unbalanced as it is after the encounter with Polyphemus.

2.2.1. Odysseus' helplessness during the Aeolian and the Laestrygonian adventures.

At the very beginning of book 10, Odysseus and his companions arrive on Aeolus' island, where they spend one month. When the hero expresses the desire to leave, Aeolus, the divine keeper of the winds, gives him a bag in which he binds "the paths of the blustering winds" (ἔνθα δὲ βυκτάων ἀνέμων κατέδησε κέλευθα, *Od.* 10.20), while he sends forth the favorable breath of Zephyrus. Thanks to this help, the crew sails undisturbed until their native land comes into sight. At this point Odysseus, who

[33] Pucci (1987) 73. Odysseus appears desperate and in need of resources on Calypso's island too (*Od.* 5.82-84, 151-53). Yet when the nymph offers him practical help (food, drink, and favorable wind, *Od.* 5.165-70) so that he may return to Ithaca safely, wily Odysseus does not quite trust the extraordinary help. He fears that some god may plot a new scheme against him (*Od.* 5.173-79). Therefore he does not appear completely helpless, but his reaction seems to prove that he is in full command of his mental faculties. Prudence and awareness of possible future outcome, as we have repeatedly pointed out, are fundamental elements of μῆτις. We can therefore reasonably infer that Odysseus is indeed unable to escape from Calypso's island counting on his own forces, but his μῆτις still protects him from possible dangers.

had kept the helm in his hand the whole time in order to avoid problems and arrive at Ithaca sooner, falls asleep.

The formulaic adjective "sweet" referred to the sleep here should not be misleading (ἔνθ' ἐμὲ μὲν γλυκὺς ὕπνος ἐπέλλαβε κεκμηῶτα, *Od.* 10.31): Odysseus explicitly blames sleep for their subsequent catastrophe,[34] and the fact that he had stayed awake for the whole duration of the navigation, namely for an astounding nine days, is a clear sign of how dangerous he knew sleep could be. While Odysseus is asleep, in fact, his curious and distrustful comrades open Aeolus' bag of winds, whereupon the winds flow forth howling and raise a storm that carries the crew out to sea and away from Ithaca.

Although the long vigil constitutes a very good and plausible excuse for Odysseus' sudden and imprudent slumber, the vivid picture we get is that of an exhausted Odysseus, whose traditional μῆτις is completely inactive: while he sleeps, in fact, his mind is asleep too, and is not able to counteract the companions' wicked advice. When, at the outbreak of the tempest, Odysseus wakes up, so should his μῆτις (we would think): his only reaction, instead, seems to be uncertainty (μερμήριξα) as to whether he should jump into the sea and die, or suffer and live. As we will show at greater length when dealing with *Od.* 10.192-93, μερμηρίζω does not imply any specific mental elaboration, but simply indicates some sort of rudimentary mental activity. Odysseus, in other words, is simply aware of two possible courses of action, yet the verb μερμηρίζω

[34] At *Od.* 10.68-69, in fact, this sudden sleep is referred to as "cruel" (σχέτλιος). On the connection between sleep and death, see below, §4.4.1.

does not indicate any actual pondering of the different possibilities.[35] His decision to suffer and live, in fact, is presented rather as a fact than as the outcome of either μερμηρίζειν or some other decision making process:

> αὐτὰρ ἐγώ γε
> ἐγρόμενος κατὰ θυμὸν ἀμύμονα μερμήριξα,
> ἠὲ πεσὼν ἐκ νηὸς ἀποφθίμην ἐνὶ πόντῳ,
> ἦ ἀκέων τλαίην καὶ ἔτι ζωοῖσι μετείην.
> ἀλλ' ἔτλην καὶ ἔμεινα, καλυψάμενος δ' ἐνὶ νηΐ
> κείμην·
>
> but as for me,
> I awoke, and pondered in my noble heart
> whether I should throw myself from the ship and die in the sea,
> or endure in silence and still remain among the living.
> However, I endured and resisted, covered myself up
> and lay down in the ship.
>
> (*Od.* 10.49-54)

In a similar way, once the tempest carries the ships back to Aeolus' island, no mental process, but necessity – due to the lack of other resources – urges Odysseus to return to the palace and ask Aeolus for renewed help. Instead of his customary μῆτις, all he can offer is rather the "gentle words" he addresses Aeolus with (μαλακοῖσι καθαπτόμενος ἐπέεσσιν, *Od.* 10.70).

The formula "addressing with gentle words" recurs in another Homeric passage that confirms how crucial gentle words were in supplication scenes in order to gain the

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[35] On μερμηρίζειν-scenes, see Arend (1933) 106-15. On scenes of introspection in the *Odyssey*, see Pucci (1987) 66-75. Pucci quite appropriately notes that Odysseus in *Od.* 10.49-54 chooses to endure and live, but "as he drops to the ground, silent and hidden, his condition mirrors, so to speak, the other course of action, death." (1987: 71). The poet enhances the opposition of two alternatives by presenting us with this contrast: the mere decision of enduring silently resembles the course of action that Odysseus rejected. Homer thus amplifies the bitterness of what sounds like utter defeat for a Homeric hero: silence and stillness.

benevolence of the addressee, especially if he is or may be enraged. In *Il.* 1.582, in fact, Hephaestus urges Hera to address Zeus with gentle words:

> ἀλλὰ σὺ τὸν ἐπέεσσι καθάπτεσθαι μαλακοῖσιν·
> αὐτίκ' ἔπειθ' ἵλαος Ὀλύμπιος ἔσσεται ἡμῖν.
>
> But address him with gentle words;
> so the Olympian will be gracious to us.
>
> (*Il.* 1.582-83)

Zeus' rage towards Hera (*Il.* 1.560-70), which upsets all the gods, could end up overturning the entire world, since it might disrupt the relationship among the gods, and have devastating consequences on the life of the mortal men too. Hephaestus therefore advises Hera to soothe Zeus' anger and thus gain his benevolence.

Both in the Iliadic passage and in Odysseus' return to Aeolus' island, a situation of emergency arouses the need for gentle words; and in both passages the gentle words aim to capture the benevolence of somebody who can solve the situation (Zeus can give up his rage, and Aeolus can give Odysseus additional help). The emergency in the *Iliad* is phrased in terms of time: the sooner Zeus's anger will cease, the better for mortals and immortals; an urgent solution is therefore necessary to prevent him from harming somebody. On Aeolus' island, instead, the emergency is not stated clearly, and it is only hinted at by the powerful expression μαλακοῖσι καθαπτόμενος ἐπέεσσιν (*Od.* 10.70). Καθάπτω is the verb that generally indicates the suppliant's act of embracing the knees, and the scholia confirm that we are dealing with a remarkable supplication

scene.[36] The picture of Odysseus as supplicant is quite unusual, although not unique in the poem. When the hero arrives at the Phaeacian court, for instance, he follows Athena's advice (*Od.* 7.54-66) and supplicates queen Arete so that she may grant him an escort to Ithaca (*Od.* 7.142-52). Both on that occasion and with Aeolus, a picture of Odysseus as suffering and wandering hero in need of help supplants that of the πολύμητις hero. Yet with significant differences. First of all, on Scheria Odysseus was able to count on Athena's comforting and guiding support. Secondly, in his appeal to Arete, he does not mention his status either of king of Ithaca or of Trojan hero, but only his long anonymous suffering (*Od.* 7.147, 152).[37] His πολύμητις nature thus cleverly reveals only the troubled aspect of his character. With a rhetorical expedient he

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[36] Schol. *ad Od.* 10.70: οὐ καθάπτεται γὰρ αὐτὸν, ἀλλ' ἱκετεύει. The expression μαλακοῖσι ἐπέεσσιν occurs in other passages where persuasion is involved (*Il.* 6.337; *Od.* 10.422; 16.286; 19.5), yet only in *Il.* 1.582 and *Od.* 10.70 is it used in conjunction with the verb καθάπτω. On supplication scenes in Homer, see Gould (1973) 74-103, Pedrick (1982) 125-40, Thornton (1984) 113-47, and Crotty (1994).

[37] On Odysseus' supplication to Arete, see Crotty (1994) 134-35. As De Jong (2001) 171 notes, nowhere does the poet explain the reason for Odysseus' reticence. This intriguing instance of ellipsis has spawned much scholarly discussion. Rose (1969) 391 claims that Odysseus initially conceals his identity because "in order to avoid a hostile reaction he must make himself believable as the Trojan-War hero." Austin (1972) 5 argues that before revealing his identity Odysseus must test the sincerity of his hosts' hospitality, and ensure that his own name is known in the bardic repertoy at court. Reinhardt (1996) 122-23 believes that, if the first day at Scheria involved also the recognition, "the day would become too full of too many different things." See also Kilb (1973) 78, Dolin (1973) 274. The most extensive discussion of this question is to be found in the study of Fenik (1974) 7-55, in which the author observes that "all important identifications in the *Odyssey* are subjected to considerable delay" (p.16). These delays aim at producing an elaborate range of emotions and ironies; thus, concludes Fenik, it would "contradict an unchanging bent of the *Odyssey* if the hero *did* answer Arete and name himself directly" (p.53). See also Friedrich (1975) 42-43, Murnaghan (1987) 8, and Webber (1989) 1-13. Goldhill (1991) 28-37 agrees with Fenik that the deferral of the answer to Arete's question allows the final announcement of his name to become a finely prepared dramatic climax. Yet Odysseus has already been offered his trip home, gifts, and Nausicaa's hand before he reveals his identity and tells his story. "Even if he receives further gifts after his story, it is not merely in order to raise Odysseus' statut among the Phaeacians that his name is deferred. (...) To say 'I am Odysseus' is to begin the story that tells what it is to be Odysseus." (p.30) Goldhill seems to underestimate the fact that at that point in the narrative Odysseus is still very much dependent on Alcinous' goodwill; yet he is right in emphasizing how the central episode of Odysseus' story, namely the *Cyclopeia,* revolves crucially around the use of the proper name.

discloses only his long distress, while he conceals his identity and therewith his outstanding and renowned cleverness and deceitfulness.[38]

In Aeolia the situation appears quite different. No divinity guides Odysseus, and the poet does not hint at any particular cleverness on his part. We are simply told that the hero returns to Aeolus' palace with his heart in distress (ἀχνύμενος κῆρ, *Od.* 10.67), explains briefly the cause of his plight (baneful sleep and the comrades' reprehensible behavior) and then switches to a wheedling tone, asking for help. The hero does not resort to any rhetorical expedient to captivate Aeolus' benevolence, although his amazement (ἐθάμβεον, *Od.* 10.63)[39] and the fear that some divinity cursed him (τίς τοι κακὸς ἔχραε δαίμων; *Od.* 10.64) would require a quite elaborate and clever explanation.[40] Odysseus' complete and plain sincerity at this point is both unusual and

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[38] When responding to Euryalus' reckless words at *Od.* 8.179-83, Odysseus contrasts his former athletic skills with his current wretchedness. Although he is held by woes, it is a point of pride that he is not ignorant of ordeals. As Crotty (1994) 166 justly points out, "grief is at once something that oppresses him and a part of what makes Odysseus who he is: it is an achievement and part of his excellence." When he narrates his adventures to the Phaeacian audience, his sufferings do not appear to be imposed on him, but become distinctive of his personality. His narrative allows him to share his suffering with others, thus instituting a link with the audience. Yet, while Odysseus never denies his grieves, with the Phaeacians he is able to use them rhetorically, almost embracing them as part of his mortal condition.

[39] For amazement at the sight of a visitor, see *Il.* 9.193 (Achilles does not expect to receive the visit of Ajax and Odysseus), 11.777 (Achilles is surprised to see Nestor and Odysseus), 24.483-84 (Achilles is astonished when he receives Priam's visit); *Od.* 16.12-14 (Eumaeus receives the visit of Telemachus), 24.101-4 (the spirits of Achilles and Agamemnon are surprised to see the spirits of the Suitors arrive in the Underworld), 24.391-92 (Dolios and his sons do not expect to see Odysseus).

[40] At *Od.* 11.355-61, Odysseus responds to Alcinous' invitation to stay until the next day saying that if he should bid him to remain a year until he provides an escort and hospitality gifts, he would be willing to do so. Odysseus realizes that he is still radically dependent on his hosts' benevolence, and his words are plainly motivated by his need to obtain the king's good will. As Crotty (1994) 160 points out, "what is striking about Odysseus' response is that he shows that he has every reason to lie or distort the truth in order to win the Phaeacians' good will." The lying of wandering men, on the other hand, is often taken for granted, not only in the Homeric poems. See e.g. *Od.* 14.124-25, 365; cf. Strabo 1.2.23: "everyone who tells the story of his own wandering is an ἀλαζών (wanderer/ braggart)." Goldhill (1991) 38-39 in this respect points out the irony of *Od.* 14.156-57, where Odysseus introduces his second Cretan story

out of place, and emphasizes the emergency of a situation of utter helplessness: when no other resources are left for him to use, he can only resort to supplicating his interlocutor.

The parallel with the passage in *Il.* 1 suggests that Odysseus' gentle words probably aim to soothe Aeolus' anger, just as Hera's words aimed to appease Zeus' rage. At first sight, therefore, we might interpret Odysseus' gentle words as a sign of μῆτις, aimed to prevent Aeolus' rage. Yet the text seems to suggest the opposite, since Odysseus' words are expressly the cause of Aeolus' anger, and thus constitute an additional clue to his helplessness.

His words, usually the expression of his μῆτις, seem to have lost their rhetorical power to persuade, and paradoxically provoke the very furious reaction in Aeolus that they ought to avert. If his μῆτις were functioning properly, it would endow Odysseus with a good grasp of the present situation, including the social context in which he is acting. The "gentle" form of his words would be appropriate in a hospitality scene, but is less so once they are uttered upon the failure of Aeolus' gift: the situation does not admit the request for a second hospitality gift, and the hero does not seem to understand it. The inappropriateness of Odysseus' words therefore causes the initial, startled silence

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with an expression of distaste for deceptive wanderers' tales, and with a claim of absolute veracity. Yet no expedient of this sort is displayed in Aeolia. At *Od.* 8.170-75, Odysseus claims that the shapeliness of speech is granted by a god, makes a man preeminent at the assemblies, and is able to evince grace (χάρις, *Od.* 8.175). He may have gained this awareness after his adventure in Aeolia, but what is sure is that Odysseus' words with Aeolus do not display any shapeliness or beauty, which may help him gain his benevolence. Rather, they are just a plain and unsophisticated request for help whose only effect is to upset Aeolus.

of Aeolus' family (*Od.* 10.63, 71): the absence of a "gentle" and appropriate dialogue between host and guest could not be more tangible.[41]

Moreover, Odysseus' unusually honest and candid speech proves not only that his formal "gentleness" does not correspond to a good grasp of the real situation, but demonstrates both his complete lack of astuteness and his failure to foresee the immediate consequences of his words. He does nothing to hide what could be interpreted as negligence or even ill-fate and the gods' hatred. Once Aeolus learns the disastrous consequences both of Odysseus's sleep and of his companions' wrongdoings, in fact, he immediately interprets them as a sign of divine malevolence (τίς τοι κακὸς ἔχραε δαίμων; *Od.* 10.64), and does not hesitate to chase the hero away from his island (*Od.* 10.72-75).

In the Aeolian episode, therefore, Odysseus certainly does not stand out for his μῆτις, as we can infer from his behavior. However, his account in the first person does not seem to indicate that he realizes yet that something is happening to his νοῦς. The same is true for the Laestrygonian episode that follows immediately, although at first glance Odysseus seems in this case to be endowed with some sort of μῆτις. We might think, in fact, that precisely his μῆτις suggests to him that he should keep his ship

[41] The use of gentle words, and the very expression μαλακοῖσι (...) ἐπέεσσιν ("with soft words") are formulaic, and typically recur in supplication scenes. On the formal property of supplication see Arend (1933); Gould (1973) 74-103, emphasizes gestures and pays less attention to the suppliant's speech; Crotty (1994) 21, 92, 104. The very formularity of this expression may deprive it of any particular significance. Yet the effect that it creates, namely the contrast between gentle form and inappropriate content, is quite powerful. Odysseus seems to follow the ceremony of supplication, but he does so only in a very superficial and rudimental fashion: his appeal to Aeolus, in fact, results in a disaster.

outside the harbor and moor it to a rock at the end of it (*Od.* 10.95-96), while all the other ships enter the harbor (*Od.* 10.91-94), which will soon become an inescapable, deadly trap for all of their crews.

In the light of our considerations of μῆτις, however, we can observe that in the Laestrygonian episode Odysseus does not demonstrate the high level of elaborate foresight that μῆτις generally involves. Rather, his decision to keep his ship outside the harbor may be based merely on some perception of danger, and on the intention to avoid disasters like in the cave of Polyphemus.[42]

In the *Cyclopeia*, which is explicitly considered the highest expression of the hero's μῆτις (*Od.* 9.413-22; 20.20), Odysseus was concerned about all of his comrades. When his rationality is overcome by ἀτασθαλία, as we will observe in the next chapter, he does put the lives of his comrades at stake in the name of his curiosity; once in the cave of the Cyclops, however, his cunning indeed aims to save as many companions as he possibly can, and μῆτις is explicitly mentioned in this respect.

> αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ βούλευον, ὅπως ὄχ' ἄριστα γένοιτο,
> εἴ τιν' ἑταίροισιν θανάτου λύσιν ἠδ' ἐμοὶ αὐτῷ
> εὑροίμην· πάντας δὲ δόλους καὶ μῆτιν ὕφαινον,
> ὡς τε περὶ ψυχῆς· μέγα γὰρ κακὸν ἐγγύθεν ἦεν.
>
> as for myself I kept on puzzling to think what the best plan would be,
> if I might find some way of escape from death for my companions
> and for myself: and I schemed all manner of wiles and cunning,
> as in a matter of life and death; for great was the evil that was near us.
>
> (*Od.* 9.420-23)

[42] Clay (1983) 114: "The outcome of the visit to Polyphemus has taught Odysseus to balance curiosity with caution."

In the Laestrygonian episode, instead, Odysseus does not seem to think about the fate of the other ships, and only manages to save his own skin. No particular μῆτις appears to be necessary to achieve this. In a similar way, it is not necessary to ascribe to μῆτις the idea that, in order to find out what sort of people inhabit the Laestrygonian land, they should follow the smoke rising from the ground (*Od.* 10.99). Μῆτις generally implies a much higher and subtle level of understanding, foresight, and cunning, and the decision to follow the smoke can easily be explained as a recourse to some sort of sensorial memory.

As we have observed in the previous chapter, with regard to processes of memory and forgetfulness in the Homeric poems, a sign that is immediately easy to grasp, and thus does not escape somebody's notice, seems to have an impact on the φρένες. The νοῦς, on the other hand, seems at times to elaborate and store sensorial data, and at times it functions as an organ of perception – yet not so much with the senses as through a mental perception or realization. Following this pattern of psychological activity, we can reasonably ascribe Odysseus' decision to follow the smoke to a psychoactive process that is based on some previous memory engraved in his mind, which connects the smoke to a fire, and therefore to human presence. Some sort of rudimental memory, therefore, is what allows Odysseus to take action. Μῆτις, on the other hand, does not seem to be based upon either memory or any previous knowledge.

Some sheer perception of danger, most likely based on previous experiences, can also reasonably justify Odysseus' decision not to go out to explore himself, but rather to

send out some explorers (*Od.* 10.100).[43] The *Cyclopeia* is once again a good comparison, inasmuch as in that episode Odysseus did not show any hesitation, and did not question his leading role in the exploration of the foreign land with his bravest comrades (*Od.* 9.172-76; 193-96). When the Laestrygonians start to butcher Odysseus' companions, however, his role as a leader fades away, and he does not resort to μῆτις to save his comrades. He does not rush to the rescue of his men like a good leader should do, but saves his own skin like any average man would have done in the same situation:

> ὄφρ' οἱ τοὺς ὄλεκον λιμένος πολυβενθέος ἐντός,
> τόφρα δ' ἐγὼ ξίφος ὀξὺ ἐρυσσάμενος παρὰ μηροῦ
> τῷ ἀπὸ πείσματ' ἔκοψα νεὸς κυανοπρῴροιο·
> αἶψα δ' ἐμοῖσ' ἑτάροισιν ἐποτρύνας ἐκέλευσα
> ἐμβαλέειν κώπῃσ', ἵν' ὑπὲκ κακότητα φύγοιμεν·
> οἱ δ' ἅμα πάντες ἀνέρριψαν, δείσαντες ὄλεθρον.
>
> While they were slaying them within the deep harbor,
> I drew my sharp sword from beside my thigh,
> and cut with it the cables of my own dark-prowed ship;
> and quickly urging my men I ordered them
> to fall to their oars, that we might escape from out our evil plight:
> and they all rowed with all their might in fear of death.
>
> (*Od.* 10.125-30)

What complicates our understanding of Odysseus' mental activity in book 10 is that, as readers, we suddenly observe the hero from the outside, without having any insight into why things are performed in a certain way. In the account of his adventures to the Phaeacians, Odysseus provides the audience with indications that make them (and us)

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[43] In contrast to Odysseus' unusual lack of μῆτις, the Laestrygonian Antiphates seems to devise at least some rudimentary scheme, inasmuch as he "devised for them woeful destruction" (τοῖσιν ἐμήσατο λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον, *Od.* 10.115).

participate in his reasoning and decision-making processes, as long as his mind was functioning properly. In the Cyclopean adventure, for instance, we are guided almost step by step through the psychological itinerary that leads the hero to the blinding of Polyphemus. Now, all of a sudden, we have to observe from outside, without participating in Odysseus' stream of thoughts. The reason for this change must be sought in the fact that Odysseus is both the narrator and the subject of his own adventures.[44]

Is Odysseus-narrator intentionally and skillfully omitting details from his story for some reason, or does he tell what happened to him to the best of his knowledge? In the first scenario we would be dealing with a more conventional picture of πολύμητις Odysseus, whose clever use of words aims to persuade and manipulate his audience; in this case, he would understandably omit details and rush through the narration of events that would portray him as a bad leader in the eyes of the Phaeacian audience. The second possibility is that the text itself may hint at Odysseus' disturbance: we do not participate in Odysseus' mental activity, because his mental activity is limited, flawed, partial, corrupted. The haziness and imprecision of his

[44] On problems related to Odysseus' narration in the first person, see Suerbaum (1968) esp. 156-77. Some anti-unitarian scholars argued that Odysseus' first-person narration is based on a more ancient story expressed in the third person. La Roche (1863) 194 hypothesized an original third-person narration not only for books 10-12, but also for book 9. Kirchhoff (1879^2) 292-99 even attempted to rewrite *Od.* 12.366-91 in the allegedly original third person singular. Wilamowitz (1884) 230 embraced Kirchhoff's theory. Focke (1943) 156-269 claimed that in books 9-12 of the *Odyssey* it is possible to identify clearly (i) ancient tales of wanderings, (ii) reworking of a later poet, and (iii) interpolations of a last poet. See Suerbaum (1968) 158 n.14 for thorough bibliographical reference of this debate among scholars towards the end of the nineteenth century. On the first person narrative, see also Maehler (1963) 9-34, Frontisi-Ducroux (1976) 538-48, Stewart (1976) 146-95, Moulton (1977) 145, Thalmann (1984) 157, Walsh (1984) 19.

account would therefore reflect his lack of awareness of what is happening to him: the less he understands his disrupted condition, the more he is unable to talk about it, and his account becomes confused and sketchy.

Alcinous at *Od.* 11.363-69 makes the question even more difficult to address. The Phaeacian king recognizes a certain shapeliness (μορφή) in the account of Odysseus' adventures. Homer tends to consider any arrangement of events that differs from their succession in reality as the equivalent of a lie. In the Homeric poems, the "point-by-point" sequence of events is typically regarded as the form for a truthful narration, and vice versa the truth is considered the content of an ordered narrative sequence.[45] Referring to Odysseus' stories, Alcinous thus praises his ordered and therefore truthful narration. Unlike his lying tales, Odysseus' account of his adventures does not overturn the sequence of events, and it does not mix facts and fiction:[46] from a formal point of view, his words correspond to a truthful narration. Yet, as the scholion to *Od.* 13.294

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[45] Homer never applies expressions that indicate a "point-by-point" narration (e.g. κατὰ μοῖραν, κατὰ κόσμον) to Odysseus' lying tales. Macleod (1983) 5 points out that expressions such as κατὰ κόσμον in Odysseus' praise of Demodocus refer "to the truth rather than artistry of what it told, or at least not to the artistry in isolation from the truth." See also Verdenius (1983) 25 and Walsh (1984) 7. According to Goldhill (1991) 48, Alcinous says that Odysseus does not resemble a charlatan (*Od.* 11.363-64), "he is not like typical wandering men who construct lies of which there can be no seeing and testing (although it is not clear how this is different from Odysseus' tales." Pratt (1993) 85-93 claims that Odysseus' lying tales are indeed κατὰ μοῖραν: yet there is no passage in the Homeric poems in which the expressions κατὰ μοῖραν and κατὰ κόσμον are applied to lies. Gill (1993) 70-71 and Finkelberg (1998) 129-30 sharply criticize Pratt's approach, and emphasize that a "point-to-point" narration is both a feature of epic song and the pattern for all veracious narrative. On false tales that resemble the truth, see *Od.* 19.203, Goldhill (1991) 45 and Finkelberg (1998) 149. On Odysseus' shapeliness of speech see also *Od.* 8.170-75.

[46] On the idea that Odysseus' lying tales mix facts and fiction, see Walcot (1977) 12-13, Goldhill (1991) 37-47, Bowie (1993) 19-20, Pratt (1993) 55-94, Finkelberg (1998) 149 and n.42. On their difference from true stories told by Odysseus, see Emlyn-Jones (1986) 1-10. On Odysseus' Cretan lies, see also Trahman (1952) 31-43, Marg (1957) 12, Todorov (1977) 59, Maronitis (1981) 117-34, Haft (1984) 289-306.

suggests, the need to lie may be rather pressing when traveling in foreign lands, and possibly among enemies. Moreover, the fundamental thing for a guest like Odysseus at the Phaeacian court is to combine exciting material with a clever delivery, in order to give the best possible impression and to gain the greatest possible benefit. Clever delivery, in this case, would most likely entail the omission of embarrassing details.

The text does not seem to present elements that exclude either interpretation of Odysseus' vague narration. Yet both interpretations hint at some sort of disturbance. If we accept the first possibility, we should infer that Odysseus-narrator realizes that something was very wrong with his behavior as leader, and decides to omit it rather than give explanations to his audience. If we follow the second interpretation, instead, the disturbance that affected the Odysseus-subject of the adventures hinders the possibility for a precise account by Odysseus-narrator.

The haziness and vagueness of Odysseus' account is particularly evident in the Circe episode,[47] although on Circe's island Odysseus begins to realize that he is not quite the same cunning man he has always been. As in the Laestrygonian episode, following a pretty standard procedure when arriving in a foreign land, he climbs a high rock and looks around, hoping to see some sign of human work, or to hear a human voice (*Od.* 10.97-99, 10.145-49); and similarly to what happened in the Laestrygonian land, he sees some smoke rising from the ground (*Od.* 10.99, 10.149),[48] and understands that in order

[47] The density and at times obscurity of the Circe episode has been variously noted. See *Introduction*, pp. 9-10.

[48] While on Aiaia Odysseus is alone in his exploration, in the Laestrygonian episode he uses the first person plural to say "we only saw some smoke rising from the ground" (καπνὸν δ' οἷον ὁρῶμεν ἀπὸ

to learn who inhabits that land he should find out where the smoke comes from. Once again we are not told why and how Odysseus decides not to go out and explore, and the mental process that is responsible for this decision is only expressed by two rather general and vague terms that say nothing about either the activity or the condition of his νοῦς (μερμήριξα, *Od.* 10.151; φρονέοντι, *Od.* 10.153). We are told only that Odysseus preferred to return to the ships, provide a meal for his comrades, and send them out to explore; he thus kills a wondrous stag and takes it to the ships.[49] No μῆτις is involved in the killing of the stag, and Odysseus ascribes his successful hunt to some sort of divine pity instead:

> ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ σχεδὸν ἦα κιὼν νεὸς ἀμφιελίσσης,
> καὶ τότε τίς με θεῶν ὀλοφύρατο μοῦνον ἐόντα,
> ὅς ῥά μοι ὑψίκερων ἔλαφον μέγαν εἰς ὁδὸν αὐτὴν
> ἧκεν
>
> But when, as I went, I was near to the curved ship,
> then some god took pity on me in my loneliness,
> and sent a great, high-horned stag into my very path.
>
> (*Od.* 10.156-59)

χθονὸς ἀΐσσοντα, *Od.* 10.99). He thus suggests the idea that the decision-making process is almost a corporate action, rather than his own initiative. A similar democratization of actions appears on Aiaia, although Odysseus explores the island by himself: in a difficult situation that resembles the one in the Laestrygonian land, he urges his comrades to think about how to save the situation (φραζώμεθα, *Od.* 10.192). Maybe thanks to this democratic process, Eurylochus is able to be a leader equal to Odysseus on Aiaia (*Od.* 10.205-7).

[49] The wondrousness of the stag, emphasized by Odysseus with the expression δεινοῖο πελώρου (*Od.* 10.168), corresponds to the fact that the animal was allegedly sent by some god. Alternatively, it can reasonably be considered as a sign of Odysseus' daze. As we will observe repeatedly in the course of this dissertation, the gods seem to abandon Odysseus after the *Cyclopeia*. I therefore prefer to consider his claim that the stag was sent by some god as the personal point of view of Odysseus-subject of his adventures, or possibly to a desire of Odysseus-narrator to make a good impression with his Phaeacian audience by mentioning some divine favor. For the similarities between the way the stag is depicted here and the traditional representation of an Iliadic hero, see Beck (1965) 5. On the killing of the stag, and on the (rather unfounded) hypothesis that it was originally a man, whom Circe transformed with her sorcery, see Roessel (1989) 31-36.

It is at this point, after everybody has satisfied their hunger, that Odysseus speaks to his comrades and utters his sudden and shocking appeal for μῆτις (*Od.* 10.190-97), which clearly indicates his realization that something unusual is indeed happening to him. He loses his sense of direction (*Od.* 10.190-92), claims that there is/will be no more μῆτις (*Od.* 10.192-93), then devises what could be considered a plan (namely to explore the island following the smoke that he saw, *Od.* 10.194-97), but as we have noted for the Laestrygonian episode μῆτις is not indispensable to devise such a rudimentary scheme. But let us consider Odysseus' words more closely.

2.2.2. Odysseus' appeal for μῆτις at *Od.* 10.192-93.

On Aiaia the πολύμητις hero first demonstrates some sort of befuddlement when he claims not to know where the east and the west are. [50] He then confirms his helplessness when he quite oddly appeals for μῆτις. This explicit admission of his unusual loss of resources could be at first sight interpreted as mere pretence:[51] Odysseus would thus

[50] The apparent contradiction between the claim that they do not know where east and west lie on the one hand (*Od.* 10.190-91), and on the other hand both the mention of the sunrise just a few lines above (*Od.* 10.187) and the geographic note at 12.3-4, has been variously noted. Schwartz (1924) 52 claimed that the fairy-tale atmosphere of the episode is responsible for its textual problems. Lesky (1948) esp. 61 attributed the textual incongruity to the Homeric use of formulae. Lesky's suggestion has generally been the most successful one, and the incongruity has been generally solved by assuming that line 187 is "merely a standard formula for daybreak, and Odysseus at this point does not yet know the exact position of Aeaea." Thus Heubeck, (1989) 54. See also Zambarbieri (2002) 707. On the theme of orientation as it relates to μῆτις, see Nagy (1979) 345.

[51] This is for instance the interpretation given by Heubeck (1989) 54, who claims that Odysseus' words already hint at a possible way out: it is necessary to find some orientation by following the smoke they see on the island. Odysseus' pretence would thus have the powerful rhetorical effect of emphasizing the emergency of the situation. This intriguing suggestion would match Odysseus' traditional cunning,

know exactly what the best thing to do is, and he would use this trick to let the companions understand that there is really no way out, unless somebody explores the island. His very claim to have no μῆτις would thus be a form of μῆτις itself, aimed both to urge his exhausted comrades to explore Aiaia, and to prevent future complaints. Yet this interpretation is not sustainable for two different reasons. On the one hand, as our present investigation is pointing out, there are other passages, both before and after Odysseus' appeal for a μῆτις, which confirm his unusual helplessness. On the other hand, the form in which his claim is expressed seems to indicate a more intricate and ambiguous situation than a simulated lack of ideas. Not only this is the only case in which Odysseus is at a loss of ideas, as he openly admits; a closer look at the text will show that the way in which he utters his lack of ideas is quite awkward too:[52]

ἀλλὰ φραζώμεθα θᾶσσον,
εἴ τις ἔτ' ἔσται μῆτις· ἐγὼ δ' οὐκ οἴομαι εἶναι.

but let us straightway take thought,
if there will still be some μῆτις: I think there is none.
(*Od.* 10.192-93)

Although Odysseus urges his companions to think about how to save the situation, and in so doing he uses a verb (φράζω) which is commonly used to indicate the elaboration of a plan (μῆτις), μῆτις here is not the grammatical object of φραζώμεθα,

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but does not take into account the hero's unusual condition of helplessness that we have variously pointed out in his adventures after the *Cyclopeia*.

[52] In *Od.* 19.157-58 Penelope expresses a similar lack of ideas in terms of μῆτις, after the Suitors found out about her weaving deceit. Yet in her words μῆτις is used in a much clearer and less ambiguous way, inasmuch as she claims not to find any other device to face the Suitors (οὔτε τιν' ἄλλην μῆτιν ἔθ' εὑρίσκω), once her original trick was brought to the light. Μῆτις, therefore, is here an actual plan, rather than a mental disposition.

but rather the subject of ἔσται and εἶναι. Odysseus' helplessness is so deep and absolute that he even questions the existence of μῆτις, where μῆτις could ambiguously mean either an actual plan (in which case it would be awkward to state in such absolute terms that "there is/will be no plan"), or cleverness in general (in which case the verb φράζω would be superfluous, since μῆτις as a mental disposition does not need to be elaborated).[53] Moreover, by using the future tense ἔσται, Odysseus almost asks whether or not he will ever regain his own distinctive characteristic, and thus wonders whether he will ever be Odysseus again.

The utter naiveté of Odysseus' appeal may prompt in the audience the suspect that he is disingenuous, rather than disarmingly sincere. Yet the parallel with other passages in book 10 – such as the inappropriate appeal to Aeolus and the failure to protect his men from the Laestrygonians – unquestionably confirms the hero's genuine helplessness. Moreover, the form of Odysseus' appeal at *Od.* 10.192-93 seems to express his dismayed and tragic questions about what is happening to him. One thing is for sure, in light of our previous considerations: the lack of μῆτις implies on the one hand the impossibility of resorting to helpful δόλοι, and on the other hand it undermines both the ability of the νοῦς to perceive reality in a correct and precise way, and the rationality and prudence that should control and direct one's own temperament.

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[53] Both Detienne and Vernant (1978) 25 n.32, and Nagy (1979) 320 note the connection between μῆτις and φράζω. Yet μῆτις is never the active subject of φράζω, but only its object, namely the idea that results from a process of elaboration.

Yet Odysseus is still able to evaluate and ponder different options, at least to a certain degree: three times in book 10 and once in book 11,[54] in fact, he explicitly stops to think about what he ought to do. As we have anticipated above with regard to Odysseus' introspection at *Od.* 10.49-54, this process of deliberation is expressed by the verb μερμηρίζω, a verb that generally indicates the kind of pondering that aims at some practical decision in a moment of uncertainty and confusion.[55] Μερμηρίζω is at times assimilated to φρονέω (*Od.* 18.90-93; 20.41-43; 22.333-38; 24.235-39), inasmuch as both indicate the psychological ability to elaborate thoughts and ideas in general, whose seat is in the φρένες.[56] Yet μερμηρίζειν, we should specify at this point,

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[54] *Od.* 10.50 (after the comrades have opened Aeolus' bag of winds, Odysseus wonders whether it is better for him to jump into the sea and die, or remain alive and suffer); 10.151 (on Circe's island, Odysseus sees some smoke and is uncertain whether he should go and find out where it comes from); 10.438 (when Eurylochos calls Odysseus ἀτάσθαλος, the hero is hesitant whether he should kill him or not); 11.204 (when Odysseus encounters the spirit of his dead mother, he would like to hug her, but is hesitant about what to do).

[55] If the etymology reported by the scholia is correct, μερμηρίζω would originally mean "divide up one's mind," hence ponder various possible options. See schol. *in Od.*1 hypothesis to verse 427, line 1. Yet the Homeric use of the term rather seems to hint at troubles and cares. More precisely, there are two Homeric meanings of μερμηρίζω: (i) to be troubled or anxious over something (usually a decision between two alternatives); and (ii) to trouble oneself to do something, namely to devise. Rather than a division, the stem of the verb thus seems to indicate anxiety. On the conventionality of scenes of introspection, see Arend (1933) 106-15 and Voigt (1972^2). Generally, scenes of introspections follow three patterns: a) the character ponders alternatives and then chooses what seems best for him (*Il.* 2.5, 13.458, 14.161, 16.652, *Od.* 5.360, 6.145); b) the alternative is mentioned, but the decision is imposed by an outside character (in the *Iliad* generally a god, as in *Il.* 1.188-214; see also *Od.* 20.18-32); c) the verb μερμηρίζω simply means "to think" and does not involve any particular alternative (*Od.* 2.93 = 24.128). Pucci (1987) 69 emphasizes that, in spite of their conventionality, these scenes represent "a deep tension in the innermost being of the character."

[56] For φρένες as the seat of μερμηρίζειν, see *Il.* 2.3; *Od.* 1.427; 10.151; 11.204; 16.73; 20.38; 24.128. In other instances, φρένες is associated to θυμός as the seat of μερμηρίζειν: *Il.* 5.671; *Od.* 4.117; 20.10; 24.235. Only at *Od.* 10.50 and 16.237 the seat of μερμηρίζειν is θυμός alone. Other than the location of μερμηρίζειν, θυμός and ἦτορ can also be the subject that is wavering: *Il.* 1.189; *Od.* 16.73; 20.38.

simply indicates a moment of hesitation when facing different options, going back and forth between alternatives; it does not necessarily imply any accurate pondering of the consequences, which is generally provided by μῆτις.[57]

Significantly enough, in the Homeric poems this verb is never accompanied by either the reasons or the motivations of the hesitating subject for eventually making a certain decision. In other words, the poet simply states a condition of wavering uncertainty, without focusing on the mental processes that help the subject take one direction or another. These considerations thus confirm our previous observations of Odysseus' state of mind in book 10: he is still capable of μερμηρίζειν, inasmuch as his φρένες still function, but his psychological activity on Aiaia lacks the elaboration that is provided by μῆτις and in general by the νοῦς.

As in the Aeolian and Laestrygonian episodes, when facing a decision or a new situation, Odysseus demonstrates that he has neither a precise grasp of his present condition as a whole nor any foresight of possible future consequences, which are two of the most distinctive features of μῆτις. In other words, Odysseus is certainly able to use his φρένες and to elaborate ideas at some level (μερμηρίζειν), which allows him to make very limited, short-term decisions; yet he seems to have lost his cunning ability to

[57] In the Homeric poems μερμηρίζειν appears related to νοῦς in only two instances, namely *Od.* 2.93 and *Od.* 15.169: in both instances, the accurate evaluation of possible future consequences is crucial, and is explicitly provided by the νοῦς. Μερμηρίζειν *per se*, however, does not seem to express any particular insight or foresight. Yet the conscious hesitation between two possible courses of action is extremely relevant in the study of the psychological activity of the Homeric heroes, inasmuch as it represents the only moment of "multilayeredness" of the individual character in the Homeric poems. For the absence of "multilayeredness" in the Homeric characters, see Auerbach (1953) 13, 17.

understand situations, foresee the possible future outcome of his actions, and seize opportunities.

There is therefore no reason to see a contradiction between Odysseus' claim that he is at a loss and his subsequent suggestion that somebody should explore the island, inasmuch as the lack of resources Odysseus is talking about seems to be a much deeper condition than some simple indecision about what to do. His claim should thus be considered genuine, rather than either a rhetorical device,[58] or even "mere pretence."[59] In other words, his speech does not merely intend to prevent future complaints by making sure that all the companions understand that their only chance of survival is to follow the smoke that he saw. In the last few adventures, in fact, his traditional μῆτις seems indeed quite idle, and in its place we have observed some psychoactive process that is activated by some previous memory, rather than cunning and prudent intelligence. The text can thus be read from two different angles: from a limited point of view, his speech indeed aims to communicate the lack of options other than following the smoke on Aiaia, and thus prevents future complaints; from a broader perspective, and in the light of our previous considerations, Odysseus' words indicate a more extensive and unusual loss of μῆτις.

The interpretation of Odysseus' words as a genuine admission that his μῆτις is (perhaps irremediably) lost also explains what appears to be the *Leitmotiv* of book 10, namely weeping and desperation. Nowhere else in the *Odyssey* are the expressions of

[58] Thus van der Valk (1949) 274-75. See also Eisenberger (1973) 154.

[59] Thus Heubeck (1989) 54. See also Zambarbieri (2002) 707.

anguish and despair as numerous as they are in books 10 and 11:[60] yet in the *Nekyia* tears and grief are not surprising, considering its afterlife setting, while such manifestations of despair definitely appear unusually frequent in book 10. The long sufferings of Odysseus' crew, in fact, would certainly be a good reason for desperation in other passages of the poem too; yet only here anguish and tears are the consistent reaction both to their situation and to any possible solution that is prospected to them. What is different here? The most likely explanation is that for the first time both Odysseus and his men come to the realization that they cannot rely on his μῆτις for their safety any longer; for the first time, therefore, their helplessness is not just a temporary condition, but a deep and irremediable impossibility of making sense of their present situation, and of acting in view of a desired future outcome.[61]

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[60] *Od.* 10.49-55 (after the comrades open Aeolus' bag of winds); 10.76-77 (after Aeolus refuses to help Odysseus and chases him away); 10.133 (understandable shock after the Laestrygonian slaughter); 10.143 (upon their arrival on Aiaia); 10.198-202 (after Odysseus' claim to have no more μῆτις); 10.209 (tears of the group that is sent out to explore Aiaia); 10.241 (tears of the men that Circe transformed into pigs); 10.246-47 (Eurylochus' utter distress when he tells what happened to his men); 10.313, 373-76 (Odysseus' anguish at Circe's palace); 10.398-99 (tears of the men that Circe turned back into humans); 10.408-18 (tears of the rest of the crew, when Odysseus returns to the ship); 10.453-54 (tears of both groups of men, when they see each other again at Circe's palace); 10.456-65 (the reassuring words of Circe acknowledge their anguish and suffering); 10.496-500 (Odysseus' desperation when Circe announces the necessity for him to go to Hades); 10.566-70 (general desperation when the crew is informed of the necessary journey to Hades); 11.5 (tears while leaving Aiaia); 11.55, 59 (Odysseus' and Elpenor's tears when they see each other in the Underworld); 11.87, 208-9 (Odysseus' tears when he sees the spirit of his dead mother); 11.391-95, 465-66 (Agamemnon's and Odysseus' tears when they see each other in Hades); 11.472 (Achilles' tears); 11.616 (Heracles' tears); 12.11-12 (general weeping at Elpenor's funeral). For the *Leitmotiv* of weeping in this part of the *Odyssey*, see Beck (1965) 6-7 and Zambarbieri (2002) 707.

[61] After *Od.* 10.197, Merkelbach (1951) 185 thinks that the second part of Odysseus' speech is missing. In this second part, Odysseus would have told the companions to divide up in two groups: one group would then go ahead and explore the island. This would explain the companions' desperation at *Od.* 10.198. Yet, if we take Odysseus' previous claim seriously, we do not need to imply a corruption of the text, since his declared and unusual helplessness would certainly be sufficient to provoke his comrades' anguish.

2.2.3. What replaces Odysseus' μῆτις?

Thus far we have examined Odysseus' bankruptcy of ideas until his sudden realization and declaration that his μῆτις is somehow deficient. We should now consider how this disrupting awareness affects the hero's subsequent actions, or rather what appears to guide his actions after his μῆτις abandons him. A study of his behavior on Aiaia will show that, once he has to give up his internal resources, he unusually but inevitably resorts to external resources.

We have already noted how Odysseus ascribes to some form of divine help his encounter with the stag at *Od.* 10.157-59, which is able to satisfy everybody's hunger and thus prevent their death. In that case, however, divine help is the explanation that Odysseus provides.[62] In two instances divine intervention certainly occurs before Odysseus reaches Circe's palace, without being subject to the hero's interpretation. In fact, it is precisely some kind of divine intervention that enables Odysseus to reach Circe's palace without suffering harm or death. This divine help proves that Odysseus' suggestion to follow the smoke was totally insufficient, inasmuch as it did not involve any scheme to either prevent or face dangers, and thus by no means can be considered some sort of μῆτις.

Let us now briefly consider what type of divine help guides Odysseus to Circe's palace: on the one hand, Hermes' direct intervention provides Odysseus with the necessary directions to approach Circe, save his companions, and continue his journey (*Od.* 277-306). Odysseus' unusual docility and lack of personal initiative make him

[62] On possible explanations of Odysseus' claim about the stag, see above, n. 49.

follow the god's direction to the letter, and thus save both his and his comrades' life. On the other hand, immediately after Odysseus' claim to have no more μῆτις, we are presented with a different type of divine intervention, namely the resort to lot, which will ensure that Eurylochus be the head of the expedition on Aiaia (*Od.* 10.203-07). These two instances of divine intervention are much more closely related than they would appear at first sight.

Hermes is the messenger of the gods and traditionally mediates between divine and human realm, inasmuch as he communicates to men what the gods or a higher fate have established. His function, therefore, is generally a quite practical one: neither does he elaborate plans for humankind nor does he come up with decisions himself; he simply delivers messages, and for this very reason he carries a ῥάβδος, namely the heraldic instrument *par excellence.*[63] But there is more. As Pucci has accurately noted, only Hermes and Odysseus are called πολύτροπος in the Homeric poems. The epithet thus "characterizes the essentially Hermes-like attributes of the hero" and "shows the sort of alliance between the hero and his patron god that is typical of the epic conception."[64]

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[63] Apollod. 3.115.7. Sceptre, wand, and rod thus seem to be typical of all mediating figures. Therefore, in the world of the gods as in that of men, most mediators, be it gods, priests, sorcerers, or heralds, hold a wand, which seems to be, if not the instrument, at least the symbol of their power. On the complex symbolism of the wand, see de Waele (1927); Combellack (1948) 209-17; Melena (1972) 321-56; Brisson (1976) 61; Bayard (1978). For the conception of kings as magic-religious figures, and for the sceptre as representative of the divine basis of their authority, see Mondi (1980) 203-16. About the significance of Hermes' pastoral wand in the *Homeric Hymn*, see Grottanelli (1992) 252. Lincoln (1994) 35 makes an appropriate distinction between kings, who derive their authority from the possession of a *skeptron*, and those whose contact with the *skeptron* is merely instrumental, and derive no power from it. Among the latter, he includes heralds, who convey the *skeptron* from one king to the other, but never possess it themselves. Yet, although it is certainly a very different authority than the one kings possess, I would still consider the heraldic *skeptron* as a symbol of a very special kind of mediating authority.

[64] Pucci (1987) 25.

The epithet πολύτροπος occurs only twice in the *Odyssey*: at *Od.* 1.1, and at *Od.* 10.330, when Circe realizes that her sorcery has no effect on the hero. Pucci rightly observes that the use of πολύτροπος in this context implies Circe's realization that Hermes, the πολύτροπος god, has tricked her through Odysseus.

On the other hand, however, it is significant that Odysseus is called πολύτροπος precisely when his μῆτις and πολυτροπία appear rather dimmed. Circe, whose role will be crucial for Odysseus to regain his mental faculties, almost appeals to the characteristic that was so intrinsic to Odysseus that it "was applied to the nameless hero who will be the subject of the poem" at the outset of the *Odyssey*.[65] Hermes, therefore, is almost a divine instantiation of the quality Odysseus has lost: his mediating help is thus more necessary than ever for the hero, who cannot rely on his own customary πολυτροπία, but must follow to the letter the directions of the πολύτροπος god. The key for Odysseus' survival is still πολυτροπία, but now that he has lost his own, he has to learn it from scratch from the god who, more than anybody else, is endowed with it.

Lots were also considered some sort of communication between gods and men, since they were believed to express some inexplicable and yet inevitable μοίρα. A thorough study of sortition in archaic Greece goes beyond the scope of this work, and would certainly lead us astray. However, some brief and general considerations on lots in the

[65] Clay (1983) 29. On Odysseus' πολυτροπία see Clay (1983) 29-34; Ferrari (2002) 27-44.

Homeric poems will prove beneficial in understanding how peculiar and unique the sortition at *Od.* 10.203-7 is.

In the first place, a fundamental distinction should be made between what appear to be the two categories of sortition. On the one hand, goods and prerogatives can be allotted among members of the same family (or of the same group of *pares*) by sortition.[66] On the other hand, sortition is a favorite method both to pick out an individual for a relevant (and generally dangerous) task by selecting him from a larger group, and to decide in what order various candidates will have to perform a certain deed.[67] In this case, the group of candidates is made up exclusively of volunteers, and when lot is used to appoint one group or one person, the selection inevitably results in the exclusion of the other competitors. As Paul Demont has pointed out, lot can in certain cases subvert the order of excellence, by placing the most capable competitor in the last position; from a narratological point of view, this subversion creates in the audience some sort of expectation, and at times allows the best ones to finally excel and

[66] In this case, participation in the sortition is not a voluntary decision, but depends solely on family (or group) rights, and results in the distribution of goods among all participants. The participation itself is thus subject to specific prerequisites, and all participants (that coincide with all the legitimate recipients) will receive a portion of the allotted inheritance. Examples of this type of allotment in the Homeric poems can be found at: *Il.* 15.189-93; *Od.* 14.207-12. Achilles' words to Agamemnon at *Il.* 1.122-29 also hint at this kind of distribution.

[67] The Homeric passages that illustrate or hint at this category of sortition are: *Il.* 3.314-25 (to decide who should throw their spear first in the duel between Paris and Menelaus); 7.170-92 (among nine Achaean warriors to appoint the one who would face Hector in combat); 23.352-57 (to decide in what order the participants in the chariot race would start); 23.855-83 (to decide who should shoot first in an archery competition); 24.400 (Hermes in disguise claims to be a Myrmidon, appointed by lot among his brothers to participate in the Trojan war); *Od.* 9.331-35 (Odysseus orders his comrades to draw the lots of those who will help him blind the Cyclops).

attest their superiority after the poor performances of the less capable ones.[68] In this category of sortition, an authoritative person, generally a king, is in charge of casting and drawing the lots: his participation in the process is thus exclusively that of an external superintendent, inasmuch as he checks on the correctness of the procedure, sometimes promotes the sortition, but is never a candidate himself.[69]

The presence of a supervisor at the sortition who was not involved as a competitor most likely aimed to guarantee that the process was correct and no anomalies occurred. This element emphasizes what appears to be the social function of the casting of lots in the Homeric world, namely soothing present or possible future tensions by deferring to external forces to appoint the most worthy person.[70]

The idea of "chance," however, is absent from the Homeric mentality, which does not seem to know the term τύχη, but rather indicates some δαίμων as responsible for a certain sequence of events, or for the distribution of certain μοίραι among different people. Everybody has a μοίρα, namely an allotted and inevitable part, although it is not clear how it was assigned to each individual; what is unquestionable is the strong

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[68] Demont (2000) 306. See also Richardson (1993) 213, ad *Il.* 23.352-58: "The allottment here conveniently confuses the natural order of excellence, like a handicap, putting the best charioteer last." Yet this is not always true: at *Od.* 9.334-35, for instance, Odysseus explicitly asserts "the lot fell upon those whom I myself would have chosen." As for the sortition on Circe's island, the appointment of Eurylochus as leader of the expedition (rather than Odysseus himself) certainly has a deep effect on the narrative, inasmuch as it originates the entire Circe adventure as Homer describes it, involving the entire crew.

[69] Hector and Odysseus (*Il.* 3.314-25); Nestor (*Il.* 7.170-92); Achilles (*Il.* 23.352-57 and 23.855-83); Odysseus (*Od.* 9.331-35).

[70] In democratic Athens, instead, sortition was rather intended to give all citizens equal rights, and equal possibilities to participate in the political life of the *polis*. For a more thorough discussion of lot in relation to social competition, see Guidorizzi (2001) esp. 44-46.

and consistent presence of μοῖρα throughout the Homeric poems. Following this line of thought, "chance" and "destiny" are clearly very close and intertwined: chance, in fact, invariably corresponds to fate, inasmuch as it brings into being some pre-established μοῖρα.[71] From this perspective, chance can be obscure and inexplicable, yet it never corresponds to chaos, since it always obeys some divinely determined order.

Sortition, therefore, simply reveals some inevitable and pre-determined μοῖρα, and has the social function of making it public and unquestionable. In the light of these considerations, when somebody decides to cast lots, he expresses the intention to step back and let the μοῖρα speak and decide. In other words, he resorts to some sort of divine consultation, which also explains why a prayer to the gods, which aimed at receiving divine assistance, was an important phase of the sortition procedure, between the shaking and the drawing of the lots.[72]

With these considerations in mind, we can now turn to the casting of lots in book 10. This method of appointment undoubtedly falls into our second category, inasmuch as it aims to decide which group should explore Aiaia. Yet it presents a few remarkable

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[71] In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Lachesis is the Moira who is in charge of casting the lots of humans, thus inevitably assigning a portion (λάχος) to each one. For a more thorough discussion on fate in Homer, see Redfield (1975) esp. 133-36.

[72] The prayer to the gods during a sortition is sometimes omitted (*Il.* 23.352-53; 23.861-62; 24.400; *Od.* 9.331; 10.206; 14.209-11), possibly because it was such common practice that it was not necessary to mention it explicitly. In the light of our considerations, I cannot agree with Ehrenberg (1927) when he claims that prayers are at times omitted in the Homeric account because already in Homer lot did not have an exclusively religious value ("shon also bei Homer ist die Losung nicht nur religiös zu verstehen." Col. 1463). Significantly enough, Hermes was considered the patron of cleromancy, as already Lécrivain (1877-1919) pointed out. The religious component of sortition was first emphasized by Fustel de Coulanges (1878) 613-43. See also Demont (2000) esp. 304, Guidorizzi (2001) esp. 42-44. For the relationship between Hermes and sortition, see Grottanelli (2001) 155-96.

peculiarities: for instance, why does Odysseus put his own leadership to the decision of the lot in the first place?

> αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ δίχα πάντας ἐϋκνήμιδας ἑταίρους
> ἠρίθμεον, ἀρχὸν δὲ μετ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ὄπασσα·
> τῶν μὲν ἐγὼν ἦρχον, τῶν δ' Εὐρύλοχος θεοειδής.
> κλήρους δ' ἐν κυνέῃ χαλκήρεϊ πάλλομεν ὦκα·
> ἐκ δ' ἔθορε κλῆρος μεγαλήτορος Εὐρυλόχοιο.
> βῆ δ' ἰέναι, ἅμα τῷ γε δύω καὶ εἴκοσ' ἑταῖροι
> κλαίοντες·
>
> Then I divided in two groups all my well-greaved
> comrades, and appointed a leader for each;
> I took command of one, and godlike Eurylochus of the other.
> Quickly then we shook lots in a brazen helmet,
> and the lot of great-hearted Eurylochus leapt out.
> So he set out, and with him went twenty-two comrades,
> all weeping;
>
> (*Od.* 10.203-9)

It is not clear how Odysseus and Eurylochus are appointed leaders of each group, but since the participation in this type of sortition is generally voluntary, as we have noted above, we can reasonably assume that this is the case here too. What is remarkable is rather that Odysseus is both promoting the casting of the lots as leader, and participating in them as competitor. This is unparalleled in the Homeric poems.

While in *Il.* 3.314-25, when he casts the lots together with Hector, Odysseus seems to be a simple executor of the decisions and instructions of others, in two occasions (both in the *Odyssey*) he explicitly decides to resort to sortition.[73] In the first case, in a

[73] Considering Odysseus' cleverness and trickery, we would think that he would rather avoid a procedure that seems to obliterate μῆτις and human initiative. In fact, he resorts to sortition only in these two emergency situations, and otherwise prefers to rely on his μῆτις. His behavior regarding Achilles' armor, for instance, seems to follow this line of thought. According to what we know from the poems of the Epic cycle, and in particular the *Aithiopis* and the *Little Iliad* (Bernabè 1987-2005: 69, 74) Achilles' armor was destined to the best of the Achaean warriors. Yet it was not assigned by sortition, in a process

moment of extreme emergency in the cave of Polyphemus (*Od.* 9.331-35), he commands his men to cast the lots of those who would help him blind the Cyclops. Considering the dangers involved, the objectivity of this system certainly avoids frustrations and protests, and is neither unusual nor surprising. Yet, after four men have been appointed, Odysseus feels the need to emphasize that those men were precisely the ones that he would have chosen (οἱ δ' ἔλαχον, τοὺς ἄν κε καὶ ἤθελον αὐτὸς ἑλέσθαι, τέσσαρες, *Od.* 9.334-35). His μῆτις, he proudly implies, therefore coincides with what was already established by some μοῖρα. In accordance with our previous considerations is also the fact that Odysseus is promoter and possibly supervisor of the process, while his participation in the sortition is not at stake.

The second instance of sortition proposed by Odysseus is precisely our passage in *Od.* 10.203-7, and significantly takes place in that unusual condition of helplessness on Aiaia. The exploration of an unknown land always involves risks and dangers, and would theoretically admit sortition to avoid complaints, as in the previous case. Yet on other occasions Odysseus expressly appointed somebody to explore a new land,[74] or he volunteered to participate in the exploration himself.[75] In this remarkable case, his very participation is at stake, in the unique example of a sortition whose promoter is also involved as competitor. Odysseus does not simply divide the men, cast lots, and then

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that would let the μοῖρα decide objectively, but was obtained fraudulently by Odysseus. Also Sophocles, *Ajax* 442-46, opposes the objectivity of sortition to the subjectivity of a vote that was manipulated by the Agamemnon and Menelaus. See also Pind. *Nem.* 8.23-26; Hyg. *Fab.* 107.

[74] *Od.* 9.88 (Lotus Eaters); 10.100-2 (Laestrygonians).

[75] *Od.* 9.172-76 (Cyclops); 10.59 (Aeolus).

lead the chosen group: by putting his participation at stake, he seems to be abdicating his very role as leader.

Odysseus perceives the emergency, and realizes that his μῆτις would not be able to anticipate any pre-established μοίρα this time. This awareness, which immediately follows and reinforces his claim to be at a loss of μῆτις, emphasizes the need for some authoritative, inevitable, and infallible resource, and thus requires the consultation of fate itself, as it were, not only with regard to the situation but also with regard to himself. From this perspective, Hermes' help, which at first sight appears unexpected and unsought, also corresponds to Odysseus' desperate need of directions, which he expresses at 10.190-93, and demonstrates at 10.203-7, when his feeling of human inadequacy and his utter helplessness even lead him to subvert the traditional sortition procedure.

We can thus reasonably conclude that, once Odysseus realizes that his μῆτις is not quite the same as it has always been, his subsequent actions clearly reflect this awareness, inasmuch as he accepts alternative and authoritative sources of μῆτις, such as Hermes and sortition. Yet his strong need for sources of μῆτις demonstrates how essential and vital this quality is for the hero: once his own μῆτις is insufficient, he does not look for alternative solutions such as physical strength, but he learns μῆτις from other sources.

In the course of this chapter we have examined Odysseus' unusual psychological condition of helplessness throughout book 10, emphasizing the passages where his sudden lack of μῆτις stands out. Not only does the hero realize that something is indeed happening to him, but this condition baffles him to the point that he admits his helplessness openly to his comrades. He expressly claims that something is affecting his μῆτις. Odysseus is still capable of φράζειν and μερμηρίζειν – he is able to develop and process some ideas – but his actions and his decisions lack the perspicuity and the elaboration that are provided by the νοῦς. His lack of μῆτις, therefore, can reasonably be interpreted as a disturbance of the νοῦς.

We have also noted that Odysseus' μῆτις was certainly active in the cave of Polyphemus: in *Od.* 9.331-35 he explicitly claims that, for the blinding of the Cyclops, he would have picked the same men that were appointed by sortition (which is to say, his μῆτις was so extraordinary that it was capable of understanding and foreseeing even the obscure design of fate). More explicitly, in *Od.* 20.18-21, Odysseus calls upon his own heart (κραδίη), and begs it to bear the Suitors' outrageous behavior; he then reminds it of when it had to endure even worse sufferings in the cave of the Cyclops, "until μῆτις lead you out of the cave where you thought you would die" (*Od.* 20.20).[76] We can thus reasonably infer that whatever affected Odysseus' νοῦς took place

[76] On the unique traits of Odysseus' inner dilemma at *Od.* 20.18-21, see Pucci (1987) 72-73. On the use of the word μῆτις in the Cyclops episode, and on the pun based on the similarity between μή τις (=οὔ τις) and μῆτις at *Od.* 9.403-14 (which is also echoed in *Od.* 20.19-21) see Podlecki (1961) esp. 130-31 and Schein (1970) esp. 79-80.

between his blinding of Polyphemus and the Aeolian episode (when his cunning already appears rather dim).

Odysseus is traditionally endowed with human μῆτις to the highest degree, but the distance between his reputation and his situation in book 10 could not be greater. In particular, as we have pointed out, the type of disturbance that upset Odysseus' habitual μῆτις makes him remember that he is human, with all the limits that this condition involves, and urges him to yield to the gods in search for some authoritative sources of μῆτις (his resort to sortition at *Od.* 10.203-7 and his obedience to Hermes at *Od.* 10. 275-335 should be considered in this perspective). The disturbance that affects his νοῦς, in fact, does not eliminate the idea that Odysseus' life is deeply rooted in μῆτις, and on μῆτις it depends: if something has weakened it, the hero must do all that he can in order to recuperate it, because when his μῆτις is dim his entire existence appears hazy, confused, and almost blocked. Without his μῆτις, he does not particularly stand out from the rest of the crew, and the egalitarian tone of the entire book 10 seems to emphasize that Odysseus is on the same level as his comrades. He is not a good leader who should be able to save his men, he has lost his sense of direction, he asks his men to help him find a way out, and his authority is undermined. As his frightened words in *Od.* 10.193 hint, without μῆτις he even wonders if he will ever be Odysseus again.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ERRORS OF ODYSSEUS: *ἈΤΑΣΘΑΛΙΑ* AND *ὙΒΡΙΣ*

In the course of the previous chapters we have emphasized that on Aiaia Odysseus' νοῦς is beyond incantation (*Od.*10.329), inasmuch as Hermes' μῶλυ protects it from Circe's sorcery. Yet the hero seems to be subject to λήθη, which appears to be the standard preliminary phase of Circe's enchantment, and which makes him forget about his homecoming. Λήθη, we have also noted, has two possible outcomes in the *Odyssey*: either it has no purpose and is therefore harmful (like the one caused by the Lotus Eaters), or it has some therapeutic function (like the preliminary oblivion that supposedly alleviated the pain of transformation in Circe's victims). We have also pointed out how Odysseus' μῆτις appears to be dimmed before he arrives at Aiaia, which we have interpreted as a disturbance of the νοῦς: we may therefore reasonably infer that some recovery was indeed needed for his disturbed νοῦς. Since λήθη consistently seems to affect the φρένες, we may also conjecture that the process of recovery of Odysseus' νοῦς on Aiaia involves a moment of forgetfulness that alleviates the pain of recovery, and by suspending the φρένες, so to speak, allows the hero to concentrate on his νοῦς.

Yet, we should ask at this point, how was Odysseus' νοῦς damaged, and for what reason? The investigation of the causes for the divine malediction and helpless dependence that darken the hero's adventures after the *Cyclopeia* will shed some light

on the reasons why only his νοῦς was affected, and not any of his other faculties. This analysis will help us understand the broader picture both of Odysseus' recovery and of Circe's role in it. In this investigation we will follow a double path: we will first consider the accusations of Eurylochos (*Od.* 10.437), who considers Odysseus' ἀτασθαλία responsible for all the sufferings of the entire crew; a word study of ἀτασθαλία will provide us with a better understanding of this type of human error, and in particular it will elucidate its relation with and its effects on the νοῦς. Although Odysseus is certainly guilty of ἀτασθαλία, we will show that this fault is not directly responsible for the damage to his νοῦς.

In the second part of this chapter we will examine closely Odysseus' behavior between his encounter with Polyphemus and the Aeolian episode. Whatever affected Odysseus' νοῦς, as we have concluded in the previous chapter, took place in this period of time. In particular, we will argue that the disturbance that affects Odysseus' νοῦς can be considered a fundamental component of Poseidon's wrath. It is the indirect consequence of the hero's proud boasting, which disregards the limits of human μῆτις. After his supreme demonstration of μῆτις in the *Cyclopeia*, Odysseus' hybristic boasting provokes the divine wrath that deprives the hero of any divine help. On the one hand, when his forces are exhausted and therefore inadequate to face new dangers, his μῆτις seems to grow tired and yields to complete helplessness; on the other hand, without any divine support and benevolence, his human helplessness necessarily (and almost ironically) turns into utter dependence on the gods.

3.1. The error that ruined Odysseus' comrades: ἀτασθαλία.

Eurylochos' alarmed address to his comrades at *Od.* 10.431-37 suggests an explicit parallel between their present risk of being transformed into animals in Circe's palace and the danger Odysseus' folly brought about for them in Polyphemus' cave.

> ἃ δειλοί, πόσ' ἴμεν; τί κακῶν ἱμείρετε τούτων;
> Κίρκης ἐς μέγαρον καταβήμεναι, ἥ κεν ἅπαντας
> ἢ σῦς ἠὲ λύκους ποιήσεται ἠὲ λέοντας,
> οἵ κέν οἱ μέγα δῶμα φυλάσσοιμεν καὶ ἀνάγκῃ,
> ὡς περ Κύκλωψ ἔρξ', ὅτε οἱ μέσσαυλον ἵκοντο
> ἡμέτεροι ἕταροι, σὺν δ' ὁ θρασὺς εἵπετ' Ὀδυσσεύς·
> τούτου γὰρ καὶ κεῖνοι ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο.
>
> "Alas, wretched men, where are we going? Why do you long for these woes,
> to go down to the house of Circe, who will change us all
> to swine, or wolves, or lions,
> and we may have to guard her great house?
> So did the Cyclops, when our comrades
> went into his cave, and with them went this reckless Odysseus;
> for it was through this man's recklessness that they too perished."
>
> (*Od.* 10.431-37)

In both situations, Eurylochos claims, the hero's ἀτασθαλία has led them into a situation with no escape. Before we examine where Odysseus' ἀτασθαλία comes from, we should ask what exactly ἀτασθαλία is, what type of human error it indicates, and what psychological entities it involves. In particular, we should investigate whether ἀτασθαλία is voluntary, involves foreknowledge, and is susceptible to blame, or if it is rather involuntary, irrational, and therefore does not involve either responsibility or blame. The psychological situation of Odysseus in the *Cyclopeia* is very different from that on Aiaia, as we have variously observed in the previous chapter. In the first case his

μῆτις reaches its peak, while in the latter μῆτις is almost absent. Our study of ἀτασθαλία will therefore help us investigate whether Odysseus' temerity is independent from the unusually dimmed state of his μῆτις and of his νοῦς, or whether his ἀτασθαλία is somehow related to his helplessness in book 10.

3.1.1. Ἀτασθαλία and ἄτη.

Although the term ἀτασθαλία is usually translated as "recklessness," its meaning appears to be much more dense and complex, and certainly deserves further consideration in order to shed light on some patterns of human error in Homer. Hesychius' etymology, as well as some indications of Eustathius and the scholia, connect ἀτασθαλία with ἄτη: ἀτασθαλία would thus mean something like "abundance of ἄτη," or "ἄτη beyond abundance."[1] In order to reveal some remarkable and unquestionable differences between the two terms, it is not necessary, however, to venture into a linguistic study; rather, a careful analysis of the occurrences of the term ἀτασθαλία, as opposed to those of ἄτη, in the Homeric poems will be sufficient for this purpose.

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[1] Hesychius, s.v. ἀτασθαλίαι· ἁμαρτίαι· ἀπὸ τοῦ ταῖς ἄταις θάλλειν; Schol. *in Od.* 1 hypothesis to verse 34, line 2 (παρὰ τὸ ἐν ἄταις θάλλειν); Eustathius, *Comm. ad Od.* 1.8.1 (οὐ μόνον ἡ ταῖς ἄταις θάλλουσα ἀφροσύνη, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ ἐν θαλίαις εἴτουν εὐωχίαις ἄτη). See also Athenaeus 1.21.15 (Kaibel), *Etymol. Magnum* p.162 line 35 (Kallierges) and *Etymol. Gen.* s.v. ἀτασθαλία (ἡ παρὰ τὴν θάλειαν ἄτη καὶ βλάβη); *Etymol. Gud.* s.v. ἀτάσθαλος (παρὰ τὸ ἐν ἄτῃ θάλλειν); *Etymol. Sym.* 1.278.20 (ἢ παρὰ τὸ ἄτῃ θάλλειν). For the linguistic problems that arise when relating ἀτασθαλία to ἄτη, see Chantraine (1968) s.v. ἀτασθαλίη. As Finkelberg (1995) 18 has pointed out, Hesychius' etymology, "indicative as it is of a general tendency to ascribe all Homeric errors to ἄτη, does not stand the test of linguistics."

In Homer (and especially in the *Odyssey*), ἀτασθαλία is often associated with ὕβρις too, and some scholars have assumed that this association "is the best indication of the sense of this word."[2] The examination of the contexts in which Homer uses the term ἀτασθαλία or its cognates, however, seems to indicate that "the two terms are brought into connection with each other only when the behavior deriving from ἀτασθαλία is seen as morally condemnable as, for example, in the case of the suitors."[3] A thorough study of complex terms such as ἄτη and ὕβρις would certainly lead us astray. Yet a few considerations will suffice to delineate the substantial differences between ἄτη, ὕβρις, and ἀτασθαλία, which – at least in the Homeric poems – seem to correspond to three distinct patterns of error. This brief analysis will enable us to define better what Eurylochos accuses Odysseus of.

Let us begin by considering some consistent features of ἄτη. This type of condition in the Homeric poems seems to be characterized by a temporary lack of understanding, as in some sort of blindness or damaged deliberative capacity.[4] The individual's deeds are consistently attributed to some external factor – usually the gods – inasmuch as ἄτη

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[2] Heubeck, West, Hainsworth (1988) *ad Od.* 8.166. Ἀτασθαλία and ὕβρις are associated for instance in *Il.* 11.695, *Od.* 3.207, 16.86, 17.588, 20.370, 24.282, 24.352.

[3] Finkelberg (1995) 18. Hector's ἀτασθαλία at *Il.* 22.104, for instance, seems to consist merely in keeping his troops outside the walls of Troy, thus not involving any ὕβρις.

[4] In *Il.* 9.537, for instance, Oeneus' ἄτη is expressly described as forgetfulness and lack of attention: "whether he forgot, or he did not think about it; he was greatly blinded in his heart" (ἢ λάθετ' ἢ οὐκ ἐνόησεν· ἀάσατο δὲ μέγα θυμῷ). For a more thorough discussion of λάθετο and οὐκ ἐνόησεν in this passage, see above, ch. 1, pp. 50-52. See also Wyatt (1982) 252.

is a state that comes over men (or is sent over men) in certain situations.[5] Consequently, neither the agent himself or others recognize him as an autonomous author of what he has done. Although ἄτη seems to come from outside, however, it does not seem to obliterate completely individual responsibility: rather, as in the case both of Helen and of Agamemnon, the agents seem to be blamed for their deeds, but are not considered responsible for their consequences.[6]

Homer's idea of ἄτη, moreover, consistently involves an essential lack of foreknowledge:[7] those who are overcome by ἄτη never seem to be aware of the possibility that their course of actions could result in disaster. At *Od.* 23.218-24, for instance, Penelope expressly says of Helen that she would have never followed Paris, had she known the dreadful consequences of her action.[8] In a similar way,

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[5] Dodds (1951) 5 noted that "the agents productive of ἄτη, where they are specified, seem always to be supernatural beings." In the *Odyssey*, however, ἄτη is caused by wine in two instances (*Od.* 11.61, 21.295-98), which Dodds in a quite strained fashion treats as a special case. Another difficulty in Dodds' view of ἄτη as coming exclusively from supernatural beings is the case of the ἄτη produced in Dolon by Hector (*Il.* 10.391), which Dodds regards as "a symptom of Hector's own condition of (divinely inspired) ἄτη" (p.19, n.20). Hector, however, is actually described as producing ἄτη in others in *Il.* 18.311-13. See also Lloyd-Jones (1971) 23, and Doyle (1984) 21, n.29. In view of this, I agree with Finkelberg (1995) 20 that "it seems safer to regard ἄτη as being usually caused by an external factor, whether a god, or a fellow-man, or wine." On the issue of dual causation in the Homeric poems, see our discussion below (n.73).

[6] *Il.* 3.164-65 (Priam absolves Helen from the responsibility for the Trojan war), 19.270-74 (Achilles absolves Agamemnon from the responsibility for the Achaean defeat). Finkelberg (1995) 19. See Redfield (1975) 97: Agamemnon "is not trying to deny his wrongdoing but rather to describe its quality." Agamemnon acknowledges the role of ἄτη, but does not disclaim responsibility for his behavior (*Il.* 19.86-94). On the contrary, Agamemnon seems to imply, he made a mistake because he failed to understand what was happening to him, and what consequences his behavior might have.

[7] Unintentional homicide can also be considered a consequence of ἄτη: see for instance *Il.* 24. 480-81.

[8] For Helen's behavior as generated by ἄτη, see also *Od.* 4.261-62.

Agamemnon's insulting of Achilles, without thinking that his behavior might ultimately cause the heaviest defeat the Achaeans suffered during the Trojan war, is consistently explained as due to ἄτη.[9] This type of human error, therefore, essentially originates in the irrational, in the unplanned, and in the unforeseen.

These essential traits of ἄτη are a sufficient indication of how distant this condition is from that of ἀτασθαλία. In fact, if we examine the occurrences of ἀτασθαλία in the Homeric poems by contrasting them with the traits of ἄτη that we have sketched above, we will be able to show how these two types of error were regarded as semantically distinct. Both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*, the acts deriving from ἀτασθαλία are committed in spite of the fact that the agent was explicitly warned not to take a particular course of action: thus Hector was warned by Polydamas not to take the troops outside the walls of the city (*Il.* 22.101-3), Aegisthus was advised by Hermes not to murder Agamemnon and marry Clytemnestra (*Od.* 1.38-43), the suitors were warned by Leodes not to sleep with Odysseus' women slaves (*Od.* 22.314-15), Odysseus forbade his companions to kill the sacred cattle of the Sun (*Od.* 12.298-302), and they begged him not to put their lives in danger on the Cyclops' island (*Od.* 9.224-29). Unlike those struck by ἄτη, the subjects guilty of ἀτασθαλία thus seem to be aware of the possibility that the course of action that they have chosen results in a

[9] See Agamemnon's apology at *Il.* 19.85-90. The state of ἄτη is ascribed to Agamemnon "no less than eleven times, more than all the other named individuals taken together." (Finkelberg 1995: 19, n.16). According to Dodds (1951) 2-18, Agamemnon's explanation of his insulting of Achilles can also account for the other instances where mistaken or wrong behavior is explained as due to ἄτη. See also Adkins (1982) 307 and n.33.

disaster; their stubborn behavior therefore involves on the one hand a certain foreknowledge, and on the other hand a strong deafness to persuasion.[10]

That ἀτασθαλία involves premeditation is clear from the frequent association of the term with the verb μηχανάομαι, "to contrive," "to design," "to plan:"[11] if some plotting was considered possible in relation with ἀτασθαλία, the acts of ἀτασθαλία were thus envisaged as being committed deliberately, and subject to rational planning. Thus Odysseus' companions on Thrinacia do not slaughter the cattle of the Sun because ἄτη was clouding their minds, or because starvation was already blinding them; rather, Eurylochos expressly ponders which alternative is preferable in view of certain, future hunger. Homer thus presents the slaughtering of the sacred cattle as the result of a deliberate choice that disregards Odysseus' warnings.

> 'κέκλυτέ μευ μύθων, κακά περ πάσχοντες ἑταῖροι·
> πάντες μὲν στυγεροὶ θάνατοι δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι,
> λιμῷ δ' οἰκτιστον θανέειν καὶ πότμον ἐπισπεῖν.
> ἀλλ' ἄγετ', Ἠελίοιο βοῶν ἐλάσαντες ἀρίστας
> ῥέξομεν ἀθανάτοισι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν.
> εἰ δέ κεν εἰς Ἰθάκην ἀφικοίμεθα, πατρίδα γαῖαν,
> αἶψά κεν Ἠελίῳ Ὑπερίονι πίονα νηὸν
> τεύξομεν, ἐν δέ κε θεῖμεν ἀγάλματα πολλὰ καὶ ἐσθλά.
> εἰ δὲ χολωσάμενός τι βοῶν ὀρθοκραιράων
> νῆ' ἐθέλῃ ὀλέσαι, ἐπὶ δ' ἕσπωνται θεοὶ ἄλλοι,
> βούλομ' ἅπαξ πρὸς κῦμα χανὼν ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσαι
> ἢ δηθὰ στρεύγεσθαι ἐὼν ἐν νήσῳ ἐρήμῃ.'
>
> "Hear my words, comrades, for all your evil sufferings:
> all forms of death are hateful to wretched mortals,

[10] This deafness to persuasion is often explicit, and expressed by οὐ πείθειν/πείθεσθαι: *Il.* 22.103, *Od.* 1.42-43, 9.228, 9.500, 22.316, 24.454-60. Cf. *Il.* 4.408-9.

[11] *Il.* 11.695; *Od.* 3.207, 16.93, 17.588, 18.143, 20.370.

> but to die of hunger, and so meet one's doom, is the most pitiful.
> Nay, come, let us drive off the best of the cattle of Helios
> and offer sacrifice to the immortals who hold broad heaven.
> And if we ever reach Ithaca, our native land,
> we will straightway build a rich shrine to Helios Hyperion
> and put therein many splendid offerings.
> But if he is wroth at all because of his straight-horned cattle,
> and desires to destroy our ship, and the other gods consent,
> I would rather lose my life once for all with a gulp at the wave,
> than be slowly straitened to death in a desert isle."
>
> (*Od.* 12.340-51)

The episode of the cattle of the Sun can illustrate very well the difference between ἀτασθαλία and ἄτη. While the companions deliberately decide to disobey Odysseus' order, and are therefore ἀτάσθαλοι (*Od.* 1.7-9), Odysseus' sudden slumber can reasonably be interpreted as ἄτη, inasmuch as it is sent by the gods, and temporarily dims his mental faculties (*Od.* 12.238). The hero himself, when he realizes what happened while he was asleep, refers to his unfortunate sleep as having been sent by the gods εἰς ἄτην (*Od.* 12.372).[12] The use of the term ἄτη with relation to Odysseus' falling asleep on Thrinacia almost puts his slumber on a similar plane as Helen's running away with Paris, or Agamemnon's insulting of Achilles. Although, from a modern perspective, Odysseus's sleep might be considered quite innocent, the lack of foreknowledge that he demonstrates is sufficient for Homer to characterize this as ἄτη. What Odysseus, Helen, and Agamemnon all have in common is that none of them was

[12] The preposition εἰς suggests that ἄτη is here used in a sense that is very close to the post-Homeric meaning of the word, namely "ruin," "disaster." The lack of foreknowledge, in fact, explains how the term ἄτη evolved after Homer to mean "unforeseen disaster." See Jaeger (1960) 319-24; Doyle (1984) 18; Finkelberg (1995) 19. On the connection between sleep and death, see below, §4.4.1.

aware of the possible consequences of their actions, which seems to be a sufficient reason for Homer to qualify them as ἄτη.

Interestingly enough, the slumber that comes over Odysseus after Aeolus gives him the bag of winds has similarly disastrous consequences, but takes place when Odysseus' μῆτις appears damaged and his mind bewildered: as we have pointed out in the previous chapter (§2.2.1), his imprudent sleep relates to his loss and disorientation. While the hero mentions "the wicked comrades and evil sleep" as responsible for that terrible tempest (ἕταροί τε κακοὶ πρὸς τοῖσί τε ὕπνος σχέτλιος, *Od.* 10.68-69),[13] on Thrinacia he explicitly relates his slumber to ἄτη, and is caused by some ineluctable and external force. As we will see in the course of this work, on Thrinacia Odysseus seems to have recuperated his mental faculties; yet he can neither prevent nor avoid the sleep, which is irrational, unavoidable, and sent by the gods.

Ἀτασθαλία is thus the attitude of those who are warned about the consequences of their deeds, ponder different alternatives, and still decide to follow a dangerous course of action. I share Finkelberg's view that "this was, as simply as possible, a calculated risk."[14] A direct consequence of this disagreement with advice and warnings is the type of responsibility that follows a premeditated action.[15] Those whose errors are committed

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[13] In his account to the Phaeacians, Odysseus ascribes the Aeolian disaster to folly and error, and the terms he uses are ἀφραδία (*Od.* 10.27) and ματία (*Od.* 10.79): no mention of ἀτασθαλία, which would probably require an intellectual activity that goes beyond the capacity of Odysseus' dimmed mind.

[14] Finkelberg (1995) 21.

[15] What characterizes ἀτασθαλία is disagreement with the advice, rather than indifference to it, or obliviousness of it. Thus Patroclus initially agrees with Achilles' advice not to get too close to the walls

under the influence of ἄτη are not considered fully responsible for the consequences of their actions,[16] unlike those who are warned of the possible outcome of their deeds and still commit them.

At the outset of the *Odyssey*, Zeus states very clearly that men's ἀτασθαλία is the cause for their own sufferings (οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ σφῇσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν, *Od.* 1.33-34): just as Aegisthus, though foreseeing the deadly consequences of his deeds,[17] murdered Agamemnon, so Odysseus' companions, although they were warned not to touch the cattle of the Sun, slaughtered them and "perished by their own ἀτασθαλία" (αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο, *Od.* 1.7). Odysseus is not fully responsible for being overcome by sleep εἰς ἄτην ("for his unforeseen ruin," *Od.* 12.372); yet his condition enables Eurylochos to take advantage of the situation and persuade the rest of the crew to disobey their leader and slaughter the cattle, which ultimately leads to the seven-year delay of the hero's return. Ἀτασθαλία, we may conclude, is firmly associated in Homer with the

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of Troy (*Il.* 16.87-96), but later seems to forget about it: his error is therefore ascribed to ἄτη (ἀάσθη, *Il.* 16.685; cf. 16.805), and not to ἀτασθαλία. Therefore I cannot share Fuqua's view that ἀτασθαλία has been given "an undeserved moral stance that is more characteristic of later eras than that of Homer." (1991: 51).

[16] Redfield defines Agamemnon's ἄτη as "the error of a moderately good man, the sort of error such a man would make in such circumstances according to probability or necessity." (1975: 97). In Aristotelian language, Agamemnon's mistake would be a ἁμαρτία, rather than an act originating in μοχθερία, which would involve some baseness of character. For the link between ἄτη and ἁμαρτία, see Dawe (1967) 89-123.

[17] Moreover, Hermes forewarned Aegisthus at *Od.* 1.38-43. Cf. *Od.* 3.235, 4.91-92, 11.430 and 439.

ideas of foreknowledge, planning, rationality, and responsibility, while ἄτη is as consistently associated with their opposites.

3.1.2. The psychological entities involved in ἀτασθαλία.

Considering the fundamentally rational nature of ἀτασθαλία and its frequent association with the verb μηχανάομαι, it is not surprising to find in the Homeric poems some more or less explicit connection between the processes of ἀτασθαλία and some psychological entity. In particular, it is not surprising that ἀτασθαλία is somehow related to the φρένες, as the seat of psychological activity.[18] Yet there are other psychic entities that determine and are involved more specifically in the processes of ἀτασθαλία.

The events that lead to Hector's fall in *Il.* 22 provide some useful indications in this respect. Homer consistently presents Hector's fall as caused by ἀτασθαλία, as we will point out, and he himself ultimately recognizes his ἀτασθαλία in his monologue in *Il.* 22.99-107:

> ὤ μοι ἐγών, εἰ μέν κε πύλας καὶ τείχεα δύω,
> Πουλυδάμας μοι πρῶτος ἐλεγχείην ἀναθήσει,
> ὅς μ' ἐκέλευε Τρωσὶ ποτὶ πτόλιν ἡγήσασθαι
> νύχθ' ὕπο τήνδ' ὀλοὴν ὅτε τ' ὤρετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
> ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην· ἦ τ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν.

[18] *Od.* 8.166-68; 17.586-88 (ἄφρων... ἀτάσθαλα μηχανόωνται); 22.47-51 (πολλὰ ἀτάσθαλα... φρονέων); 24.457-58. Moreover, in the light of our considerations of psychological activity in Homer, we may reasonably infer that the activity of the φρένες was also implied in the use of a verb like μηχανάομαι.

νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ὤλεσα λαὸν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἐμῇσιν,
αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρῳάδας ἑλκεσιπέπλους,
μή ποτέ τις εἴπῃσι κακώτερος ἄλλος ἐμεῖο·
Ἕκτωρ ἦφι βίηφι πιθήσας ὤλεσε λαόν.

Alas for me, if I go within the gates and the walls
Polydamas will be the first to reproach me,
who told me to lead the Trojans back to the city
during this cursed night, when noble Achilles arose.
But I did not obey: surely it would have been much better.
But now, since I have ruined the folk by my own recklessness,
I have shame of the Trojans, and the Trojans' long-robed wives,
lest some other baser man than me may say:
'Hector, trusting in his own might, brought ruin on the folk.'

(*Il.* 22.99-107)

In *Il.* 18.249-83 Polydamas, who functions as Hector's *alter ego*, warning and restraining him, tries in vain to persuade Hector to go back to the city and to lead the soldiers into the city walls, but clashes with the hero's mistaken confidence in Zeus' support. At least twice before Hector proved to be ἀτάσθαλος in reaction to the advise of Polydamas, inasmuch as he refused to follow his sensible advice and claimed to excel all men in counsel.[19] Yet their crucial and decisive debate in *Il.* 18 represents the triumph of his ἀτασθαλία: not only does Hector refuse to listen to Polydamas, but Athena makes sure that his decision prevails over that of Polydamas by removing the φρένες of the other Trojans.

νήπιοι· ἐκ γάρ σφεων φρένας εἵλετο Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη.
Ἕκτορι μὲν γὰρ ἐπήνησαν κακὰ μητιόωντι,

[19] *Il.* 12.195-264; 13.723-57. The narratological function of Polydamas, we may reasonably assert, is precisely that of pointing out Hector's ἀτασθαλία, just as Eurylochos does with Odysseus in *Od.* 10.437 (see below, n. 49). See Finkelberg (1995) 23 n.36. For a careful analysis of these passages in the light of Hector's error, see Redfield (1975) 143-53.

Πουλυδάμαντι δ' ἄρ' οὔ τις ὃς ἐσθλὴν φράζετο βουλήν.

fools that they were! for from them Pallas Athena took away their wits.
To Hector they all gave praise in his ill advising,
but no man praised Polydamas, who devised a good counsel.

(*Il.* 18.311-13)

Polydamas, "who alone looked at once forward and back" (ὃ γὰρ οἷος ὄρα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω, *Il.* 18.249), comes up with the best and most reasonable suggestion; the Trojans fail to recognize the excellence of his advice because Athena removes their very ability to think.[20] On the other hand Hector, whose mind does not seem to be affected by Athena's action, seems to be able to think and deliberate, since he is explicitly capable of rational activity (μητιόωντι). Yet his counsel, which he forces on the Trojans against Polydamas' good advice, happens to be bad (κακὰ μητιόωντι). A bad judgment – but still a judgment – as well as the stubbornness to stick to it is what ultimately causes Hector's fall.

Unlike the other Trojans – who are not considered guilty of ἀτασθαλία since their φρένες have been disabled – both Hector and Polydamas are capable of using their φρένες. In the light of our considerations regarding μῆτις in the previous chapter, and in particular following the idea that μῆτις is envisaged as an activity of the νοῦς, we may reasonably infer that both heroes are capable of using their νοῦς too: Polydamas' ability to "look forward and back" is one of the most distinctive signs of μῆτις, and

[20] For the removal of psychic entities, and in particular of φρένες, see Sullivan (1994) 190-93.

Hector's bad advice is presented in terms of the deliberate rational activity of μῆτις (κακὰ μητιόωντι). What makes the difference and causes ἀτασθαλία, therefore, can neither be limited to the φρένες (that are indispensable for any psychological act, be it ill or sound) or to the νοῦς (that can fail to take into account all possible elements in order to elaborate a sound plan, but at the same time should be open to warnings and suggestions). In other words, we can reasonably conclude that both the φρένες and the νοῦς are involved in processes of ἀτασθαλία, inasmuch as ἀτασθαλία involves some rational elaboration, though flawed and incapable of seeing what is right to do. Yet the determination to deliberately ignore warnings and opinions of others, and stubbornly follow a certain course of action, seems to go beyond the simple action of the φρένες and the rational evaluation of the νοῦς.[21] What seems to determine the rational resolution to take a calculated risk, which characterizes ἀτασθαλία, is apparently the role of the θυμός.

Although θυμός is one of the most prominent psychic entities in Homer, it is not clear what it may have been precisely: starting from its possible link with the Latin *fumus* or the Sanskrit *dhūmas*, some scholars claim that originally it may have been a

[21] The role of both the φρένες and the νοῦς, however, seems to be of fundamental importance for ἀτασθαλία, as it is for any other mental process. Odysseus' reproach of the Phaeacian Euryalus at *Od.* 8.165-85, in fact, explicitly puts ἀτασθαλία (*Od.* 8.166) in connection both with the φρένες (*Od.* 8.168) and with the νοῦς (νόον δ' ἀποφώλιός ἐσσι, *Od.* 8.177). See also *Od.* 18.136-39 for the relation between ἀτασθαλία and the νοῦς.

vaporous breath arising from blood,[22] while others prefer to take it as the quick breathing associated with emotion.[23] The φρένες are the only psychological entity that is often represented as a location, and may therefore at times be considered an organ:[24] the θυμός, instead, to quote Redfield's definition, "is not an organ; rather, it is a substance which fills an organ, namely, the φρένες. The φρένες have been (cogently) identified as the lungs, and the θυμός, therefore, as the breath."[25]

Without wanting to investigate its nature or venture into identifications within actual human physiology, we should just point out that Homer seems to consider θυμός as the generator of (e)motion and agitation, which also explains why death is often depicted as the θυμός departing from the limbs.[26] As usual, when dealing with Homeric

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[22] Gomperz (1920^2) vol.1, 249 claims that the θυμός is a "smoke-soul", "older in origin than the exclusively Greek ψυχή." See also Boisacq (1938) 356-37; Chantraine (1968) vol.2, 446; Onians (1954^2) 47-48, 80. Autenrieth (1984) s.v. θυμός, believed it connected with the circulation of the blood, and translated the Homeric θυμός as "that which is in constant motion", defining it as "the vehicle of the anima."

[23] Rohde (1925^8) ch.1 n.58; Böhme (1929) esp. 70-81; Harrison (1960) 65; cf. Sullivan (1980) 138.

[24] For the difficulties connected with the semantics of psychological entities, see Caswell (1990) 16.

[25] Redfield (1975) 173 and n.26. Already Rohde (1925^8) ch.1 n.58 regarded the θυμός in Homer as a "mental faculty of the living body", "the seat of the emotions (...) especially enclosed in the φρένες."

[26] Rüsche (1930) interpreted the term θυμός simply as "allgemeine Lebenskraft." Snell (1953) 9-10 translated it as "the generator of motion and agitation", and Chantraine (1968) s.v. θυμός, considered θυμός as "l'âme, le coeur en tant que principe de la vie, (...) ardeur, courage, siège des sentiments et notamment de la colère." Alternatively, swoon and death are depicted in the Homeric poems as a loss of ψυχή, for which see Garland (1981) 48, and Lateiner (2002) 56-57 and n.59. As Garland observes, "when the ψυχή leaves the body, it does so through not only the mouth (*Il.* 9.409), but also through a wound (*Il.* 14.518, 16.505) and perhaps as well from the limbs (*Il.* 16.856, 22.362), which seems to suggest that Homer located it only very generally 'in' the body." (1981: 48). For Homer's treating of fainting, see Böhme (1929) 113 and Schnaufer (1970) 191. Andromache's swoon in the *Iliad* quite clearly illustrates the process involved, and reveals the role of ψυχή and θυμός: "She exhaled her ψυχή (...) but

psychology, it is not easy to come to an exact definition of the functions of an entity, since Homeric diction does not compartmentalize the psychological and the physiological, and overlaps are extremely frequent; yet θυμός seems to be related to emotions much more often than any other psychological entity: although at times some knowledge seems to be residing in it (e.g. *Il.* 2.409), and it can deliberate on the basis of lessons learned through difficulties, θυμός is customarily the seat of joy, pleasure, love, sympathy, anger, pain, wishes, hopes, and inclinations, and it is affected positively by food, drink, and rest, and negatively by injury or neglect; it is the θυμός that rouses a man to action, and it is his own θυμός that a man summons to pull himself together and recover self-control.[27] When the term θυμός does not indicate an entity but a function, it generally signifies "will" or "character," and where it refers to a single act it indicates individual impulses, like in *Od.* 9.302 where Odysseus says "another θυμός held me back."

This survey of the main characteristics and functions of θυμός, though brief and partial, still sheds some light on the relevance of θυμός in the processes of

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when she breathed again and the θυμός was gathered into her φρήν (...)" (*Il.* 22.467, 475); Sarpedon's swoon at *Il.* 5.696-98 is similarly described in terms of both ψυχή and θυμός. It should be noted, however, that ψυχή is never depicted as returning into the body: when a person loses consciousness, as in the cases of Andromache and Sarpedon, the senses abandon the body in terms of ψυχή, and return in terms of θυμός. This observation is further confirmed by Achilles' words, according to which the ψυχή "cannot be made to return once it has passed the barrier of a man's teeth." (*Il.* 9.408-09). For a more thorough discussion of the expression "to pass the barrier of the teeth," see above, ch. 1, pp. 43-45.

[27] Sharples (1983) 1-7; Caswell (1990) 2 and *passim*; Sullivan (1980) 138-50; Sullivan (1995) 229-31. See also Pelliccia (1995) 54-62, who considers the θυμός in scenes where impulses are communicated to another person.

ἀτασθαλία,[28] and confirms that, in addition to being a rational process, it involves some sort of voluntary aspect that was most likely envisaged as governed by the θυμός. Ἀτασθαλία, we should conclude, originates voluntary actions committed in full knowledge (also of possible consequences) and as a result of calculation.

So Eurylochos' reasoning in book 12 is as lucid and rational as it can be, yet his choice is phrased in terms of hope and wish. On the one hand he is fully aware that the gods may punish him by death for the sacrilege he is about to commit by slaughtering the cattle of Helios, and he can only hope that he will be able to avoid Helios' rage by building him a temple upon his return to Ithaca (*Od.* 12.345-47). On the other hand he is conscious of the two possible types of death that expect him depending on his imminent course of action: either he will "cast his life away with one gulp at the wave" (*Od.* 12.350), or he will be "slowly straitened to death in a desert island" (*Od.* 12.351), and his choice between the two options is clearly expressed in terms of wish (βούλομαι, *Od.* 12.350). Ἀτασθαλία, therefore, involves erroneous decisions based not so much on wrong reasoning, but rather on tenuous and unfounded hope, as if the sound function both of the φρένες and of the νοῦς was disregarded and overcome by some flawed process of the θυμός.[29]

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[28] *Od.* 4.693-94; 7.59-62 (within a few lines the Giants are called both ὑπερθύμοισι Γιγάντεσσιν and λαὸν ἀτάσθαλον, and the Giant Ναυσίθοον is called μεγάθυμον); 12.300, 324; 19.71, 88; 23.64-67 (ἀτασθαλία is associated in the Suitors with ὕβριν θυμαλγέα).

[29] Both at *Od.* 5.407-23 and at 464-73, for instance, Odysseus addresses his own θυμός considering possible alternatives that will lead to a reasoned choice of the means required in those situations: in these cases, however, these sound considerations are followed by a right decision made by the θυμός. No

3.1.3. Odysseus' ἀτασθαλία

Now that we have sketched the conceptual backdrop of ἀτασθαλία, we should consider its role in the broad setting of the *Odyssey*. Subsequently, the connotation of ἀτασθαλία as reckless and calculated risk will help us shed some new light both on Eurylochos' accusations at *Od.* 10.431-37 and on Odysseus' behavior from the *Cyclopeia* to Circe's island.

While in the *Iliad* ἄτη seems to be the dominating pattern, as far as the *Odyssey* is concerned ἀτασθαλία dominates the scene.[30] Our previous considerations regarding ἄτη and ἀτασθαλία allow us to argue that the predominance of ἀτασθαλία in the *Odyssey* is a strong indicator of its focus on the individual, on personal initiative following a rational analysis, and on full responsibility for taking certain risks against warnings and foreknowledge. The fact that in the prologue Odysseus' companions are explicitly blamed for their ἀτασθαλία (*Od.* 1.7), and the same charge is brought about by Zeus towards Aegisthus (*Od.* 1.32-43), can thus be considered programmatic for the poem, and indicative of one of the *Leitmotifs* of the entire *Odyssey*. As Rainer Friedrich

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explicit element in the text differentiates erroneous and right decisions, when they both follow sound reasoning: what seems to make the difference is the quite arbitrary action of the θυμός.

[30] Finkelberg (1995) 25 noticed that in the *Iliad* ἄτη serves to account for the errors of Helen, Paris, Agamemnon, Patroclus, and some minor characters; in books 9 and 19, then, ἄτη is even given a sort of theological foundation. In the *Odyssey*, instead, "the two major misdoings of the poem, of the suitors and of Odysseus' companions, are consistently accounted for as due to ἀτασθαλία."

wrote, "the poet has the supreme god set out the religious and moral outlook that informs the epic action of the *Odyssey*."[31]

> ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὣς ἑτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἱέμενός περ·
> αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,
> νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἠελίοιο
> ἤσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ.
>
> Yet not even so did he save his comrades, though he desired it:
> for they perished through their own recklessness,
> fools, who devoured the cattle of Helios Hyperion;
> but he took from them the day of their returning.
>
> (*Odyssey* 1.6-9)

> ὢ πόποι, οἷον δή νυ θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτιόωνται.
> ἐξ ἡμέων γάρ φασι κάκ' ἔμμεναι· οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ
> σφῇσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν,
> ὡς καὶ νῦν Αἴγισθος ὑπὲρ μόρον Ἀτρεΐδαο
> γῆμ' ἄλοχον μνηστήν, τὸν δ' ἔκτανε νοστήσαντα,
> εἰδὼς αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον, ἐπεὶ πρό οἱ εἴπομεν ἡμεῖς,
> Ἑρμείαν πέμψαντες, ἐύσκοπον Ἀργεϊφόντην,
> μήτ' αὐτὸν κτείνειν μήτε μνάασθαι ἄκοιτιν·
>
> See now, how ready mortals are to blame the gods.
> For it is from us, they say, that evils come: yet they even of themselves,
> through their own recklessness, have sorrows beyond that which is ordained.
> Even as now Aegisthus, beyond that which was ordained,
> took to himself the wedded wife of the son of Atreus, and slew him on his [return,
> though he knew it would mean sheer destruction, since we spoke to him [before,
> and sent Hermes, the keen-sighted Argeiphontes,
> that he should neither slay the man nor marry his wife.
>
> (*Od.* 1.32-39)

Zeus rejects a widespread opinion among mortals who see divine agency behind their sufferings, and clearly states that men themselves with their own ἀτασθαλία

[31] Friedrich (1990) 18. See also Dodds (1951) 32-33; Fenik (1974) 209; Lloyd-Jones (1971) 29; Kullmann (1985) 5.

cause the misfortunes that they suffer "beyond that which was ordained." The story of Aegisthus works as a paradigm for Zeus to proclaim that the gods can do nothing against human ἀτασθαλία, but simply warn in advance and punish afterwards: thus Odysseus' companions were forewarned not to kill the cattle of the Sun on Thrinacia, and disregarding this order they brought about their own destruction.[32]

Odysseus instead, unlike the suitors, "was never reckless at all to any man," (κεῖνος δ' οὔ ποτε πάμπαν ἀτάσθαλον ἄνδρα ἐώργει), if we believe Penelope's words to the herald at *Od.* 4.693: does this simply mean that Odysseus was never ἀτάσθαλος towards his countrymen, or, more broadly, shall we consider ἀτασθαλία alien to him in general? Most likely, Odysseus was never ἀτάσθαλος only in Penelope's partial and limited knowledge, and her words are profoundly in contrast with Eurylochos' allegations at *Od.* 10.437. Something in the course of Odysseus' return, we should infer, must have generated Eurylochos' accusation of ἀτασθαλία, thus undermining the trustworthiness of Penelope's claim.

On the other hand, later on in the narrative, Odysseus himself seems to follow up on Eurylochos' allegations: upon his arrival at Ithaca, in fact, he tells Amphinomous:

> καὶ γὰρ ἐγώ ποτ' ἔμελλον ἐν ἀνδράσιν ὄλβιος εἶναι,
> πολλὰ δ' ἀτάσθαλ' ἔρεξα βίῃ καὶ κάρτεϊ εἴκων,

[32] In the Homeric poems, the word ἀτασθαλία and its cognates are used to designate the behavior of the Suitors (*Od.* 3.207, 16.86, 16.93, 17.588, 18.143, 20.170, 20.370, 21.146, 22.47, 22.314, 22.317, 22.416, 23.67, 24.282, 24.352, 24.458), that of Odysseus' companions (*Od.* 1.7, 12.300), of Aegisthus (*Od.* 1.34), of Odysseus (*Od.* 10.437), of Hector (*Il.* 22.104), of the Seven against Thebes (*Il.* 4.409), of Melantho the woman slave (*Od.* 19.88), of Euryalus the Phaeacian (*Od.* 8.166), of the Epeans in Nestor's story (*Il.* 11.695), of the Trojans (*Il.* 13.634), of Achilles (*Il.* 22.418), and of the Giants (*Od.* 7.60).

πατρί τ' ἐμῷ πίσυνος καὶ ἐμοῖσι κασιγνήτοισι.

For I, too, could once have been prosperous among men,
but I committed many deeds of recklessness, yielding to might and strength,
and trusting in my father and my brothers.

(*Od.* 18.138-40)

Although Odysseus is in disguise, and the story he tells about himself is fictional, the fact that he ascribes his misfortunes to ἀτασθαλία is extremely significant: mortal men, he claims in his speech, are the most feeble creatures on earth, for they think that they will never suffer evil in time to come, as long as the gods give them prosperity and good fortune. Yet when the gods decree them sorrow, they must bear this too, "for the νοῦς of men is like the day which the father of gods and men brings upon them" (*Od.* 18.129-37). This is what Odysseus has learnt from his experience: the νοῦς of men resembles the day inasmuch as it is ephemeral, changeable, and not fully under their own control. In this perspective, human ἀτασθαλία is described as a refusal to adapt one's own νοῦς to the circumstances, and to whatever the gods have decreed. In the light of our previous considerations, we may ascribe this refusal to the action of the θυμός.

At this point in the narrative, Odysseus has realized that his θυμός got the better of him, and is aware of the disastrous consequences of ἀτασθαλία. Though in the context of a lying tale, this realization does not appear fictional, inasmuch as it corresponds to the truth, and it may very well refer to his real misadventures.[33] Yet when and how

[33] Rutherford (1986) 151 n.37, 156 argues that Odysseus' admission in *Od.* 18.139 is in fact partly autobiographical, reflecting an awareness that some of his deeds could be described as ἀτάσθαλα. See

exactly does Odysseus display ἀτασθαλία? Now that we have examined both the conceptual backdrop of ἀτασθαλία and its relevance in the broader context of the *Odyssey*, we can go back to Eurylochos' charge against Odysseus *Od.* 10.431-37[34] and investigate what generated it. More specifically, we should ask, did it have any legitimate ground, and what exactly did this charge imply?

In his agitated address to the crew, Eurylochos clearly refers to the *Cyclopeia*, and more in particular to Odysseus' decision to enter the cave of Polyphemus bringing his companions with him: the adventure on the Cyclops' island, in fact, is presented by Homer as entirely Odysseus' own initiative, and he is the only one to blame for its disastrous consequences. Unlike at Thrinacia, on the island of the goats the crew is not stranded, they are not in danger of dying from starvation, nor are they even driven to explore by hunger: the poet of the *Odyssey* seems to consciously have them land on the island of the goats first so that their exploration of the island of the Cyclopes is clearly unnecessary for their survival.[35] Once on the island of the Cyclopes, then, it is certainly

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also Brown (1996) 12 n.29. On the significance of lying tales in the *Odyssey*, and on the theory that lying tales reflect the truth, see Trahman (1952) 31-43; Walcot (1977) 1-19; Haft (1984) 289-306; Emlyn-Jones (1986) 1-10; Reece (1994) 157-73; Ahl-Roisman (1996); Richardson (1996) 393-402.

[34] Quoted above, p.122.

[35] On the narratological role of the goat island, see Reinhardt (1996) 79. On the rhetoric aspects of Odysseus' description of the goat island, and on the argument that by the time of his account to the Phaeacian audience the potential usefulness and fertility of the goat island, in contrast to its undeveloped state, has struck the hero most sharply, see Byre (1994) 357-67. According to Byre, Odysseus' "domestic" ambition of seeker and admirer of order and civilization assimilates him to the Phaeacians themselves: the description of the goat island would thus aim to establish a strong parallel between the hero and his hosts. Clay (1980) 261-64 argues that the description of the goat island establishes a link between the Phaeacians and the Cyclopes, inasmuch as the goat island would be Hyperia, the former homeland of the Phaeacians from where they were forced to emigrate by the neighboring Cyclopes. Homer does mention this episode in *Od.* 6.4-10, but the evidence that Hyperia is identifiable with the goat

not strict necessity that brings them to Polyphemus' cave: both on the rest of the island, and already on the island of the goats, in fact, they can find everything they require, in terms of food and water (*Od.* 9.116-65). Rather, Odysseus expressly seeks an encounter with the Cyclops out of curiosity (*Od.* 9.174-76), and the desire to obtain hospitality gifts from him (*Od.* 9.228-29).[36]

His θυμός feels that the inhabitant of the cave is a gigantic and strong brute who knows neither righteous nor lawful thoughts:

> αὐτίκα γάρ μοι ὄΐσατο θυμὸς ἀγήνωρ
> ἄνδρ' ἐπελεύσεσθαι μεγάλην ἐπιειμένον ἀλκήν,
> ἄγριον, οὔτε δίκας εὖ εἰδότα οὔτε θέμιστας.
>
> for my proud spirit immediately thought
> that a man clothed in great might would come to me,
> a savage man that knew neither justice nor law.
>
> (*Od.* 9.213-15)

The very appearance of the cave,[37] in fact, and then the tools they find in it (most likely their shape and size beyond the human scale), astound them all (ἐθηεύμεσθα, *Od.* 9.218), and make the companions request that they take some cheese and some sheep, and leave for the ship without delaying (*Od.* 9.224-27). The θυμός, as we have pointed

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island appears rather slight. Austin (1975) 144-45 sees the Cyclopes' neglect of the goat island as exemplifying their intellectual deficiencies and their inability to exploit its maritime and commercial possibilities.

[36] Clay (1983) 115: "Here, however, Odysseus' curiosity serves no practical purpose, nor is it decreased when he begins to suspect the worst, which he soon does." Reinhardt (1996) 79 claims that Odysseus has "a premonition of what lies before him. He chooses his men accordingly and he takes along with him the magic wine against all eventualities."

[37] In the *Odyssey*, only superhuman beings (Calypso and the Nymphs) or subhuman creatures (Polyphemus and Scylla) live in caves. Cf. *Hymn to Hephaestus* 20.3-4: before acquiring the arts of Hephaestus, humans "used to dwell in caves in the mountains like wild beasts."

out above, is the seat of various kinds of impulses, and it is mainly the entity that governs motions and emotions. It is the θυμός that feels, almost in an uncanny intuition, that a monster lives in the cave, and – considering that Odysseus' decision is formulated in terms of curiosity, desire, and wish – it is most likely the θυμός that urges the hero to disregard the comrades' suggestion and wait for Polyphemus. We may reasonably hypothesize that the hero's θυμός is his predominant guiding entity here, since his νοῦς would have processed the vision of the gigantic tools and his μῆτις would have rationally foreseen the danger, and suggested to him that they run away.[38]

More precisely, following the pattern that we have often observed in the course of this work, we may reasonably hypothesize that his organs of perception, together with φρένες and νοῦς, allow him to notice the size of the tools in the cave, and his μῆτις (namely the νοῦς) should foresee the dangerous consequences of lingering around waiting for a gigantic ogre. Instead, Odysseus does not seem to perceive any danger, and neither μῆτις nor νοῦς are mentioned here.[39] We know only that the θυμός

[38] Moreover, Odysseus' perceptive eye certainly did not fail to notice that the Cyclops' economy is a rather primitive one, based on the production of dairy products only for his own consumption. It is therefore very unlikely that what he can obtain as hospitality gift is any different from what he sees around and can easily grab without risking anybody's life, as the companions timidly suggest. Privitera (1993) 25 points out that the island of the Cyclopes brings up Odysseus' deductive capacity, inasmuch as he "la decifra come un archivio e scopre in essa una catena di indizi sui vicini Ciclopi."

[39] Although Odysseus' subsequent behavior in the *Cyclopeia* is generally considered the *aristeia* of the πολύμητις hero, at least at the onset of this adventure he is far from being consistently the quintessential man of μῆτις, and his lack of prudence is as uncharacteristic of him as it is undeniable. See Monro (1900) 29, quoted in Pocock (1959) 97 and in Friedrich (1987) 121. Both Stanford (1954) 77 and Kirk (1962) 364-65 note the inconsistency in the *ethopoiia* of Odysseus and explain the discrepancies as the result of the conflation of different traditions: although these discrepancies are undeniable, I prefer to attempt to resolve them within the terms of the transmitted text, rather than appealing to conflicting traditions.

connects the tools to a huge and lawless monster, yet the emotion that arises does not seem to be fear, but rather curiosity. Odysseus is somehow able to perceive that a strong and lawless brute lives in the cave (οὔτε δίκας εὖ εἰδότα οὔτε θέμιστας, *Od.* 9.215), but his rationality and his μῆτις seem to be overcome by the curiosity to find out whether or not Polyphemus would host him properly (ὄφρ' αὐτόν τε ἴδοιμι, καὶ εἴ μοι ξείνια δοίη, *Od.* 9.229).[40] In other words, the sight of the gigantic tools and the intuition that makes him infer that a monster lives there are overcome by his stubborn and fearless curiosity.[41] According to our previous analysis, curiosity and emotions are generally regulated by the θυμός: we can therefore reasonably infer that in Polyphemus' cave the θυμός takes command of Odysseus' actions.

That this pattern of psychological activity was widely accepted in Greek thought finds a remarkable confirmation in a passage of Plato's *Republic*, in which Socrates

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[40] Odysseus' desire for hospitality gifts should not be misinterpreted as unheroic greed for gain (cf. Plutarch, *De audiendis poetis,* 27c-d). If all he wanted were some κέρδος, he would not reject his comrades' suggestion to take as much as possible from the cave before its owner comes back, and leave as fast as they can (*Od.* 9.224-27). As Friedrich (1991) 22 noted, "accustomed as he is to obtaining his possessions either by fighting or as gifts in recognition of his honor, Odysseus spurns his comrades' unheroic advice because it is beneath the dignity of Heroic Man. The gifts Odysseus expects to receive from the Cyclops must be seen as being analogous to a *geras*, a gift of honor, the tangible token of the hero's superior reputation." For the relevance of guest-friendship and guest-gifts in the Homeric world, with specific relation to the *Cyclopeia*, see Finley (1954) 109-14; Podlecki (1961) 125-33; Gunn (1971) 1-31; Edwards (1975) 51-72; Stagakis (1975) 94-112; Bader (1976) 18-39; Stewart (1976); Calame (1977) 381, n.12; Kearns (1982); Clay (1983) 116; Friedrich (1987) 124-26; Herman (1987); Murnaghan (1987) 91-117, who rightly relates the institution of hospitality gifts to the problem of recognition.

[41] Stanford (1954) 76 describes Odysseus' attitude in the *Cyclopeia* as "inquisitiveness and acquisitiveness." In stressing the hero's alleged cupidity, Stanford continues a tradition that goes from the scholiast who called him φιλοχρήματος (*ad Od.* 7.225) to F. Jacoby (1933) 159-94, who spoke of the mercantile spirit of Odysseus. Friedrich (1987) 125 quite rightly observes that "if Odysseus' motive for embarking on the adventure were indeed acquisitiveness, as Stanford and others claim, he should have listened to his comrades and accepted their advice." See also Friedrich (1991) 21 and n.26.

describes the fight within the mind of a man who wants to look at corpses against his better judgment, with anger and desire fighting against each other as two alien entities (440a). What appears at first sight to be a completely Platonic scenario, with the rational component of the soul contrasted with anger and desires, finds instead a striking parallel in the mental process of Odysseus who wants to enter the Cyclops' cave, as sketched in *Odyssey* 9, when the hero's desires seem to overpower what sound reason would suggest and the companions keenly demand. In both cases we are dealing with a triangulation of the psyche, although the ensuing battle looks different in each author: in Homer νοῦς seems to be the faculty initially in charge (what perceives the giant tools), but this perception somehow leads not to the sensible decision making of μῆτις but to an irrational desire most likely on the part of the θυμός. In Plato, instead, the irrational ἐπιθυμίαι battle and overcome the λόγος only to be censured after the fact by the θυμός.

Furthermore, in *Rep.* 440b, Socrates claims that it is impossible that a man makes common cause with the desires against the λόγος: when a man is overcome by his desires, he despises himself and his θυμός ends up becoming an ally to his λόγος.[42] What is innovative in Socrates' claim, therefore, is not so much a new concept of the soul, inasmuch as already the *Cyclopeia* seems to present Odysseus' psychological

[42] Pl., *Rep.* 440a-b: Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἄλλοθι, ἔφην, πολλαχοῦ αἰσθανόμεθα, ὅταν βιάζωνταί τινα παρὰ τὸν λογισμὸν ἐπιθυμίαι, λοιδοροῦντά τε αὐτὸν καὶ θυμούμενον τῷ βιαζομένῳ ἐν αὑτῷ, καὶ ὥσπερ δυοῖν στασιαζόντοιν σύμμαχον τῷ λόγῳ γιγνόμενον τὸν θυμὸν τοῦ τοιούτου; ταῖς δ' ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτὸν κοινωνήσαντα, αἱροῦντος λόγου μὴ δεῖν ἀντιπράττειν, οἶμαί σε οὐκ ἂν φάναι γενομένου ποτὲ ἐν σαυτῷ τοῦ τοιούτου αἰσθέσθαι, οἶμαι δ' οὐδ' ἐν ἄλλῳ.

process in terms of dynamics of psychic entities. Rather, within this dynamic concept of the soul that both Homer and Plato seem to refer to, Socrates surprisingly denies the possibility for a man to follow his desires against his rationality. If our argument regarding the role of the θυμός in creating Odysseus' curiosity is correct, the *Cyclopeia* would seem to be an example of what Socrates claims never to have seen, namely θυμός siding with desire against λόγος (which in Homeric terms would be μῆτις or νοῦς). A thorough comparison between Homeric and Platonic psychology would go far beyond the scope of this investigation: what matters here is simply the similarity between the patterns of psychological activity described by Plato's Socrates and those sketched in *Odyssey* 9. What I want to suggest is the possibility that Plato's elaborate concept of the soul is deeply rooted in the dynamic model of various parts of the soul that is already evident in the *Cyclopeia.*

While Odysseus' rationality is overcome by bold curiosity, his companions, on the other hand, seem to perceive the danger of the situation in a much more lucid way: like Odysseus they are shocked (ἐθηεύμεσθα, *Od.* 9.218) when they enter Polyphemus' cave and look around; they may or may not realize that a lawless brute lives there, but the size of the objects they see certainly frightens them. Their psychological process seems to be analogous to that of Odysseus up to a certain point, namely up to the realization that a gigantic monster lives in the cave; yet curiosity does not prevail over the rational analysis of the situation, or (we may even hypothesize) their θυμός generates fear, rather than curiosity. In any case, their vivid perception of danger urges

them to beg Odysseus (λίσσοντ' ἐπέεσσι, *Od.* 9.224) to leave as quickly as possible. Odysseus does not listen to them, and only in his account to the Phaeacians does he realize that it was a mistake (ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην, —ἦ τ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν —, *Od.* 9.228).

Odysseus' error in the *Cyclopeia* thus presents all the distinctive characteristics of ἀτασθαλία that we have outlined above: it follows a rational analysis of the situation, and it is generated by a personal decision that goes against foreknowledge and warnings. What is remarkable in this case is that the warnings come from the comrades, whose level of understanding and awareness should be lower than that of their leader, the πολύμητις Odysseus. We should not infer that Odysseus' μῆτις is already damaged at this point in the narrative, considering the crucial role of his cunning in the subsequent encounter with Polyphemus. Rather, as we will point out in the following section, his supreme demonstration of μῆτις seems to be characterized initially by the overconfidence that makes him disregard both the signs of danger and the companions' advice, and subsequently – after the triumph of his μῆτις in the blinding of the Cyclops – by the arrogance that makes him boast against Polyphemus at *Od.* 9.523-25.

Odysseus' ἀτασθαλία is thus the direct cause of the brutal death of some of his most valuable companions (*Od.* 9.195, 288-90, 311, 344). As we have hypothesized following a fairly standard pattern of Homeric psychology, if he had valued more carefully the indications of his φρένες and his νοῦς, and if he had listened to his comrades, without relying excessively on his μῆτις, he would not have lost six men.

Eurylochos' reproach on Aiaia is in fact phrased along these lines: he explicitly accuses Odysseus of having put at stake the life of his crew for no good reason, but only in the name of his own bold audacity (θρασύς, *Od.* 10.436). Now that Odysseus tries to persuade Eurylochos' group to join the other companions in Circe's palace, his previous imprudent boldness comes to mind: by explicitly blaming Odysseus for the tragedy on the Cyclops' island, Eurylochos simply wants to avoid a situation in which the hero's recklessness and overconfidence causes additional deaths.

3.2. The error that ruined Odysseus' mind: ὕβρις.

As our investigation has pointed out so far, Odysseus' ἀτασθαλία in the *Cyclopeia* puts the life of his comrades in danger, and for this reason it constitutes the core of Eurylochos' charge against him; yet neither does ἀτασθαλία itself represent a disturbance of the νοῦς, nor can it be held directly responsible for Odysseus' loss of μῆτις. After his ἀτάσθαλος behavior in deliberately seeking an encounter with Polyphemus, in fact, his μῆτις reaches its peak when it comes to finding a way out of the cave.

The hero's ἀτασθαλία is indeed rooted in μῆτις in some way, inasmuch as it involves a first moment of deliberation, and is brought about precisely by Odysseus' overconfidence in his own cunning: he takes for granted the superiority of his μῆτις and carelessly lets his curiosity (and thus most likely the θυμός) prevail. In a similar way,

the excessive confidence in his own μῆτις after his triumph over the Cyclops leads him to forget the limits of his human intellectual faculties, in a behavior that is typically recognized as ὕβρις. Odysseus' most distinctive characteristic, namely μῆτις, ultimately disrupts on the one hand his authority over the rest of the crew, inasmuch as his comrades notice his ἀτασθαλία, blame him for the death of some men, and lose their trust in him to the point that in their subsequent adventures they repeatedly disobey his orders (they open Aeolus' bag of winds, and they slaughter the cattle of the Sun). On the other hand, his supreme demonstration of μῆτις disrupts him on a psychological level, inasmuch as his overconfidence turns into ὕβρις, which the gods punish – as some sort of retribution for his μῆτις – by dimming his mental faculties.

In the course of this section we will consider first of all the conceptual differences between ἀτασθαλία and ὕβρις. This distinction will bring up another element of ἀτασθαλία, namely its relevance from a social point of view, and hence will shed new light on Eurylochos' accusations. Once our picture of ἀτασθαλία is complete, we will then proceed to consider more closely Odysseus' hybristic behavior towards the end of the Cyclops episode. The complete picture of Odysseus' psychological and behavioral itinerary in the *Cyclopeia* will help us elucidate the possible consequences of ἀτασθαλία and ὕβρις on the hero's mind.

3.2.1. Ἀτασθαλία and ὕβρις

Let us return to Zeus' speech in the prologue of the *Odyssey*. Zeus clearly emphasizes that humans, with their ἀτασθαλία, are responsible for their own misfortune, or rather for those misfortunes that they suffer "beyond that which was ordained" (ὑπὲρ μόρον, *Od.* 1.34). If Zeus were simply stating that men are punished by gods for their misdoings, there would be nothing particularly new about his message. What his words really mean, and what makes his speech programmatic for the entire poem, is the idea that some evil does come from the gods, and there is nothing men can do to avoid it; yet there are errors committed beyond, or not in accordance with the divine design[43] – for these errors men alone are responsible, and are doomed to suffer more than their own due share.[44]

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[43] Clay (1983) 215-16 mentions the widespread view that the *Odyssey* presents a more advanced ethical notion of the gods and a more enlightened view of divine justice and human responsibility than the *Iliad*. Zeus' programmatic speech in the proem of the *Odyssey* is thus a "theodicy that corrects, criticizes, and moves beyond the moral stance of the *Iliad*." In *Il.* 24.524-33, Achilles consoles Priam and claims that there are two jars at the threshold of Zeus, full of the gifts that he gives to humans: one of evils, and one of good. Zeus sometimes mixes good and evil gifts, but at times he gives only evils. Human happiness and misery thus come from the gods, and depend entirely on them. Clay convincingly argues that, by contrast, the Odyssean Zeus responds to Achilles' claim: he rejects divine responsibility for the human misfortune and charges mortals with their own unhappiness. In the *Iliad* Achilles refers to wandering as an example of unmixed evil (*Il.* 24.531-33); according to Zeus' words in the proem of the *Odyssey*, however, Odysseus' wanderings should not be considered some god sent evil.

[44] Finkelberg (1995) 25 n.46; Brown (1996) 8-10. The discrepancy between the high morality articulated by Zeus in the proem and the vindictiveness of Poseidon and Helios has been variously considered a compositional problem and an obstacle for a coherent theology in the *Odyssey*. The bibliography on this discussion includes (but is not limited to): Reinhardt (1996) 84, who emphasizes the unity of the conception of the gods in the poem; Schadewaldt (1958) 16, who advocates a mild analytic approach; Bona (1966) 23, 26, who criticizes the analytic approach; Fenik (1974) 208 n.18, 223 who rejects Schadewaldt's solution in opting for the oralist assumption of multiple strands within a complex tradition; Friedrich (1987a) 384 who harshly criticizes Fenik's aestheticist separation of form and content; Segal (1992) 489-518, who does not consider Zeus' "higher morality" and Poseidon's vindictiveness anomalies, but rather crucial points in clarifying the poem's more or less unified moral concerns.

This idea of excess, which is emphasized by Zeus himself, is extremely relevant for the present study. There is a limited and established portion of suffering that is divinely assigned to each man, just as there is a precise μοῖρα for everybody: to have an additional share of pain corresponds to the exceeding of that established portion, caused in turn by some error that transgresses human limitations.[45] Violations can involve either the boundaries and relations among humans, or the relationship between men and gods. When some social relation is broken or corrupted, the violation can take several different forms: yet, when dealing with a rational error involving deafness to persuasion and disregard of warnings and foreknowledge, we are in the presence of ἀτασθαλία. In Homer, in fact, and especially in the *Odyssey*, the term ἀτασθαλία seems to indicate the type of recklessness that subverts human social relations.[46]

When, on the other hand, the relationship between men and gods is at stake, the error takes the form of ὕβρις. A thorough study of a complex and widespread term such as ὕβρις goes beyond the scope of this work, and would certainly lead us astray. For the present investigation it will be sufficient to mention the most basic definition of ὕβρις,

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[45] In *Od.* 11.618-19, the shade of Heracles in Hades recognizes a similarity between his own labors and sufferings and Odysseus' wanderings, which are indicative of a κακὸς μόρος: Odysseus' sufferings are presented as his lot, but considering Zeus' programmatic words we can infer that men's ἀτασθαλία can modify the allotted portion; Odysseus' κακὸς μόρος after the Cyclops' curse at the end of book 9, in fact, seems to be increased and exacerbated. In general, the μόιρα is not influenced by the gods, and as Lateiner (2002) 44 pointed out, "a willingness of Olympians even to consider interfering with impersonal Destiny strongly signals severe distress in Homeric epic."

[46] The only crime that is called ἀτασθαλία without involving human relations is that of the Giants (*Od.* 7.60): yet the Giants are not humans, and their crime can easily be considered an attempt to subvert the social order among the gods.

namely the arrogance that derives from forgetting one's own mortal place in the scheme of things, which regularly prompts some kind of divinely-sent punishment.[47] Quite understandably, those who risk crossing the invisible line that separates men from gods are those who get closer to that line, and they can reach that point because the gods allow them to rise to heroic stature above the rest of mankind. In Greek thought, divine benevolence is always dangerous and double-edged, inasmuch as it often elevates humans and then reduces them back, more or less violently, to their mortal condition.[48]

Zeus' programmatic speech in the prologue of the *Odyssey*, therefore, and more precisely the phrase ὑπὲρ μόρον, is extremely significant: on the one hand it indicates the excessive suffering men are subject to (in addition to what has been divinely established), but on the other hand it mirrors the "excessive" nature of the human errors that generate this additional pain. Both the violation of social relations and the transgression of the limits between men and gods, in fact, are based on some "excess," and represent the trespassing of some limit. Odysseus' ἀτασθαλία, for instance, is

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[47] Brelich (1958) 261: "in sostanza è sempre un disconoscimento dei limiti che la concezione religiosa greca pone all'essere umano – concezione ben più antica non solo della filosofia, ma di tutta la documentazione letteraria sulla grecità, dal momento che essa pervade anche la poesia omerica." See also Clay (1983) 182. Fisher (1992) 151, and Brown (1996) 7-12 after him, have pointed out that the term ὕβρις in Homer always refers to violent lawlessness or some other behavior that compromises an individual's honor, rather than to the arrogance that it regularly indicates in fifth-century drama. However, the type of behavior that will be called ὕβρις later is certainly present in the Homeric poems too, although it may not be called that way explicitly: for this reason, in the course of this work, I will refer to ὕβρις to indicate a type of behavior, also in instances where the term ὕβρις does not occur explicitly.

[48] Clay (1983) esp. 180-83 discusses the ambiguity and the danger of divine favor. Cf. *Il.* 24.527-33 (Achilles instructs Priam about the ambiguous character of the gifts of Zeus); *Il.* 3.65-66 (Paris tells Hector that divine gifts should not be rejected, although nobody would choose them willingly); *Hymn to Demeter* 147 = 216 (humans must endure divine gifts by necessity, even if they bring grief).

deeply rooted in the hero's excessive confidence in his μῆτις; in this sense, the divine benevolence towards his extraordinary μῆτις is double-edged, since it generates arrogant overconfidence, and hence stubbornness and deafness to persuasion.

3.2.2. The social aspect of ἀτασθαλία: Odysseus' violent reaction.

By contrasting it with ὕβρις, we have thus shed some light on another, fundamental component of ἀτασθαλία, namely the way it undermines or at least disrupts social relations. In the previous section we have examined Eurylochos' charge of ἀτασθαλία against Odysseus, and we have pointed out how his ἀτασθαλία generates in his comrades frustration and mistrust. If now we consider this charge from the point of view of human relations, we can reasonably assert that Odysseus is accused of putting his comrades' lives in danger in the name of his own curiosity, stubbornly ignoring their advice. In other words, he is their leader, but his recklessness ends up disrupting the very bond of trust that related his crew to him. In the light of our considerations regarding the social impact of ἀτασθαλία, and in particular the disruption of social bonds that it generally implies, Odysseus' surprisingly violent reaction to Eurylochos' words appears clearer.

> ὣς ἔφατ', αὐτὰρ ἐγώ γε μετὰ φρεσὶ μερμήριξα,
> σπασσάμενος τανύηκες ἄορ παχέος παρὰ μηροῦ,
> τῷ οἱ ἀποτμήξας κεφαλὴν οὔδάσδε πελάσσαι,
> καὶ πῃῷ περ ἐόντι μάλα σχεδόν· ἀλλά μ' ἑταῖροι
> μειλιχίοισ' ἐπέεσσιν ἐρήτυον ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος·

'διογενές, τοῦτον μὲν ἐάσομεν, εἰ σὺ κελεύεις,
αὐτοῦ πὰρ νηΐ τε μένειν καὶ νῆα ἔρυσθαι·
ἡμῖν δ' ἡγεμόνευ' ἱερὰ πρὸς δώματα Κίρκης.'

So he spoke, and I pondered in my heart
whether to draw my long sword from beside my stout thigh,
and with it strike off his head, and bring it to the ground,
although he was a close relative of mine by marriage; but my comrades
one after another tried to restrain me with gentle words:
'O you sprung from Zeus, as for this man, we will leave him, if you so
[command,
to stay here by the ship, and to guard the ship,
but as for us, do lead us to the sacred house of Circe.'
(*Od.* 10.438-45)

What Eurylochos questions is Odysseus' reliability as leader. In this specific case, Odysseus' very authority is at stake, and his violent reaction corresponds to the necessity to reaffirm it strongly, and thus reestablish the threatened social order, with the minimum possible damage.

Eurylochos' charge thus attacks Odysseus on different levels: on a social level, he undermines the hero's leadership and opens the way to a possible mutiny;[49] on a psychological level, the mere use of the term ἀτασθαλία implies some misused rationality, and stubborn deafness to persuasion. In this case, since the forewarnings were uttered by the comrades, Eurylochos is almost questioning Odysseus' mental

[49] I do not necessarily agree with Brown when he claims that Eurylochos' outburst "is part of an unsuccessful bid to incite mutiny and is not ratified in any way by the rest of the ἑταῖροι" (1996: 12, n.29). The other comrades may not even be aware of Odysseus' responsibility in the *Cyclopeia*, inasmuch as their level of awareness and rationality is generally inferior to that of their leader. This does not mean that Eurylochos' charges are not legitimate and founded. In any case, it is ironic that the subsequent and successful sedition on Thrinacia, that will have dire consequences for the crew, is explicitly called ἀτασθαλία (*Od.* 1.7). Most significantly, Eurylochos' role of counter-advisor is crucial from a narratological point of view, since he points out to the audience elements that we would never know otherwise, such as Odysseus' ἀτασθαλία in the episode of Polyphemus. In this respect, Eurylochos' narratological function is very close to Polydamas' role of counter-advisor for Hector in *Il.* 18-22.

faculties (that appear inferior to those of his companions), and casts doubt both on his μῆτις and on the steadfastness of his νοῦς (which, according to our interpretation, are overcome by the θυμός).[50]

We will not try to investigate what aspect of Eurylochos' charge touched Odysseus' sensitivity the most: what matters for the scope of the present study is the promptness and the violence of his reaction, which correspond to his readiness to stop any attempt to overturn his authority. Significantly enough, the sedition on Thrinacia and the subsequent slaughtering of Helios' cattle are phrased in terms of ἀτασθαλία too, which was possibly initiated by this first hint of disrupted social order, disrespect for warnings, and misused rationality. Odysseus may or may not be aware of his own ἀτασθαλία in the *Cyclopeia*, but the very fact that he may be recognized as ἀτάσθαλος by his crew justifies his reaction, and confirms the strong social impact of the charge of ἀτασθαλία. This may also explain why, this time, Odysseus listens to his companions and does not kill Eurylochos: now his rationality (μετὰ φρεσὶ μερμήριξα, *Od.* 10.438) is not subject to the θυμός, but is carefully open to wise advice.

Furthermore, Eurylochos is explicitly called "a close relative" to Odysseus, and we would expect family bonds to constitute the core of social relations that should be respected. Odysseus' reaction, instead, simply aims to reestablish his authority on all levels, almost sacrificing family ties for a higher, social cause. In this context, our

[50] That Odysseus is particularly proud of his own μῆτις and steadfast νοῦς is evident for instance in *Od.* 12.211.

observations on λήθη in the first chapter will constitute a valuable interpretive key for this passage. At this point in the narrative, Odysseus has already drunk Circe's potion, and has consequently been subject to λήθη. Helen's νηπενθὲς φάρμακον of *Od.* 4.221 immediately comes to mind, and more precisely its power of inducing forgetfulness of evil things, and consequently removing pain and rage. The example that is used to illustrate the effectiveness of this φάρμακον is fairly remarkable for our present discussion:

> ὅς τὸ καταβρόξειεν, ἐπὴν κρητῆρι μιγείη,
> οὔ κεν ἐφημέριός γε βάλοι κατὰ δάκρυ παρειῶν,
> οὐδ' εἴ οἱ κατατεθναίη μήτηρ τε πατήρ τε,
> οὐδ' εἴ οἱ προπάροιθεν ἀδελφεὸν ἢ φίλον υἱὸν
> χαλκῷ δηϊόῳεν, ὁ δ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὁρῷτο.
>
> whoever should drink this down, when it is mixed in the bowl,
> would not in the course of that day let a tear fall down over his cheeks,
> not even if his mother and father should lie there dead,
> or if before his face men should slay with the sword his brother
> or dear son, and he saw it with his own eyes.
>
> (*Od.* 4.222-26)

The (violent) death of a close relative is precisely what Odysseus is about to cause in *Od.* 10.439-41. In some sort of detachment, λήθη enables people to face painful and even excruciating events without emotional encumbrances. As a matter of fact, nothing in Odysseus' reaction towards Eurylochos indicates rage or any other violent feeling; rather than emotional, his reaction seems to be rational (μετὰ φρεσὶ μερμήριξα, *Od.* 10.438). He knows – since his mental faculties are not affected by Circe's magic – how dangerous a charge of ἀτασθαλία can be on a social level, and he acts consequently,

with the help of the λήθη induced by Circe, without being restrained by emotional or sentimental considerations.

3.2.3. Odysseus' ὕβρις

Our study of ἀτασθαλία, as well as its distinction from ὕβρις, constitute the conceptual backdrop that will now allow us to complete our examination of the Cyclops episode. The prominent role of μῆτις in the *Cyclopeia* has been variously studied throughout the years, and it has been so widely celebrated that it certainly requires no further investigation.[51] Yet the different stages of Odysseus' cunning in the *Cyclopeia*, and – strictly related to it – the possible reasons why the hero's cleverness appears to be so obfuscated immediately after leaving Polyphemus' island, do not seem to have

[51] The bibliography on the *Cyclopeia* is immense, and covers various aspects of the Homeric episode from different angles. See for instance Podlecki (1961) 125-33 on guest gifts and the play on the name *Outis*; Bradley (1968) 33-44 on Odysseus' *hybris* and his helplessness after the *Cyclopeia*; Schein (1970) 73-83 analyzes the *Cyclopeia* in the light of the major themes and motifs of the entire poem; Glenn (1971) 133-81 considers the *Cyclopeia* in the light of folktales about the Cyclopes; Bergren (1983) 45-50 studies temporal patterns in the *Odyssey*, and singles out anachronies between narrative and story, be it proleptic prophecies or analeptic recollections, such as Polyphemus' recollection of the old prophecy regarding Odysseus; Clay (1983) 112-25 considers the *Cyclopeia* "the most Odyssean of all the adventures", inasmuch as it marks the supremacy of human intelligence over force and impulse, accomplished without divine assistance; Mondi (1983) 17-38 proposes a close analysis of the Cyclopeian society into its traditional, thematic, and folk elements; Newton (1983) 137-42 considers the possible reasons why Homer enlists some of the audience's sympathies on behalf of Polyphemus; Friedrich (1987) 121-33 and *idem* (1991) 16-28 examines the Cyclops adventure from the point of view of the poem's religious and moral outlook; Goldhill (1991) 31-33 considers the episode within his discussion of disguise and revelation of one's own name; Segal (1992) 489-518 considers the *Cyclopeia* and the episode of the cattle of the Sun as pivotal points in clarifying the poems moral concerns; Brown (1996) 1-29 considers the *Cyclopeia* in relation to Zeus' programmatic speech in Book 1; Reinhardt (1996) 79-87 considers the episode of Polyphemus as the only Odyssean adventure where Odysseus comes willingly, and not as a sufferer; Pucci (1998) 113-30 examines the elements that define the I and the Other in the story Odysseus tells about his encounter with the Cyclops; Nieto Hernández (2000) 345-66 considers various topics in the *Cyclopeia* such as the exchange of hospitality gifts, the revenge for an attack against one's family member, the strange nature of the society of the Cyclopes, and interestingly claims that "the *Cyclopeia* locates us in an antique world, in which we relive, along with Odysseus, the overthrow of Cronus, the beginning of Zeus' sovereignty, and the division of the universe among the three brothers." (364).

attracted much attention so far. What is relevant for the scope of the present work is instead, so to speak, the evolution of Odysseus' μῆτις in the encounter with Polyphemus, through the processes of ἀτασθαλία and ὕβρις, and the way in which different psychological entities contribute to this evolution. In the course of this section we will therefore follow Odysseus' demonstrations of μῆτις up to the end of book 9, with particular attention to the psychological entities involved. Just as μῆτις gives way to ἀτασθαλία, in fact, later in book 9 it seems to yield to ὕβρις, when Odysseus boasts arrogantly against Polyphemus; right after this outburst of ὕβρις, at the beginning of book 10, his traditional μῆτις suddenly appears to be seriously damaged. What this section will point out is the connection between ὕβρις and ἀτασθαλία, and the relation that both have to Odysseus' supreme demonstration of his μῆτις in the *Cyclopeia.*

Odysseus' overconfidence in his μῆτις seems to generate the ἀτάσθαλος behavior that we have observed upon his arrival in the land of the Cyclopes, which on the one hand causes the death of six valuable comrades, and on the other hand upsets the social relations between the hero and his crew. As a consequence, on Thrinacia they will break a formal oath and successfully precipitate a mutiny that will have deadly consequences for them all. Odysseus' undeniable ἀτασθαλία, therefore, can be considered responsible for the comrades' dire end. Yet it does not appear to have any consequences for him directly, nor does it seem to generate the loss of μῆτις that we have emphasized in the previous chapter.

On the contrary, the initial condition of ἀμηχανίη that seems to paralyze Odysseus and his companions in the cave of Polyphemus (*Od.* 9.295) is solved solely by the excellence of his μῆτις, which defeats the monster's brutal force.[52] Sheer curiosity and the ἀτασθαλία that results from it have led him into a situation of utter humiliation with strong unheroic connotations: he finds himself in a world of lawlessness and brutality, where the Cyclopes are unconcerned with the gods – and even consider themselves superior to the gods – the heroic glories of Troy are unknown, and he is forced to witness the grim death of some of his men, whom Polyphemus devours in response to his request for hospitality gifts. Odysseus fails to recognize the differences between his own society and that of the Cyclopes, and in a certain way Polyphemus is right to suggest that Odysseus' attitude indicates that he is either a fool or comes from far away: as a matter of fact, he does come from far away, namely from a place where respect for the gods is strictly enforced.[53]

Odysseus' first reaction to the Cyclops' brutality is a heroic urge to kill the monster in revenge, and so restore his violated honor, but he has to restrain his μεγαλήτωρ θυμός (*Od.* 9.299): the headlong impetuosity of the θυμός has already overcome his μῆτις once with dire consequences, when he deliberately looked for an encounter with Polyphemus; what is necessary now in order to escape from the cave is the determined suppression of the θυμός, before it once again thwarts all that his μῆτις

[52] For the interpretation of the *Cyclopeia* as the conflict of μῆτις and βίη, and culture and nature, see Kirk (1970) 162; Austin (1975) 143-50; Austin (1983) 3; Clay (1983) 112; Brown (1996) 18.

[53] Νήπιός εἰς, ὦ ξεῖν', ἢ τηλόθεν εἰλήλουθας, *Od.* 9.273. See Brown (1996) 21-22.

devises.[54] Not only does Odysseus suppress his μεγαλήτωρ θυμός,[55] but he even gives up his ὄνομα κλυτόν (*Od.* 9.364), which is the foundation of a hero's glory: as Friedrich noticed, "by calling himself *Outis*, Heroic Man inflicts upon himself the ultimate outrage, self-abnegation."[56] It is at this point that Odysseus almost turns into sheer μῆτις, initially suggested by the μή τίς at *Od.* 9.377, then confirmed by the pun μή τίς / Οὖτις in the words of the puzzled Cyclopes to the blinded Polyphemus (*Od.* 9.405-10),[57] and finally mentioned expressly by Odysseus as the agent of his success over the Cyclops (ὄνομ' ἐξαπάτησεν ἐμὸν καὶ μῆτις ἀμύμων, *Od.* 9.414; πάντας δὲ δόλους καὶ μῆτιν ὕφαινον, /ὥς τε περὶ ψυχῆς, *Od.* 9.422-23).[58]

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[54] Friedrich (1991) 22 justly emphasizes the role of τλημοσύνη combined with the hero's intellectual strength: "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." Cf. *Od.* 20.20 (σὺ δ' ἐτόλμας, ὄφρα σε μῆτις ἐξάγαγ' ἐξ ἄντροιο). On this double aspect of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, see ch.2 p.86.

[55] The θυμός is mentioned three times during Odysseus' elaboration of the plan that leads to blinding Polyphemus, with three slightly different nuances of meaning: in the first instance, it represents the heroic urge to kill the Cyclops (κατὰ μεγαλήτορα θυμόν, *Od.* 9.299); in the second case, it indicates a second, wiser instinct that overcomes the initial rashness (ἕτερος... θυμός, *Od.* 9.302); finally, it seems to be the location in which the best plan is elaborated (κατὰ θυμὸν ἀρίστη φαίνετο βουλή, *Od.* 9.318 = 9.424). The crucial role of the θυμός in Homeric decision-making processes is here clear. Cf. Sharples (1983) 1-7.

[56] Friedrich (1991) 22. This concept remains valid even if we accept the indication of the scholia (ad *Od.* 9.364), according to whom κλυτὸν here does not mean "famous," but rather "by which I am called" (ἐξ οὗ καλοῦμαι): the name in the heroic world is consistently a fundamental component of the hero's glory, inasmuch as it distinguishes him from everybody else.

[57] On this pun, see Podlecki (1961) esp. 130-31, Schein (1970) esp. 79-80, and Goldhill (1991) 34.

[58] In *Od.* 20.18-21, when Odysseus addresses his own heart and urges it to endure the arrogance of the suitors, he reminds it of the worse pain that it had to endure in the cave of Polyphemus, "when the brutal strength of the Cyclops devoured my strong comrades: but you endured, until μῆτις got you out of the cave, when you already thought you would die."

Once Odysseus' μῆτις triumphs over the Cyclops' brutal force,[59] the hero feels the need to reassert his humiliated heroic self by addressing the blinded monster, and thus ceases to be Οὖτις. Just as an Iliadic hero would do after a victory, he boasts to seal his *aristeia*.[60] Furthermore, Once he gets his comrades and himself safely out of the cave, Odysseus addresses the Cyclops with three different speeches that make up his heroic εὖχος. Let us consider them closely.

> Κύκλωψ, οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλες ἀνάλκιδος ἀνδρὸς ἑταίρους
> ἔδμεναι ἐν σπῆϊ γλαφυρῷ κρατερῇφι βίηφι.
> καὶ λίην σέ γ' ἔμελλε κιχήσεσθαι κακὰ ἔργα,
> σχέτλι', ἐπεὶ ξείνους οὐχ ἄζεο σῷ ἐνὶ οἴκῳ
> ἐσθέμεναι· τῶ σε Ζεὺς τείσατο καὶ θεοὶ ἄλλοι.
>
> "Cyclops, you were not about to devour the comrades of a weakling
> by brutal strength in your hollow cave.
> And surely your evil deeds were to fall on your own head,
> you wretch, who did not refrain from eating your guests in your own house:
> therefore Zeus has taken vengeance on you, and the other gods."
>
> (*Od.* 9.475-79)

Odysseus declares the blinding of Polyphemus to be a divine punishment (τίσις) for the monster's lawlessness, and assumes, without any warrant, that he is the gods' agent. The hero thus seems to credit Zeus and the other gods for his deed, but this claim sounds awkward and surprising. The Cyclopes, in fact, live outside the world of ordinary humankind (*Od.* 9.106-15), although Odysseus here erroneously assumes that

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[59] In contrast to Odysseus' μῆτις, Polyphemus is repeatedly represented as foolish and obtuse (ἀφραδίῃσιν, *Od.* 9.361; τὸ δὲ νήπιος οὐκ ἐνόησεν, *Od.* 9.442), to emphasize further the utmost superiority of intelligence over physical force.

[60] Cf. Hector in *Il.* 16.830-42 and Achilles in *Il.* 22.331-36.

the common rules governing human society are valid for them too. They seem not to obey the rules of hospitality, since they lack the social structure on which the institution of ξενία depends. Yet Zeus does not punish them for this, and what is more, he declines (οὐκ ἐμπάζετο, *Od.* 9.553) Odysseus' sacrifice at *Od.* 9.551-53. The blinding of Polyphemus would perhaps be justifiable in terms of human morality, but that is an unreliable standard in the world of the Cyclopes. Not only does Odysseus fail to realize this, but he dares to impose his own moral standards, and claims that his hand was driven by the gods themselves when he blinded the lawless brute.[61]

After this first speech, Polyphemus attempts to hit Odysseus' ship with a huge rock, but this does not prevent the hero from boasting further: when he estimates himself to be at a safe distance from the coast, he summons the Cyclops again. The companions at this point realize what danger the hero's εὖχος may represent for all of them, and try to persuade him with sweet words.[62] Homer here uses the same expression that he employs when the comrades dissuade Odysseus from killing Eurylochos in *Od.* 10.441-42, but the outcome is different, inasmuch as now the hero does not listen to them (οὐ πεῖθον ἐμὸν μεγαλήτορα θυμόν, *Od.* 9.500).

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[61] Scholars have debated at length on how to interpret this passage, and in particular line 479. Reinhardt (1996) 82 considers it the core of Odysseus' presumptuousness; Eisenberger (1973) 141 argues, against Reinhardt, that line 479 suggests the hero's pious modesty, rather than his arrogance; Fenik (1974) 216 criticizes Reinhardt's concept of ὕβρις as anachronistic, since "sin of moral pride" is essentially a Christian notion. For an overview of the debate, see Friedrich (1991)17-24; Brown (1996) 6, 16.

[62] De Jong (2001) 246: "Not only the aggressive nature of his words, but the very act of speaking is dangerous (as the companions point out), since it allows the blind Cyclops to locate the Greeks."

Once μῆτις has granted him victory, it no longer controls and restrains his μεγαλήτωρ θυμός. The first step of his resurgent θυμός, all the more violent because of the proportion of the outrage suffered in the cave, is the loss of all restraint: his disregarding the sensible advice of the comrades is not phrased in terms of ἀτασθαλία, this time, because it is not preceded by any reasoning. Neither μῆτις nor νοῦς seem to play any role here, and the hero' θυμός even risks jeopardizing at the last minute the successful escape.

Completely ignoring the comrades' terrified supplication, Odysseus thus addresses the Cyclops a second time with an enraged θυμός (κεκοτηότι θυμῷ, *Od.* 9.501):

> Κύκλωψ, αἴ κέν τίς σε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων
> ὀφθαλμοῦ εἴρηται ἀεικελίην ἀλαωτύν,
> φάσθαι Ὀδυσσῆα πτολιπόρθιον ἐξαλαῶσαι,
> υἱὸν Λαέρτεω, Ἰθάκῃ ἔνι οἰκί' ἔχοντα.
>
> "Cyclops, if any one of mortal men
> shall ask you about the shameful blinding of your eye,
> say that Odysseus, the sacker of cities, blinded it,
> the son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca."
>
> (*Od.* 9.502-5)

The proud revelation of Odysseus' famous name marks the definite end of Οὖτις, and confirms the prophecy that had foretold Polyphemus about his blinding by the hand of Odysseus. In a *crescendo* of rage, fomented by his furious θυμός, the hero here claims the deed as his very own, and does not mention the gods anymore. The peak of this increasingly violent outburst culminates in what Friedrich (1991: 23) calls "a gratuitous insult to Poseidon:"

αἲ γὰρ δὴ ψυχῆς τε καὶ αἰῶνός σε δυναίμην
εὖνιν ποιήσας πέμψαι δόμον Ἄϊδος εἴσω,
ὡς οὐκ ὀφθαλμόν γ' ἰήσεται οὐδ' ἐνοσίχθων

"If only I was able to rob you of soul and life,
and to send you to the house of Hades,
as I am sure that not even the Earth-shaker will heal your eye."

(*Od.* 9.523-25)

The *aristeia* of Odysseus' μῆτις is thus sacrificed to the vehemence of his μεγαλήτωρ θυμός, which lays him open to the curse of the Cyclops (*Od.* 9.528-35) and the consequent wrath of Poseidon.[63] This process corresponds perfectly to the idea of ὕβρις that we have described above: Odysseus, who is endowed with μῆτις beyond human standards, completely relies on this exceptional quality to escape from a situation of utmost danger,[64] but his subsequent success makes him forget both his mortal place in the scheme of things, and the boundary that separates men from gods. In the final analysis, his supreme demonstration of μῆτις turns into excessive confidence in his own faculties, and exposes him to divine wrath and punishment.

It is not necessary to view Odysseus' words as a presumption of divinity;[65] rather, as Frederick Combellack has pointed out, they are a "form of asseveration" designed to express the speaker's certainty about something by contrasting it to an unrealistic wish. In this perspective, Odysseus' third and last address to Polyphemus simply says: "I wish

[63] Once Polyphemus knows Odysseus' name, he can curse him. See Brown (1966) 193-202. For the structure of Polyphemus' curse as "prayer type-scene" and "anti-farewell speech", see De Jong (2001) 248.

[64] On the use of trickery in situations that would otherwise be inescapable, see ch.2 p.78.

[65] Thus Bradley (1968) 39-44.

I were as sure of being able to kill you as I am that not even Poseidon will cure your eye."[66] In any case, his excessive certainty, based on the staggering triumph of his μῆτις, ends up dimming μῆτις itself, and yields entirely to his μεγαλήτωρ θυμός: no reasoning lies beneath Odysseus' boasting, and his heroic pride alone is speaking.

The assertion of his own intellectual excellence would be enough to cause the φθόνος θεῶν, and some divine wrath may indeed aim to lower the hero's superiority.[67] Yet, although the dimming of Odysseus' mental faculties and the obliteration of his μῆτις seem indeed a very appropriate retribution, at no point does the Homeric narrator indicate explicitly that the hero's helplessness is the outcome of divine vengeance; Odysseus himself, however, will later suspect that he has been its victim (*Od.* 12.338,

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[66] Combellack (1981) 118. The scholia to *Od.* 9.525 take Odysseus' outburst as foolishly demeaning Poseidon's powers; then, following the pattern that we will observe in Plutarch's *De audiendis poetis* 27 (see below, n.70), they provide two possible explanations for the hero's proud words: one morally neutral (it was not Poseidon's prerogative to heal, but rather Apollo's), and one morally charged (Poseidon would not want to heal Polyphemus on account of the monster's lawlessness, διὰ τὴν πονηρίαν). The latter explanation is further loaded ethically by the observation that, even though the Cyclops deserved to be punished, he should have been punished by Poseidon, and not by Odysseus: the hero's outburst would thus be all the more despicable. In any case, Odysseus' mindlessness (ἀνοήτως) in addressing the god remains unexplained, and constitutes an *aporia* both for ancient and for modern readers. The present investigation of the *Cyclopeia*, of Odysseus' boasting, and of his subsequent helplessness, thus aims to find a possible explanation regarding a behavior for which Homer neither provides a clarification nor expresses a judgment.

[67] Divine punishment is the inevitable consequence of human wrongdoings in several works of Greek tragedians. In Aesch. *Agam.* 453-54, 478-83, for instance, human wrongdoings have clearly no escape from divine vengeance, even if the Furies are called "late-avenging" in *Agam.* 71. While in tragedy the idea of slow but sure punishment is formulated explicitly, in Homer the question of divine retribution is more difficult for us to follow, since the poet does not always present divine wrath as the consequence of some explicit human outrage. In *Il.* 6.200-205, for instance, Homer does not specify the reason for the gods' wrath against Bellerophon. According to Pindar (*Isthm.* 7.44-47), Bellerophon with his horse Pegasus tried to reach the gods' dwelling in the sky. Homer only mentions the punishment Bellerophon is subject to, namely solitary wandering and the violent death of two of his children. In the case of Odysseus, Polyphemus' prayer alerts the audience that some divine punishment will fall upon the hero for his hybristic behavior, but Homer fails to present the actual punishment as immediate and straightforward.

371-73). Before we consider the divine intervention at the end of the *Cyclopeia* more in detail, we should point out once again the scarcity of elements in the Homeric text that guide the audience towards one precise interpretation: not only Odysseus' behavior with the Cyclops, but also the ensuing divine intervention presents major difficulties in this sense.

The scholia to *Od.* 9.229 confirm that Odysseus' decision to deliberately seek an encounter with Polyphemus is one of those Homeric passages that already perplexed ancient authors. Plutarch (*De Audiendis Poetis* 27) mentions a series of passages in which the poet does not give us sufficient elements to decide the real nature of a character, or the true reasons for certain actions.[68] As Plutarch points out, when Homer does not indicate a clear interpretation for a certain behavior, as we have repeatedly noticed in the *Cyclopeia*, the readers of those ethically ambiguous passages are generally faced with two possible explanations, one more positive and admirable, and the other despicable. What matters for Plutarch is that the young readers can distinguish between morally good and bad to interpret a passage when the text is ambiguous or unclear (27e-f).

Even if we set aside the ethically pedagogical side of his discussion, however, it is interesting how he explicitly points out the difficulties presented by various ancient texts, and the twofold possible interpretation that the audience is faced with. In the case

[68] Unlike Achilles, Odysseus is a much more complex and less definite figure, which allows later authors, such as Pindar (*Nem.* 7.20ff.), Sophocles (*Ajax* and *Philoctetes*), Horace (*Sat.* 2.5), Dante (*Inferno* XXIV), Ugo Foscolo (*A Zacinto*), Alfred Tennyson (*Ulysses*), Giosue Carducci ("Omero," *Juvenilia* II), Giovanni Pascoli ("L'ultimo viaggio," *Poemi Conviviali*), and Gabriele D'Annunzio ("Laus Vitae," *Maia*), to develop very different aspects of his character.

of the *Cyclopeia*, a morally admirable interpretation of Odysseus' desire to meet Polyphemus would be his "inquisitiveness," to use Stanford's terms, while "acquisitiveness" and greed for hospitality gifts would be morally despicable.[69]

The exact nature of Odysseus' punishment, and the consequences of his behavior in the *Cyclopeia*, on the other hand, represent another excellent example of what Plutarch would call ἀσάφεια τῆς γνώμης (*De Audiendis Poetis* 27a): Homer's interpretation, in other words, is not clear from the text.[70] Let us consider the end of book 9 in more detail. Poseidon hears the invocation of his son Polyphemus (τοῦ δ' ἔκλυε κυανοχαίτης, *Od.* 9.535), while Zeus refuses Odysseus' sacrifice, takes Poseidon's side, and plans to destroy all his ships and kill all his comrades (*Od.* 9.552-55).[71] In the *Nekyia* Teiresias expressly points to the wrath of Poseidon (*Od.* 11.101-3), and in the course of the poem we are told twice (*Od.* 1.20 and 6.330) that it does not relent. The epic narrator repeatedly refers to Poseidon's fury, providing the audience with elements that Odysseus himself cannot be aware of, and therefore would not be able to mention in his account to the Phaeacians.

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[69] Stanford (1954) 76. See above, n.41.

[70] The solution that Plutarch envisages for this ἀσάφεια is a process of exact distinction and specification (διοριστέον, *De audiendis* 27a). The same process of distinction, defined by the exact same terminology, is adopted by Socrates in Plato's *Timaeus* 54b to overcome lack of clarity and precision (τὸ δὴ πρόσθεν ἀσαφῶς ῥηθὲν νῦν μᾶλλον διοριστέον). We may reasonably assume that unclear arguments were customarily disentangled by recurring to processes of distinction similar to those illustrated by Plato and Plutarch.

[71] On the possible reasons for the unanimity of Zeus and Poseidon, see Reinhardt (1996) 84. It is only some retrospective analysis that makes Odysseus realize that Zeus refused his sacrifice. We are not told when exactly this realization takes place in the narrative, but we can infer that the dreadful adventures that follow the *Cyclopeia* slowly contribute in building the awareness that Odysseus in disguise demonstrates in his lucid words to Amphinomus in *Od.* 18.130-42.

Yet where is his wrath evident in Odysseus' adventures? If the hero reaches the Lotus Eaters and the Cyclopes before incurring divine wrath, we do not necessarily have to ascribe the adventures of the Sirens, Skylla, and Charybdis to Poseidon's fury. What I want to suggest is that the effects of Poseidon's wrath are not limited to tempests and shipwrecks, and in fact Poseidon's traditional type of revenge is not Odysseus' worst punishment here.

We are told that the sea god hears (ἔκλυε, *Od.* 9.536) Polyphemus' prayer, and Zeus embraces Poseidon's cause and is willing to fulfill Polyphemus' curse that the hero "may come home late and in evil case, after losing all his comrades, in another man's ship, and may find woes in his house" (*Od.* 9.532-35). Yet Zeus' plan to destroy Odysseus' ships and comrades is a quite problematic form of punishment: he does not kill the men and devastate the ships directly, with a divine act similar to the tempests traditionally brought about by Poseidon. Rather, their destruction seems to be caused by their own ἀτασθαλία, as we can also infer from Zeus' speech in the prologue.[72] However, in a certain sense they do perish from a divine scheme. If there is a divine scheme to punish Odysseus after the *Cyclopeia*, in fact, and one consequence of this scheme is his no longer being credible to his men, then their recklessness in not listening to him and following their own desires in the face of his advice to the contrary can be reasonably considered a part of or at least a consequence of this scheme.

[72] Cf. Reinhardt (1996) 72 about Odysseus' adventures: "each time Odysseus and his men bring the disaster on themselves. Although Poseidon is angry with Odysseus, our knowledge of ruin caused by sin directs our attention not to him but to Zeus. So on a higher level of causal connections, the authority of Zeus overshadows the wrath of Poseidon." On Poseidon's wrath against Odysseus and on the problem of the vindication of Odysseus' errors, see Schmidt (2003) 5-42.

So what is the result of Zeus' μερμηρίζειν at *Od.* 9.554, and what does Poseidon's wrath involve?

> ὁ δ' οὐκ ἐμπάζετο ἱρῶν,
> ἀλλ' ὅ γε μερμήριζεν, ὅπως ἀπολοίατο πᾶσαι
> νῆες ἐύσσελμοι καὶ ἐμοὶ ἑρίηρες ἑταῖροι.
>
> yet he (i.e. Zeus) did not accept my sacrifice,
> but was wondering how all my well-benched ships
> might perish and my loyal comrades.
>
> (*Od.* 9. 553-55)

My suggestion is that on the one hand the destruction of Odysseus' crew corresponds to Polyphemus' curse, and requires divine intervention only inasmuch as it brings about (or does not hinder) the comrades' ἀτασθαλία. Ἀτασθαλία will then ultimately ruin them. On the other hand, the divine intervention that originates their ἀτασθαλία is also the most fierce retribution for the hero's hybristic behavior.[73] Let us consider how.

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[73] The Homeric poet is comfortable with the idea that the gods arrange things to happen in the human world, but humans in the Homeric poems tend to believe that they have control over events – thus the dual and parallel explanations for divine and human causation of events. Homeric scholars commonly refer to this double possible explanation as "dual causation" or "double motivation." The earliest evidence of this theory is offered by Plutarch, who notices this dual causation of events in Homer, and in *Coriolanus* ch.32 defends the idea that divine intervention in Homer does not detract from human freedom. Thus Pohlenz (1947) 14 notes how the doomed Achilles still feels himslef the master of his own decisions. The issue of double motivation for human actions in Homer has been debated at length. On the one hand, some scholars emphasize the role of divine intervention over the individual's self-determination: Snell (1953) 20, (1966) 18-31, Fränkel (1939) 476-79, (1962^2) 113, and Voigt (1972^2) 106 all consider Homeric agents as not agents in the fullest sense, since they do not seem to make decisions having full awareness of what they are doing; rather than acting, they appear to react, and choices seem to be made *for* them, rather than *by* them. In dealing with Patroclos' death, Dodds (1951) 7-14 introduces the idea of "overdetermination" in Homer. On the other hand, other scholars have demonstrated that the intervention of a god in a decision-making process does not obliterate the freedom (and hence the responsibility) of the individual; this theory is now widely accepted and on it I base my suggestion regarding Odysseus' punishment. See Calhoun (1937) 16, Schadewaldt (1938) 155, Grube (1952) 3-19, Webster (1952-53) 18, Schwabl (1954) 46-64, Kullmann (1956) 106-11, Wüst (1958) 75-91, Harrison (1960) 77-80, Lesky (1961), who confutes Dodds' theory, and claims that Homeric actions have

After a number of adventures in lands populated by monsters, and after Odysseus' μῆτις has reached its peak, the hero would obviously require some rest in order to recover both his physical strength and his mental faculties. When his μῆτις is clearly dimmed, however, the gods seem to abandon him, and at the same time do not allow him to take any rest: his mental faculties, in fact, are consistently challenged in the subsequent adventures in Aeolia, with the Laestrygonians, and on Aiaia. However, while stress and tiredness alone can perhaps explain the dimming of the hero's μῆτις, they are in no way sufficient to justify his loss of credibility with his men, and certainly would not involve any μερμηρίζειν on Zeus' part.[74] The text is unfortunately quite brief at this point: it neither provides us with a clear explanation of the outcome of Zeus' μερμηρίζειν, nor does it give precise reasons for Odysseus' helplessness. Plutarch's mention of ἀσάφεια τῆς γνώμης (*De Audiendis Poetis* 27a) comes to mind once again. This obscurity of the text can best be solved by combining the two possible explanations for the hero's unusually weak condition, namely exhaustion and divine punishment.

As Plutarch points out, ambiguous passages can generally be explained in two possible and ethically distant ways, and Odysseus's helplessness is no exception: it

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interdependent aspects, rather than independent components: actions can thus acquire a "double aspect." Schmitt (1982) 6-23 argues that divine intervention somehow matches abilities and propensities already present in an agent: therefore, it does not remove individual responsibility, since it prompts what the individual might have done otherwise. See also Lloyd-Jones (1971) 10, Gaskin (1990) 1-15, and our considerations on ἄτη above (pp.124-26 and n.5).

[74] Odysseus' words for Zeus' state of mind (ἀλλ' ὅ γε μερμήριζεν, *Od.* 9.554) perhaps reflect the difficulty of seeing how his plan took effect.

could be explained either in morally neutral terms as tiredness and exhaustion, or in strongly moral terms as a divine punishment. Stress and fatigue are unquestionably an important factor in the hero's sudden helplessness. Yet, since Zeus expressly devises destruction for Odysseus and his crew, the audience certainly expects negative consequences for the hero, far worse than the simple consequences of some natural tiredness. If we follow this line of thought, the divine punishment would thus encompass two aspects: on the one hand, the gods deliberately do not intervene to help the hero in a moment of extreme need; on the other hand, they make the crew's ἀτασθαλία possible by undermining Odysseus' credibility and authority.

After Odysseus' proud boasting, the lack of divine help emphasizes the limits of his human condition: since ὕβρις constitutes the trespassing and neglecting of the boundaries between men and gods, Odysseus' act of ὕβρις is punished by forcing him to count on his human forces alone. The text does not indicate clearly whether the dimming of Odysseus' μῆτις is the natural and temporary consequence of his exhausting adventures, or is rather a divine punishment, and we have suggested that it is probably a combination of both. What we know for sure is that the dimming of his mental faculties, possibly made worse or at least not helped by any divine intervention, turns into the condition of utter disorientation and helplessness which generates all the misadventures that we have examined in the previous chapter.

In the course of book 9, Odysseus thus seems to indulge in two different types of error: ἀτασθαλία and ὕβρις. The first represents an initial, partial, and temporary obliteration of μῆτις, whose sound reasoning is overcome by the impetuosity of the θυμός: it brings about the dire death of some companions, and utter danger for Odysseus himself, to the point that he must promptly suppress his own μεγαλήτωρ θυμός and resort to the highest possible μῆτις. The latter error originates directly from this triumph of μῆτις, and paradoxically represents its utmost obliteration while the θυμός boasts proudly: in so doing, the hero seems to take for granted his customary intellectual skills, forgets that they ultimately reside on divine favor, and boasts arrogantly. Significantly enough, Athena, Odysseus' patroness, is absent from the entire *Cyclopeia*, and leaves the hero alone when he is fabricating his own destruction.

Both errors thus originate from Odysseus' excessive confidence in his own μῆτις, which arouses divine wrath, and ultimately brings about Odysseus' destruction. Unlike that of other heroes, however, Odysseus' punishment seems to be limited neither to the death of the people around him, nor to his long wanderings: the most unusual, though immediate and excruciating punishment he is subject to is the lack of divine help in order to heal his tired and dimmed mental faculties, and possibly the divine intervention that destabilizes his credibility with the crew.

Once the hero is left alone in his distressed human condition, his faculties will require a long and painful process of recovery. In other words, to answer our initial

question, Odysseus' νοῦς was damaged and his μῆτις weakened as a result of his distressing adventures with the Kykones, the Lotus Eaters, and finally the Cyclopes. Because he arrogantly boasted about the power of his μῆτις, according to some kind of divine retribution, the gods devise an adequate punishment, abandon him, let him rely indeed on his weakened human faculties alone, and possibly worsen his condition also damaging his authority with the crew. The temporary dimming of his forces, due either to stress and tiredness or to some divine punishment (or possibly to a combination of both), is thus prolonged and intensified because the hero's subsequent adventures do not grant him any possibility of resting, but add up to distressing his νοῦς even further. Odysseus' process of recovery from such a deep condition of helplessness must therefore quite understandably focus on the νοῦς to recuperate the sharpness that it lost, leaving aside the excessive and arrogant confidence that in the final analysis destroyed it.

CHAPTER FOUR

TOWARDS ODYSSEUS' RECOVERY

In the previous chapters we examined Odysseus' adventures prior to his arrival at Aiaia, and in particular we pointed out how compromised his mental faculties are after his proud boasting to Polyphemus. His νοῦς is damaged, and his customary μῆτις yields to an unusual condition of helplessness. In the light of these considerations, we should now go back to our observations in chapter 1, and mainly to the idea that Circe's magic may indeed work as some kind of remedy for Odysseus to recover his νοῦς. In particular, according to our analysis, the forgetfulness induced by Circe's magic alleviates the pain that the recovery of his full mental faculties would necessarily involve. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that Homer frequently regards λήθη as a preventive remedy. Her φάρμακον does not cure Odysseus' νοῦς like some sort of divine medicine would do. Rather, by dissolving painful memories, it allows the hero to concentrate on his νοῦς, and thus makes the process of recovery possible.[1] In other words, if the Circe episode represents Odysseus' recovery, λήθη represents just its

[1] In this respect, Apollonius Rhodius provides an interesting structural parallel, inasmuch as in his *Argonautica* Circe has the sole function of cleansing Medea and Jason of the μίασμα after the murder of Apsyrtus. Without that purification, as the speaking mast of the ship Argo warns them, they will never escape from pain and tempests on the wide ocean (*Arg.* 4.585-88). Circe's narrative function is therefore a necessary passage for the journey to go on. This functional similarity reinforces our claim that the Homeric Circe episode was also functional to Odysseus' recovery and homecoming. Essentially, Apollonius may have read the Homeric Circe episode as a necessary phase of transition too, and this reading of it has then shaped his own Circe character.

preliminary phase, aimed to chase away emotional distress, or whatever disturbance may compromise the hero's recovery.

On Aiaia Odysseus does not demonstrate any sign of recovery. He is completely lost when he arrives there (*Od.* 10.190-93); he somehow renounces his authority of leader and resorts to lot to decide who should explore the island (*Od.* 10.204-6); he wants rescue his comrades from Circe's palace (*Od.* 10.261-62), but rather than following the smoke from Circe's palace he asks Eurylochos to accompany him (*Od.* 10.263), thus risking his comrade's life. Hermes points out to him that his forces will never be sufficient to face Circe and save his men (*Od.* 10.281-85), and the hero thus follows his instructions very carefully. Thanks to Hermes' help he is not subject to any bodily transformation and persuades Circe to turn his men back into human form (*Od.* 10.287-306; 316-99). Homer does not hint at any personal initiative on Odysseus' part: in approaching Circe he simply follows the god's advice. No sign of recovery appears after he drinks Circe's φάρμακον either. When Odysseus returns to the ships and brings the rest of the crew to Circe's palace, he is not behaving like a responsible leader, but is just obeying Circe's order (*Od.* 10.401-27). Finally, he forgets about his homecoming, and his companions have to rebuke him (*Od.* 10.472). Their reproach, however, cannot in itself constitute the remedy Odysseus needs to recuperate his μῆτις: it cannot be sufficient to counteract both the λήθη induced by Circe's magic and the divinely imposed weakness of his mind. The comrades' words simply represent a wake-up call, or rather another guideline that urges Odysseus to beg Circe to let them leave.

On Aiaia, therefore, Odysseus' mental faculties do not show any sign of recovery, and he does not seem capable of any personal initiative: if Circe's φάρμακον induces forgetfulness in him, it certainly does not help him recuperate his usual resourcefulness. So what type of process does Odysseus' recovery imply, and what role does Circe play in it? In the course of this chapter we will consider how, in order for the hero to regain full power over his mental faculties, he will be forced to explore what the boundaries of human mental faculties are.

Odysseus' recovery is twofold, and seems essentially to focus on his νοῦς. The first phase is constituted by his journey to Hades, and in particular by his conversation with Tiresias, the only one of the dead who is allowed to retain a steadfast νοῦς. The difference between Tiresias and the other dead (whose νοῦς was lost with death) provides a good model for Odysseus to discern what steadfastness of νοῦς is. The seer thus represents a positive model for the hero, and provides him both with directions and with an authoritative moral lesson, by warning him against the dangers that an unbridled θυμός can cause to the νοῦς. Elpenor, instead, constitutes a negative example, inasmuch as his mental faculties are weak, and resemble the condition from which the hero should recover, rather than what he should aim for. In addition, his dialogues with other dead spirits help Odysseus regain his awareness of the peculiar characteristics that distinguish him from other men; in particular, they remind Odysseus of the relevance of his outstanding μῆτις.

In the second part of his recovery, Circe suggests to Odysseus some practical μῆτις to survive the Sirens and other dangers. However, as we will observe, her instructions do not seem as precise and detailed as those before the trip to the Underworld. Once she makes sure that everything in the Underworld journey took place as it was supposed to (*Od.* 12.34-37), she can leave Odysseus more and more free to make his own decisions, as she explicitly asserts (*Od.* 12.56-58). Her advice is mainly and significantly aimed to remind Odysseus of the undefeatable power of the divine, which humans should never challenge.

4.1. <u>The necessity for Odysseus to descend to Hades.</u>

The θυμός, as we have illustrated at some length in the previous chapter, is the generator of motion, emotion, agitation, and passions in general. It is not surprising, therefore, that the adventures of Odysseus and his crew with various monsters have strained and deeply affected their θυμός too. Yet the recovery of the θυμός, as Circe presents it, appears to be rather easy to obtain: her words clearly indicate that food and wine will gradually restore both the men's weakened bodies and their θυμός, and grant it the strength it had before they left for Troy.

> ἀλλ' ἄγετ' ἐσθίετε βρώμην καὶ πίνετε οἶνον,
> εἰς ὅ κεν αὖτις θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι λάβητε,
> οἷον ὅτε πρώτιστον ἐλείπετε πατρίδα γαῖαν
> τρηχείης Ἰθάκης· νῦν δ' ἀσκελέες καὶ ἄθυμοι,
> αἰὲν ἄλης χαλεπῆς μεμνημένοι· οὐδέ ποθ' ὔμιν
> θυμὸς ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ, ἐπεὶ ἦ μάλα πολλὰ πέπασθε

> But come, eat food and drink wine,
> until you once again get spirit in your breasts
> such as when at first you left your native land
> of rugged Ithaca; but now you are withered and spiritless,
> always mindful of the exhausting sea; nor is your
> spirit ever joyful, for truly you have suffered a lot.
>
> (*Od.* 10.460-65)

Ἀθυμία, in this case, appears to indicate the deep emotional distress that accompanies physical exhaustion, deep suffering, and danger overcome. Quite logically, therefore, Circe invites the crew to regain their forces with food and wine, so that – we may reasonably infer – their θυμός will also be affected positively.[2] Unlike Calypso, however, she does not expect Odysseus and his men to stay forever, and her hospitality has a clear temporal limit ("eat and drink *until*...," *Od.* 10.463): their prolonged stay, therefore, has very much the traits of a necessary recovery before facing a new part of their journey.

Circe's offer of food and drink is certainly effective if the comrades, after one year on Aiaia, remind Odysseus of their return to their homeland (*Od.* 10.472-74), thus demonstrating that they are both physically and morally ready to face a new journey. The full recovery of the θυμός, on the other hand, is confirmed by Odysseus' subsequent address to Circe (*Od.* 10.480-86), when he begs the goddess to allow them to leave since their θυμός demands so (θυμὸς δέ μοι ἔσσυται ἤδη / ἠδ' ἄλλων ἑτάρων, *Od.* 10.484-85). And Circe's response begins by saying that they should no

[2] For food as an antidote to grief, see *Il.* 24.601-20; *Od.* 4.212-14; 7.215-25. On the positive or negative effects of wine on the θυμός, see Sullivan (1997) 10-14.

longer remain on Aiaia against their will (μηκέτι νῦν ἀέκοντες ἐμῷ ἐνὶ μίμνετε οἴκῳ, *Od.* 10.489): once their bodies and spirits have regained their original strength, they obviously no longer want to remain on Circe's island, whereas they certainly had no objections when they were disheartened and lacked vitality.

Yet Circe unexpectedly and abruptly tells Odysseus that a journey to Hades will be necessary before they can head back to Ithaca. This journey, she claims, will aim to interrogate the soul of the seer Tiresias,

> ὅς κέν τοι εἴπῃσιν ὁδὸν καὶ μέτρα κελεύθου
> νόστον θ', ὡς ἐπὶ πόντον ἐλεύσεαι ἰχθυόεντα.
>
> who will tell you about your voyage and the length of your path,
> and about your return, how you are to sail over the ocean full of fish.
>
> (*Od.* 10.539-40)

Circe, a goddess who explicitly claims to know about Odysseus' past misadventures (*Od.* 10.457-59), and will be able to provide the hero with very detailed instructions both about his journey to Hades (*Od.* 10.504-40) and about his trip to Ithaca (*Od.* 12.37-141), still asserts the necessity for Odysseus to interrogate Tiresias.[3] As a matter of fact, the very response that – according to *Od.* 10.539-40 – we would expect from Tiresias will in fact be given by Circe herself after Odysseus' Underworld journey is complete (*Od.* 12.37-141). Tiresias does mention Odysseus' crucial stop at Thrinacia and the loss

[3] This episode has strong resemblances with Menelaus' encounter with Proteus in *Od.* 4.367-480, as several scholars have noted. See Plass (1969) 104-8; Hansen (1972) 8-19; Heubeck (1989) 72; Peradotto (1990) 35-40; Reinhardt (1996) 105-8; De Jong (2001) 266-67. Merkelbach (1951) 181 and Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 54 consider the episode in book 10 as the model for the one in book 4, while Theiler (1950) 105, Matthiessen (1988) 21-22, and Zambarbieri (2002) 753 rather view the Proteus episode in book 4 as the model for the prophecy in book 10.

of his companions, before he reveals events that will take place after his arrival at Ithaca, namely his victory over the Suitors and the end of his life. Circe's instructions, however, appear to be more immediately useful for the last part of Odysseus' journey: they provide valuable indications on how to face the Sirens, the Planktai, Scylla, and Charybdis, as well as confirming Tiresias' warning about the cattle of Helios on Thrinacia. The purpose of the hero's trip to Hades has thus puzzled generations of scholars.[4]

Eustathius attempts a rather naive explanation based on geographical proximity: Circe, he argues, would know better what is closer to her island, whereas the help of a seer like Tiresias would be required for dangers and events that are more distant both in space and in time: Tiresias, in fact, will also reveal information about what Odysseus will have to face after his return to Ithaca.[5] The narratological discrepancy between

[4] Focke (1943) 202-4 claims that the introduction to book 11 somehow disrupted an ancient narrative, and thus caused the narratological discrepancy between the purpose of the journey to Hades as expressed by Circe and the actual outcome of Odysseus' dialogue with Tiresias. Page (1955) 28-47 faults the composition and integration of book 11 for reasons which he describes as "common sense:" he essentially claims that the *Nekyia* has nothing to do with the rest of the *Odyssey*, and was carelessly added without regard for the damage it would inflict upon the structure of the whole poem. Kirk (1962) 238, following an analyst approach, assumes that Tiresias' prophecy is an abbreviated version of an earlier story: that story presumably concerned Odysseus, and the original point of the prophecy has been omitted or obscured by Homer; Heubeck (1989) 72-73 argues that Homer probably wanted to include in Odysseus' adventures a journey to the Underworld, and thus simply came up with the necessity for him to interrogate Tiresias. Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 74-75 points out that the part of Tiresias' advice that will not be supplemented by Circe concerns Ithaca: he prophesizes not only the closure of Odysseus' journey, but also of his life, thus projecting forward a closure beyond the text. Reinhardt (1996) 105 notices the contradiction between what Odysseus needs to ask and what Tiresias actually reveals, but he proposes a poem-external solution to the problem by claiming that "the purpose of the journey for Odysseus disappears behind the purpose of the poet." For bibliographical indications of older works on this issue, see Erbse (1972) 24-48.

[5] Eustathius 1.390.32-35: Σημείωσαι δὲ ὅτι περὶ Σειρήνων μὲν καὶ Σκύλλης καὶ Χαρίβδεως καὶ Ἡλίου βοῶν ἐρεῖ πρὸς Ὀδυσσέα ἡ Κίρκη ὡς γειτνιῶσα φασὶ, καθὸ Τυρσηνικὴ, τοῖς κατὰ τὸν Σικελικὸν πορθμὸν μέρεσι, περὶ ὧν οὐδὲν ὁ Τειρεσίας ἐρεῖ. περὶ δὲ τῶν λοιπῶν

what we expect to hear from Tiresias' words and what he will actually tell Odysseus has been variously noted throughout the centuries, to the joy of the analytic school.[6] Consequently, the actual helpfulness of Tiresias' words within the Odyssean narrative has been questioned, since Circe's directions would have been sufficient for the hero to survive and finally arrive at Ithaca: Homer, according to this view, would simply want to see his hero go to the Underworld, just as Theseus and Heracles, and the interrogation of Tiresias would provide the excuse for a good story.[7]

Although I do not want to exclude the (quite likely) possibility that the *Nekyia* was originally an independent narrative that at some stage became part of Odysseus' *nostos*, I once again prefer to consider the Homeric text as we have it. Circe announces that a journey to Hades is necessary: the broader context of the Circe episode can clarify this otherwise surprising announcement, and sheds new light on the meaningfulness of Odysseus' dialogue with Tiresias. Odysseus and his crew, as we have variously noted, arrive at Aiaia completely strained and disheartened; moreover, Odysseus' νοῦς appears to be damaged, and the πολύμητις hero is suddenly lost and helpless. Circe

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ἐπιτρέπει τῷ μάντει ὡς ἂν μὴ ἀπιστηθῇ, καθὰ καὶ προεγράφη, οἷα ὑπὲρ ἑαυτῆς τὰ τοιαῦτα εἰποῦσα.

[6] According to Kirchhoff (1879[2]) 221 and Von der Mühll (1940) 723, the entire *Nekyia* is poorly inserted into the main poem, as the discrepancy between Circe's words in *Od.* 10.539-40 and Tiresias' actual speech confirms. For views on the compositional archaeology of the *Nekyia*, see also Schwartz (1924) 137-49; Van der Valk (1935); Merkelbach (1951) 185-91, 209-30; Kirk (1962) 236-40; Bona (1966) 55-58; Clark (1979) 39-45, 98; Vermeule (1979) 28; Bremmer (1983) 81; Burkert (1985[2]) 196; Garland (1985) 150; Bernstein (1993) 23; Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 70-76. De Jong (2001) 266 simply considers Circe's instructions in book 12 as complementing Tiresias' prophecy, and seems to disregard any narratological problem. Zambarbieri (2002) 721 acknowledges this narratological discrepancy, but concludes that it probably bothers scholars more than it bothers the audience.

[7] Heubeck (1989) 72-73.

hosts the crew, the λήθη brought about by her magic seems to ease the sufferings of their θυμός,[8] and the food and the drink that she offers them renew both their physical strength and their θυμός. Yet how about Odysseus' damaged νοῦς? Did the prolonged stay on Circe's island have beneficial effects on that too? Or rather is Odysseus' recovery not complete yet? Let us consider Circe's words after she promptly and briefly assents to the departure of Odysseus:

> ἀλλ' ἄλλην χρὴ πρῶτον ὁδὸν τελέσαι καὶ ἱκέσθαι
> εἰς Ἄϊδαο δόμους καὶ ἐπαινῆς Περσεφονείης
> ψυχῇ χρησομένους Θηβαίου Τειρεσίαο
>
> but you must first complete another journey, and come
> to the house of Hades and dread Persephone,
> to consult the spirit of the Theban Tiresias
>
> (*Od.* 10.490-92)

"It is necessary" that Odysseus completes this endeavor. Yet what sort of necessity is this? Does some higher Fate impose this journey? Have the gods decreed so? Or is it just a more concrete necessity of some sort? In her announcement to Odysseus Circe quite surprisingly uses the term χρή, which is probably the most general and banal expression that indicates necessity in the Homeric language.[9] Homer generally uses the verb χρή to indicate routine warfare necessity, as well as general requirements of religion, traditions, and institutions: within certain socio-political structures, χρή is the

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[8] For a thorough discussion of the role of λήθη in the Circe episode, particularly as remedy against pain and sufferings, see ch. 1.

[9] Mugler (1979) 60: "elle dit qu'il faut faire ce voyage, en se servant, pour en exprimer la nécessité, du mot le plus banal dans la liste très variée des expressions par lesquelles Homère désigne la nécessité, de χρή."

term that usually designates what is or is not appropriate for certain situations, as well as duties and obligations rooted in human institutions, which men understand and must observe.[10]

Interestingly enough, when reporting Circe's words to his men, Odysseus qualifies this injunction with a form of the verb τεκμαίρομαι, a term that Homer generally reserves for the gods' decrees (ἄλλην δ' ἧμιν ὁδὸν τεκμήρατο Κίρκη, "yet Circe has decreed another journey for us," *Od.* 10.563). Circe herself uses this solemn expression when she warns Odysseus not to touch the cattle of Helios on Thrinacia (εἰ δέ κε σίνηαι, τότε τοι τεκμαίρομ' ὄλεθρον, νηΐ τε καὶ ἑτάροισι, "but if you harm them, then I foretell ruin for your ship and for your comrades," *Od.* 12.139-40), thus repeating word by word Tiresias' admonition at *Od.* 11.112-13. Τεκμαίρομαι in the Homeric poems consistently indicates a divine decision,[11] and Circe uses this term in a very appropriate way, when referring to the divine decrees regarding the cattle of the Sun. The reason why Odysseus uses this term in his account to the comrades is most likely because he interprets the necessity for his journey to Hades as a solemn

[10] A complete list of Homeric passages in which χρή occurs would be too long and not indispensable for the present study. A selection of the uses of χρή that I have mentioned above includes for instance: *Il.* 2.24, 61, 613; 5.490; 7.109, 331; 9.100, 496; 10.479; 12.315; 13.275, 463; 16.492; 19.67, 228; 23.478; *Od.* 2.369; 6.27, 206; 12.154; 14.364; 15.74; 17.417; 18.17; 19.118; 21.110.

[11] Cf. other solemn uses of τεκμαίρομαι indicating a divine decision at *Il.* 6.349; 7.70. See also *Hom. Hymn to Apollo* 285; Hes., *Op.* 229, 239. The only occurrence of τεκμαίρομαι to indicate an authoritative (yet not divine) decision in the Homeric poems is *Od.* 7.317 (Alcinous tells Odysseus that he has appointed a time for his journey back to Ithaca).

injunction of the goddess Circe, whereas Circe's words are in fact much less solemn and binding than the term τεκμαίρομαι would indicate.

Nor does Circe express the need for the Underworld journey in terms of a higher Fate: she does not mention μοίρα, or αἶσα, or πότμος, or the verb εἵμαρτο, which all indicate the ineluctable fate to which even the gods are subject.[12] In other words, the journey to Hades is imposed neither by the Olympians nor by some ineluctable Fate through Circe, but by Circe herself; and the necessity is not expressed by a term that indicates some divine injunction that is obscure and unintelligible to men.

Given the human traits of the necessity expressed by χρή, it is not surprising that at times the people urged by χρή are reluctant to obey, or even question the necessity itself. Odysseus, however, despite his traditionally independent judgment of what is necessary in difficult situations, immediately obeys unconditionally, almost with resignation:

> ὣς ἔφατ', αὐτὰρ ἐμοί γε κατεκλάσθη φίλον ἦτορ·
> κλαῖον δ' ἐν λεχέεσσι καθήμενος, οὐδέ νύ μοι κῆρ
> ἤθελ' ἔτι ζώειν καὶ ὁρᾶν φάος ἠελίοιο.
> αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κλαίων τε κυλινδόμενός τε κορέσθην,
> καὶ τότε δή μιν ἔπεσσιν ἀμειβόμενος προσέειπον·
> 'ὦ Κίρκη, τίς γὰρ ταύτην ὁδὸν ἡγεμονεύσει;
> εἰς Ἄϊδος δ' οὔ πώ τις ἀφίκετο νηΐ μελαίνῃ.'

[12] For a more thorough discussion of μοίρα, see above, ch. 2, pp. 113-14. Homeric passages in which μοίρα and αἶσα indicate a higher, ineluctable Fate include: *Il.* 4.517; 5.628; 15.613; 16.849; 21.82; 22.303; *Od.* 9.61; 9.532; 10.174; 11.409; 16.421; 20.241 (μοίρα/μόρος); *Il.* 21.281; *Od.* 5.312; 24.30 (εἵμαρτο); *Il.* 1.418; 5.209; 6.487; 8.72; 9.245; 16.441, 707, 780; 17.321; 20.127; 21.100, 291; 22.60, 179, 212; 24.224, 428, 750; *Od.* 16.280 (αἶσα/αἴσιμος/αἴσιος); *Il.* 2.359; 15.4945; 20.337; *Od.* 9.61; 11.409; 16.421; 20.241. Cf. Mugler (1979) 60-63.

So she spoke, and my heart was broken:
I wept as I sat on the bed, and my heart
had no longer desire to live and see the light of the sun.
But when I was tired of weeping and tossing myself about,
then I answered, and addressed her saying:
"O Circe, who will guide us on this journey?
To Hades no man ever yet went in a black ship."

(*Od.* 10.496-502)

His reaction is expressed by the same lines that describe Menelaus' excruciating pain when he hears of Agamemnon's death (*Od.* 4.538-41): as in the case of Menelaus, Odysseus' first reaction is despair.[13] Yet he never questions Circe's command. Lacking an appropriate guide, he understandably expresses a feeling of inadequacy. However, his question focuses on how he will arrive there, and the question of why he should face this danger in the first place never even surfaces.

We would expect such a resigned obedience in two possible cases: either when facing a necessity imposed by Fate or by a divine decree, or when realizing that no alternative is possible. The use of the term χρή allows us to exclude the first possibility, inasmuch as Circe is not using a term that indicates her divine authority as a sufficient

[13] Heubeck (1989) 69 claims that the correspondence between these two passages is most likely intentional, and aims to suggest a strong connection between the two heroes whose *nostos* was longest. He also hypothizes that passage in book 4, where the despair fits in the situation perfectly, was composed before the passage in book 10, where it takes an awkward connotation. Odysseus' men will have a similar emotional reaction at the prospect of having to go to Hades (*Od.* 10.566-68). Weeping, tearing one's own hair out, and rolling oneself about were typical expressions of mourning (cf. *Il.* 22.406, 414; 24.640, 711): Odysseus and his men, in other words, react as if they had heard their own death announced. Heubeck (1989) 69 sees intentional irony here: Odysseus wishes to die (and therefore go to Hades) in the very moment when he is told he must go to the Underworld. De Jong (2001) 269 quite rightly notices that "Odysseus' desire to die is paradoxical, because his depression is caused precisely by the prospect of having to 'die'." The passage is unquestionably problematic, but the paradox may emphasize the necessity for Odysseus to go the Underworld. The desire to die suggests that for Odysseus and his men there is really no alternative at this point in the journey: either they go to Hades following Circe's command, or they die, and end up in the Underworld anyhow.

reason for Odysseus to obey; we can thus reasonably conclude that Circe's injunction sounds so strong and ineluctable to Odysseus because he realizes that he has no alternative but to follow what she says. Why?

My suggestion is that, although Odysseus has recuperated his physical strength and his θυμός is restored, nothing on Aiaia has helped the recovery of his νοῦς: neither food nor drink, nor rest, nor time, nor the λήθη induced by Circe's magic. We should not forget that Odysseus' helplessness was most likely caused both by physical exhaustion and by some sort of divine punishment, as we have concluded in the previous chapter. It is not surprising, therefore, that his condition requires a much more powerful remedy than what he experienced on Aiaia. Odysseus appears to be as lost and helpless as he was upon his arrival. His μῆτις is still insufficient to guide him through the dangers of a new journey, and he must therefore follow Circe's instructions. Circe's use of χρή thus very appropriately indicates on the one hand the necessity for Odysseus to follow her advice, since his μῆτις is still unreliable; and on the other hand it indicates the journey to the Underworld as the only possible solution for Odysseus' present situation.

From this perspective, to assume that Odysseus is sent to Hades just to interrogate Tiresias about his voyage back to Ithaca would trivialize the necessity expressed by Circe's words. First of all Circe herself will give Odysseus directions for his journey homewards once he returns from Hades (*Od.* 12.37-141): her very instructions would thus make the trip to Hades less necessary, if the goal of the journey were simply to

receive directions. Secondly, mere directions would probably help Odysseus reach Ithaca, but they would not do much to improve his helpless condition. Finally, if Homer inserted an Underworld journey among Odysseus' adventures for the sake of having his hero do what other heroes such as Heracles and Theseus did, we would not understand why he is sent there specifically to interrogate Tiresias. In the Homeric poems, in fact, and especially in the *Odyssey*, "there is hardly another figure who has less to do with Odysseus, and yet the whole of the rest of his fate is said to depend on him."[14]

Circe does indeed tell Odysseus that he should interrogate Tiresias about his return (*Od.* 10.539-40). She provides very detailed directions on how to reach Hades (*Od.* 10.506-37), and the dialogue with Tiresias represents the climax of her speech, the goal of his journey that emphatically concludes Circe's instructions. Our primary question, therefore, should not be "what should he ask Tiresias?", but rather "why Tiresias?" The answer is in Circe's words (*Od.* 10.490-95):

> ἀλλ' ἄλλην χρὴ πρῶτον ὁδὸν τελέσαι καὶ ἱκέσθαι
> εἰς Ἄϊδαο δόμους καὶ ἐπαινῆς Περσεφονείης
> ψυχῇ χρησομένους Θηβαίου Τειρεσίαο,
> μάντιος ἀλαοῦ, τοῦ τε φρένες ἔμπεδοί εἰσι·
> τῷ καὶ τεθνηῶτι νόον πόρε Περσεφόνεια
> οἴῳ πεπνῦσθαι· τοὶ δὲ σκιαὶ ἀΐσσουσιν.
>
> but you must first complete another journey, and come
> to the house of Hades and dread Persephone,
> to consult the spirit of the Theban Tiresias
> the blind seer, whose mind is steadfast;
> to him even in death Persephone has granted reason,
> that he alone should have his faculties; but the others flit about as shadows.

[14] Reinhardt (1996) 105.

Tiresias' φρένες are steadfast, and he is the only one of the dead who has retained the same mental faculties – and specifically the νοῦς – that he had when alive. Before we proceed to investigate how this aspect of Circe's instructions is relevant, we should examine what happens to cognitive functions and psychological entities when a person dies according to the Homeric narrator.

4.2. The condition of the dead spirits in the Homeric poems.

Except for a few extraordinary individuals such as Menelaus,[15] the Homeric poems consider death as the inevitable, definite, and final end, from which no return to life is possible. From the Homeric description of funerary cult and mourning, we may infer that those who died recently were able at least to hear the living and receive offerings. Yet the *Nekyia* seems to suggest that eventually the dead were not able to interact very much with the living.[16] It would go beyond the scope of this work to study in detail funerary cults and rites in archaic Greece, and their significance: what matters for the present investigation is simply to understand what was believed to happen to psychic entities and cognitive functions after death in the Homeric poems themselves. For this

[15] As Proteus foretells at *Od.* 4.561-69, Menelaus is not doomed to die, by virtue of his special relationship to the gods. Rather, the gods will send him to Elysium, at the end of the world, where he will lead a privileged existence. Hesiod, *Op.* 167-73 talks about the Islands of the Blessed in similar terms, and so does Pindar, *Ol.* 2.72-80, according to whom Peleus, Cadmus, and Achilles were also counted among the Blessed.

[16] Johnston (1999) 7.

purpose, their description of how the dead can or cannot interact with the living, and under what circumstances they are able to do so, is sufficient for us to gain a clear idea of the character, temperament, and resourcefulness of the dead.[17]

Let us begin by considering the cases of Elpenor in *Od.* 11.71-78 and of Patroclus in *Il.* 23.65-74. The shade of the dead Patroclus, "similar to him in everything" (*Il.* 23.66), appears to Achilles in a dream, and points out to him that without the appropriate funeral rites he will be unable to cross the river and find peace among the dead:

> θάπτέ με ὅττι τάχιστα πύλας Ἀΐδαο περήσω.
> τῆλέ με εἴργουσι ψυχαὶ εἴδωλα καμόντων,
> οὐδέ μέ πω μίσγεσθαι ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο ἐῶσιν,
> ἀλλ' αὖτως ἀλάλημαι ἀν' εὐρυπυλὲς Ἄϊδος δῶ.
> καί μοι δὸς τὴν χεῖρ'· ὀλοφύρομαι, οὐ γὰρ ἔτ' αὖτις
> νίσομαι ἐξ Ἀΐδαο, ἐπήν με πυρὸς λελάχητε.
>
> Bury me as soon as possible, that I may pass within the gates of Hades.
> The shades, the phantoms of dead men keep me away,
> and they do not let me join them beyond the river,[18]
> but I wander vainly through the wide-gated house of Hades.

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[17] It is undeniable that the Homeric poems present a picture of the dead that is complex and ambiguous. Although a shadowy world of the dead is the predominant picture, Homer offers a variety of alternatives and exceptions: Ganymede was kidnapped from the world of the living and admitted among the immortals (*Il.* 20.232-35); Menelaus will go to Elysium (*Od.* 4.561-69); Calypso offers immortality to Odysseus (*Od.* 5.206-10, 23.336); the mortal Leucothea became a sea goddess (*Od.* 5.333-35); Castor and Polydeuces enjoy the very peculiar and almost divine honor of alternating daily between life and death in Hades (*Od.* 11.299-304); Cleitus was kidnapped by Dawn and admitted among the gods (*Od.* 15.250-51). The variety of fates is even more manifold if we take into account other early Greek poems. I agree with Morris (1989) 309-10 that we "do not have to explain every difference between poems as an evolution through time." Heubeck (1989) 100 *ad* 387 claims that any inconsistency can be accounted for in terms of poetic aims. Rather, we should just admit that the Homeric poems may occasionally present some slight contradictions concerning the afterlife: this diversity originates at times textual discrepancies, but if the audience was able to accept some exceptions to the most common belief that the dead would just go to Hades and never come back, they were most likely able to accept also their enactment in the Homeric poems. See Nilsson (1941) 1-16; Bremmer (1983) 101; Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 82-83; Tsagarakis (2000) 105-19; Heath (2005) 57-60.

[18] The river is most likely the Styx (cf. *Il.* 8.369).

> And give me your hand: I beseech you, for never again
> shall I come back from Hades, once you have given me my due of fire.
>
> (*Il.* 23.71-76)

In a similar way, Elpenor, Odysseus' comrade who died while the crew was leaving Aiaia for the Underworld, is the first shade that arrives at the pit, recognizes Odysseus immediately, and speaks to him even without drinking the sacrificial blood that seems indispensable for the other dead to interact with the hero.[19] Just like Patroclus, Elpenor has not yet been admitted to Hades fully, because he has not yet received funerary rites, and this seems to enable them to interact with the living at some level.[20] Patroclus appears to Achilles in a dream in order to demand the funerary rites that would allow him to complete his transition to the realm of the dead. The lack of a proper funeral still ties Elpenor to the upper world; another sign of his peculiar condition is that he, unlike the dead spirits that have completed their transition to Hades, does not seem to be scared of Odysseus' sword, and immediately approaches the hero. Elpenor also warns Odysseus that if his corpse does not receive funeral rites upon the return of the crew to Aiaia, he will become a θεῶν μήνιμα, a cause for the gods' wrath (*Od.* 11.72-73). In

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[19] The necessity for the shades to drink the sacrificial blood in order for them to regain some psychological faculty and be able to recognize Odysseus and tell him true things is expressed by Tiresias at *Od.* 11.144-49.

[20] Elpenor is not the only spirit that Odysseus encounters at the edge of the Underworld. Homer also mentions a number of spirits that crowd out of Erebus: unmarried women, young men, old people who have suffered many things, young brides, warriors still wearing bloody armor (*Od.* 11.38-42). "The warriors still wearing bloody armor are probably unburied, like Elpenor; no good Greek would allow the corpse of a friend to go to its grave unwashed and without the proper shroud." Johnston (1999) 10. Johnston also notes that the brides, unmarried women, and young men, because they have died "untimely", linger between the two worlds. See also Lattimore (1942) 187; Merkelback (1951) 189; Meuli (1975) 1:316; Bremmer (1983) 103; Johnston (1994) 131-43.

other words, if he does not receive the funeral rites he is owed, he will not be able to join the realm of the dead, and in return for this crime he will have the ability (and possibly the desire) to compel the gods to bring harm upon Odysseus.[21]

The lack of a complete transition to the Underworld thus seems to imply on the one hand some possibility for the unburied dead to interact with the living, and on the other hand the preservation of some sort of psychic and cognitive function: they can recognize the living and talk to them. In order to understand more clearly the type of interaction that Odysseus has with the dead spirits in the *Nekyia*, we should ask how funeral rites contribute in establishing closure. In other words, what happens during a funeral rite, that did not already happen with death itself?

In the Homeric poems death is first of all envisioned as a separation: the ψυχή, or alternatively the θυμός, leaves the body and flies away: the ψυχή will eventually enter Hades, while the θυμός is never heard of again.[22] While it is not clear what role the

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[21] This idea continues throughout Greek history: see Bremmer (1983) 89-94; Garland (1985) 101-03. Johnston (1999) 10 observes that Homer describes Odysseus as being afraid of the spirits of the unburied dead, and considers it a sign of the poet's "familiarity with the ideas that the abnormal dead lingered between the two worlds and that they were a source of potential trouble for the living." See also *Il.* 22.358, when the dying Hector uses this threat to try to convince Achilles to return his corpse to the Trojans. The myth of Sisyphus is very eloquent in this respect: his spirit was excluded from Hades because his body was unburied, so the gods allowed him to return to the upper world in order to ask for funerary rites. Once in the upper world, however, he took advantage of the situation and regained possession of his body. By instructing his wife not to give his corpse funerary rites, therefore, he made sure he would never complete the transition to the other world, and would thus avoid death. See Alc. Fr. 38; Thgn. 702-12; Pherecyd. 3 F 119. Gantz (1993) 173-76; Johnston (1999) 9.

[22] Böhme (1929) 103 compares the uses of the two terms and concludes that they "weitgehend überein(stimmen);" Schnaufer (1970) agrees with him and adds that the two terms have progressively lost their original meanings, and have simply come to indicate life. Less frequently, when young people are involved, it is the αἰών, the vital force, that is mentioned as leaving the body, not to be heard of again like the θυμός. See *Il.* 16.453, *Od.* 9.523-24. Garland (1981) 50; Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 56.

ψυχή has in a living person, it becomes crucial at the moment it leaves the body:[23] both death and loss of consciousness, in fact, are described in terms of loss of ψυχή and/or θυμός, the only difference being whether this loss is temporary or final.[24] As we have illustrated at some length in the previous chapter, the θυμός is the seat of motion, emotion, passions, and impulses: its existence is thus presumably so tied up with life that after leaving the body with death it will probably die too. If we consider the descriptions of death in the Homeric poems, we can see clearly that only one of the elements that compose a living person survives after death: the ψυχή.[25]

Given the fluidity and the imprecision of the Homeric language when it comes to psychic elements, we cannot be absolutely sure that the ψυχή that leaves the body and

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[23] Thus Böhme (1929) 112: the ψυχή "wird wichtig und lenkt das Interesse auf sich erst in dem Augenblick, wo sie den Leichnam verlässt." The significance of the ψυχή in a living person is very controversial: Otto (1923) 24 claims that the ψυχή of a living person is in effect his life; Bickel (1925) 49 considers it rather the "Lebensseele", the "Vitalempfindungen der Respiration", the "Bewusstsein, dass mit dem Aufhören der Respiration alles zu Ende ist"; Böhme (1929) 113 believes that the original meaning of the term was related to the respiration, but in Homer its meaning seems to be somewhat richer, and includes "Atem", "Leben", and "Totengeist", a view also shared by Schnaufer (1970) 203; Snell (1953) 8 notes certain instances in which ψυχή seems to mean life, but he does not consider this the only meaning of the term in connection with the living. On the possible collocation of ψυχή within the human body, see Rüsche (1930) 48 who situates it in the chest, and Onians (1954[2]) 96-103 who puts it in the head. Garland (1981) 49 quite justly observes that "such divergent opinions are surely evidence of Homer's lack of interest in the physical or spiritual nature of the 'living' *psyche*. (...) The only certain information Homer gives us is that the *psyche* leaves the body when a man dies – or alternatively that he dies when his *psyche* leaves his body – for the two notions are not identical, the choice depending on whether the presence of the *psyche* inside the body is seen as a condition, or merely an indication, of the life within." A similar view is shared by Granger (2000) 269-70, who notes how the Homeric ψυχή "appears only in contexts involving the dead, the dying, the threat of death, or fainting."

[24] On swoon and death described as loss of θυμός, see above, ch. 3, n. 26. On the θυμός, see Garland (1981) 49-50 and Padel (1992) 27-30.

[25] The goddess Hekate was present both at childbirth and at death, namely at the crucial moments when the ψυχή either enters or leaves the body. We may thus reasonably infer that not only the ψυχή survives death, but it also somehow precedes birth. Garland (1985) 46.

survives death is identical to the ψυχή of the living person. What we know for sure is that at the very moment of death, and thus before any funeral rite takes place, the ψυχή leaves the body and from that moment it can also be denoted as εἴδωλον.[26] These εἴδωλα look just as the person did while alive, and the fact that they can be held at bay by Odysseus' sword gives only an impression of corporality.[27] In fact they are physically insubstantial, lacking μένος, "smoke-like" (*Il.* 23.100-01), flitting like shadows (*Od.* 10.495, 11.207), "dreamlike" (*Od.* 11.207), unable to embrace those who are still alive, as both Odysseus' vain attempt to embrace his mother and Agamemnon's attempt to embrace Odysseus illustrate.[28]

In the *Nekyia*, the dead swarm up to the sacrificial blood (*Od.* 11.228, 388, 632-33), and this sort of instinct that drives them makes them appear not completely senseless.

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[26] *Il.* 23.72, 104; *Od.* 11.83, 476, 602; 20.355; 24.14. On the immediate separation of the ψυχή from the body at the moment of death, see Anticleia's words at *Od.* 11.218-22. For Onians (1954[2]) 94 the ψυχή after death is "what persists still without ordinary consciousness, in the house of Hades, there identified with *eidolon*, the visible but impalpable semblance of the once living". Cf. Rohde (1925[8]) 3-54; Furley (1956) 1-18; Schnaufer (1970) 75; Claus (1981) *passim*; Bremmer (1983) 79-84; Burkert (1985[2]) 195; Vernant (1991) 187-92. Redfield (1975) 177 regards the ψυχή as something that does not exist for the owner, but only for others; an unconscious man, whose ψυχή has temporary left him, "exists only for others. The *psyche*, I wish to assert, is a self that exists for others, one aspect of the social soul." Garland (1985) 23 mentions the practice to close the eyes and mouth of a deceased person, a practice "known to Homer which was most appropriately discharged by the next-of-kin." He also refers to an inscription found at Smyrna possibly dated to the third century B.C., that suggests that the closing of the eyes was believed to secure the release of the ψυχή from the body. In the Homeric poems, however, there are no indications that this practice already had any eschatological significance, and it could have fulfilled a purely cosmetic function.

[27] As the scholion to *Od.* 11.48 explains, it was widespread opinion that both the dead and the δαίμονες were afraid of iron.

[28] *Od.* 11.206-24, 392-94. See also Achilles' vain attempt to embrace Patroclus in his dream at *Il.* 23.99-101. The shades in the Underworld are often described as lacking physical strength: *Od.* 10.521, 536; 11.29, 49 (ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα); 11.393 (ἀλλ' οὐ γάρ οἱ ἔτ' ἦν ἶς ἔμπεδος οὐδ' ἔτι κῖκυς). See Garland (1985) 1-2.

Yet they are incapable of any significant interaction with the living before they drink the blood: they are ἀφραδέες (*Od.* 11.476), "lacking all those qualities expressed by that complex notion φραδή and its cognates that make converse between intelligent creatures possible: wit, reflection, and complexity of expression."[29]

As Achilles bitterly says,

> ὦ πόποι ἦ ῥά τίς ἐστι καὶ εἰν Ἀΐδαο δόμοισι
> ψυχὴ καὶ εἴδωλον, ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἔνι πάμπαν.
>
> Alas, even in the house of Hades there is some
> spirit and phantom, but there is no mind therein.
>
> (*Il.* 23.103-4)

After talking to the shade of Patroclus in a dream, Achilles realizes in tears that some impalpable εἴδωλον survives after death, but the φρένες get irremediably lost. Yet, it has been noted, how can Achilles interact with the dead Patroclus, if shades have no

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[29] Johnston (1999) 8. The idea that the dead lack intelligence is well expressed by Circe at *Od.* 10.492-95. Yet the dead spirits in the *Deuteronekyia* in *Od.* 24.24-202 do not appear witless: they do not interact with the living, and possibly do not have the same type of intelligence the living have, but they are able to carry on conversations among them, and seem to remember events from their past lives. On this discrepancy, see below n. 52 and n. 55. Rohde (1925[8]) 38 believes that Odysseus' sacrificial offerings to the dead are in contradiction with the Homeric view of the shades as illustrated by Circe; he considers this contradiction an oversight of the poet, as well as the traces of an ancient cult of the dead. West (1971) 149 claims that the soul of the dead is for Homer "void of intelligent thought and articulate speech except when poetic convenience demands otherwise." Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 77-83 devises the same contradiction between the idea that the Homeric dead were witless and the fact that these shadow-like shades are capable of perceiving, registering, and rejoicing at the ritual acts performed by Odysseus. She thus argues that there are two concepts at odds in Homeric eschatology, the notion that the shades are witless and devoid of any mental faculty, and the idea that they have faculties to some extent comparable to those of the living. She hypothesizes that this episode of the Homeric text articulates an eschatology "made up of elements that had originally belonged to different belief systems and were conflated during the transmission of epic material". In other words, the Homeric audience probably accommodated this contradiction if they saw the distant, witless shades of the inherited epic material in terms of the common funerary practices that in the real world included sacrificial offerings to the dead. See also Tsagarakis (2000) 105-19.

φρένες?[30] The scholia help us solve this problem: they refer to the variety of meanings that psychic terms can have in the Homeric language, and suggest that the word φρένες here does not indicate intelligence, but an actual body part, seat of all psychological activity (cf. *Il.* 16.481; *Od.* 9.301).[31] The dead, therefore, would lack intelligence precisely because they lost the φρένες together with all other bodily parts, and with them the capacity of perceiving and elaborating sensorial data. In other words, together with the loss of perception, the dead lose the power of reasoning and of remembering.

We may therefore reasonably infer that the destruction of the corpse on the funerary pyre, when "the sinews no longer hold the flesh and the bones together, but the strong might of blazing fire destroys these" (*Od.* 11.218-19), implies the utter destruction of the φρένες too, namely the seat of memory, thought, and psychological activity in general. To answer our initial question, therefore, we may conclude that the separation of the ψυχή from the body takes place immediately when a person dies; the funeral rites then establish a strong closure, inasmuch as they destroy the body and with it the φρένες, and therefore both sensorial life and psychological activity.[32]

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[30] Schnaufer (1970) 74 attempts to solve this problem by resorting to the pre-Homeric belief that the dead retained some of their physical strength, and were able to interact with the living, as we can infer from Mycenaean funerary rites.

[31] On the complexity of the term φρένες, see above, ch. 1, p. 53 n. 50.

[32] There is no indication in the Homeric poems that the dead can return to the upper world after the funeral rites. Rather, Anticleia clearly states the opposite when she mentions the terrible rivers that form an uncrossable barrier between the two worlds (*Od.* 11.155-59). Odysseus himself, in order to speak to the dead Tiresias, has to travel to the edge of the world: the interaction between living and dead thus takes place at a very special location between the two worlds. On the idea that Circe is a figure that crosses boundaries, and is thus able to give directions to Odysseus to interact with the dead, see Marinatos (1995) *passim.*

The spirits in the Homeric *Nekyia* are witless in the sense that death, quite materially, has deprived them of what is indispensable for any psychological activity, namely the φρένες, the location where both sensorial data and ideas are processed, elaborated, and stored.[33] In the Homeric perspective, therefore, death does not provide the dead spirits with any superior knowledge, inaccessible to the living. On the contrary, even after drinking the sacrificial blood, at times they seem to know neither what happened after they died nor what they did not know while alive.[34] With the exception of the unburied dead, such as Patroclos and Elpenor, the ψυχαί in the Homeric Hades are not even able to recognize Odysseus, let alone talk to him. Even Anticleia, Odysseus' mother, is unable to recognize him (*Od.* 11.84-89,144).[35]

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[33] If Homer does not regard the ψυχή of the living human being as the basis of the capacities for sensation, thought, and emotion, and on the other hand the ψυχή is all that survives after death, it should not surprise that he does not attribute those capacities to the ψυχαί in Hades. See Granger (2000) 270.

[34] Anticleia asks Odysseus whether or not he has already returned to Ithaca (*Od.* 11.160-62); Agamemnon asks about his son Orestes (*Od.* 11.457-61); Achilles asks about his son and his father (*Od.* 11.492-97). Yet the so called *Deuteronekyia* clearly shows the dead as living together, and learning new things with each new arrival. In *Od.* 24.98-202 the spirit of Agamemnon interrogates the spirit of Amphimedon, whom Hermes has just led to Hades; from him he learns about the situation at Ithaca while Odysseus was away, Penelope's trick, and the death of the Suitors. Unlike the witless spirits of *Od.* 11, the dead in the *Deuteronekyia* in *Od.* 24 seem to retain some memory of their lives, which they communicate to each other. See also the necromantic evocation in Aeschylus' *Persians* 598-842: Atossa evokes the spirit of the dead king Darius, so that she can tell him of the disaster of the new king, their son Xerxes. On the necromantic scene in Aeschylus' *Persians*, see Headlam (1902) 52-61, Eitrem (1928) 1-16, Lawson (1934) 79-89, Broadhead (1960) 302-9, Faraone (1999) 39, Ogden (2001) 3, 129-30, 227 and *passim*.

[35] Tiresias clearly tells Odysseus that only the shades that he will allow to drink the blood will be able to recognize him and interact with him. The implication is that unless a shade drinks the blood (s)he is unable to recognize the hero or speak to him. The heroines at *Od.* 11.235-327 explicitly drink the blood before they speak (*Od.* 11.225-34). Yet later the situation seems to change, inasmuch as the blood is not mentioned anymore when a spirit talks to Odysseus. Thus Agamemnon, Achilles, Ajax, and Heracles all seem to recognize the hero immediately, without having to drink the blood. Homer's silence about the drinking of the blood has produced a textual variant too: at *Od.* 11.390, together with the *lex difficilior* ἐπεὶ ἴδεν ὀφθαλμοῖσι, the manuscripts report ἐπεὶ πίεν αἷμα κελαινόν, that is certainly an ancient

The ψυχαί do storm to the sacrificial blood, which is the emblem of the vigorous life they have left forever.[36] Yet this thirst is neither described as some instinct that drives towards life, nor in terms of psychological activity. Rather, the souls are described almost as animals, uttering strange, inarticulate sounds (θεσπεσίῃ ἰαχῇ, *Od.* 11.43; ἠχῇ θεσπεσίῃ, *Od.* 11.633; ταὶ δὲ τρίζουσαι ἔποντο, *Od.* 24.5); the dead spirits that surround Heracles are explicitly compared to birds that fly everywhere in terror (*Od.* 11.605-06). In the upper world, it would most likely be the θυμός that governs instincts and drives people towards something they desire or long for, but the θυμός is certainly lost at the very moment of death. We may reasonably hypothesize that, if there were any sort of purpose behind the spirits' thirst for blood, Ajax would not even approach the pit, and would avoid both Odysseus and the blood. The blood, in fact, represents on the

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conjecture. On this variant see Heubeck (1989) 100 *ad* 390. Heubeck (1989) 100 *ad* 387 claims that "this inconsistency is probably determined by the need to prepare for the encounter with the suicide Ajax, who could not make for the blood as if thirsting for life." This discrepancy has generated two different interpretations among scholars: some believe that the connection between drinking blood and psychological activity of some sort is unstable and variable. See Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 81-82, who quite arbitrarily claims that the audience "would have taken the absence of repetition to entail that the action did not take place;" Zambarbieri (2002) 781. Others, instead, quite rightly consider this apparent inconsistency as an important lesson in Homeric composition and poetic art: once the relationship between blood-drinking and the ability to have any intellectual activity has been stated clearly, Odysseus in his account to the Phaeacian court does not repeat it every time, but simply implies it. See Schnaufer (1970) 94 n.292; Johnston (1999) 7-8: "they were unable to converse with him in any meaningful way until they had drunk the blood;" and more recently Heath (2005) 59-60.

[36] Schnaufer (1970) 91 n.283 points out that the dead's thirst for blood possibly has some connection with the idea that the blood is necessary for the life of the ψυχή, which later led to the identification of blood and soul: Soph. *Electra* 785-86, Aristoph. *Clouds* 712, Timocles fr. 35.1K, Verg. *Aen.* 9.349. Heraclitus (Fr. 98) is reported to have said that "souls smell things in Hades," and some scholars have thought that this may be in mockery of the Homeric concept of the soul. See Nussbaum (1972) 158; Kirk (1983^2) 208 n.3; Schofield (1991) 24-25. Graf and Johnston (2007) 116 point out that, outside *Od.* 11 and Plato's story of Er, we do not hear much about the Greek dead being thirsty; yet the idea of the dead being thirsty, they claim, is nearly universal.

one hand the life that he rejected with suicide, and on the other hand what enables him to recognize the hero that indirectly caused his death.

The thirst for blood, therefore, is not described as having a purpose, which would require a functioning θυμός, but it seems to be a completely unconscious process, that – as in the case of Ajax – drives the dead spirits even against their will. The cause that is behind their storming both to the pit and to the blood seems rather external, mechanical even, and not psychological: blood simply draws them almost like a magnet, and at least in some instances they are explicitly sent by Persephone (*Od.* 11.213, 226, 385-86, 634-35). Just as the drinking of the blood is not mentioned before each and every interaction between Odysseus and a dead spirit, but should probably be implied each time, so is Persephone mentioned only a few times, but can be reasonably considered responsible for the gathering of the ψυχαί around the pit.

The fact that the dead spirits have no φρένες, therefore, should not constitute a problem. Since their crowding to the blood is described in terms of an unconscious and chaotic movement caused by Persephone, there is no good reason for casting doubt on their being witless (ἀφραδέες, *Od.* 11.476). The sacrificial blood, on the other hand, enables them to regain only some inauthentic and temporary vital power,[37] that – we can reasonably assume – they will lose soon after talking to Odysseus.

[37] Graf and Johnston (2007) 116 observe how drinking changes temporarily the Homeric dead from 'witless heads' into creatures who can speak as they did when alive, and interestingly compare this process to the effect that the Waters of Memory had on the souls of the initiates.

4.3. The spirit of Tiresias

In the first chapter we have pointed out that when something escapes from the φρένες, the person's νοῦς can remain perfectly sound, and thus the forgetfulness induced by Circe's magic does not affect Odysseus' νοῦς. The φρένες in the Homeric poems are a psychic location (or, less frequently, an instrument) that is not necessarily active in the elaboration of thoughts, while the νοῦς seems to be more actively involved in mental processes of perceiving, understanding, interpreting, elaborating, and devising.

By saying that Tiresias' φρένες are steadfast and Persephone has allowed him to retain his νοῦς (*Od.* 10.493-95), therefore, Circe points out the extension of Tiresias' mental faculties in Hades: on the one hand he is still able to elaborate thoughts, and on the other hand he has not forgotten anything from his life.[38] He is able to perceive, to elaborate ideas and sensory data, and he retains memory of his life on earth: he must remember Odysseus from the upper world, in fact, if he immediately recognizes the hero without drinking the blood (*Od.* 11.91).[39]

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[38] This characteristic of the dead spirit of Tiresias is mentioned also by Callimachus, *Hymn* 5.75-130 and Tzetzes, *Sch. Ad Lyc.* 683.

[39] One might raise the objection that the drinking of the blood can be implied, just as we have hypothesized about Agamemnon, Achilles, Ajax, and Heracles (see above, n. 35). Yet, at this point in the narrative, Odysseus still does not know exactly how he can interact with the dead, and the function of the sacrificial blood is still unclear to him. He keeps all dead spirits away from the blood with his sword (*Od.*11.48-50), and only when Tiresias asks him Odysseus allows him to drink the blood (*Od.* 11.95-99). Although the spirit of Tiresias maintains some characteristics of the living, in fact, he has certainly completed his transition to Hades, and Odysseus' sword does keep him away from the blood (*Od.* 11.95-99).

While forgetfulness was considered an essential element of death,[40] Tiresias is explicitly not subject to it. Just as Circe, he can therefore be considered a liminal figure,[41] inasmuch as his transition to the Underworld is never complete, but he remains in an intermediate state between life and death. This peculiar condition after his death adds to the other distinctive qualities that made Tiresias a liminal figure in the upper world too. First of all, his life was exceptionally long, thus granting him the role of mediator through seven generations of the royal family of Thebes, and almost between

[40] At *Il.* 22.389-90 Achilles claims: "if men forget their dead in the house of Hades, yet will I even there remember my dear comrade." Only Tiresias in Homer's *Odyssey* and Amphiaraus in Sophocles' *Electra* 841 retain the strength to remember even in the world of oblivion. Vernant (1983) 106ff. mentions the figure of Ethalides, who always retained the memory of what he had seen, even after crossing the Acheron; Vernant also emphasizes the resemblance between these figures and the person consulting the oracle of Trophonius, for which see above, ch. 1 n. 65. On the "plain of Oblivion" over which the dead travel, see Theognis 705, 1216; Simonides 184 Bergk; Plato, *Rep.* 10.621a-c; Aristoph., *Frogs* 186; Lucian, *De luctu* 5; Oppian, *Cynegetica* 2.417; Plutarch, *De sera numinis vindicta* c.2141-44. Plutarch, *De lat. viv.* 1130d-e interestingly considers the dead as the object of the living's oblivion: he suggests that the waters of Lēthē cause the soul of the bad to be forgotten by the living, since the spirits of the bad are engulfed by its swirling waters and sink into oblivion. On the waters of Oblivion and of Memory, and their relevance in the oracle of Trophonius at Labadaea, see Paus. 9.39.8. Nilsson (1943) 1-7 has curiously defended the Hellenistic origin of this pair of powers. Nilsson's theory has been criticized by Kérényi (1945) 94ff. and Burkert (1972). Simondon (1982) 145-46 has examined the oracle of Trophonius in relation with a series of inscribed tablets that mention Mnemosyne and Lethe in funerary contexts. On the "throne of memory" opposed to the "throne of oblivion", on which Theseus and Pirithous are seated in Hades, see Detienne (1996) 63-64, 167 n.84. On the "gates of Oblivion" through which the dead pass, as well as the "House of Lēthē" which they enter, see Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2001) 51-53. Graf and Johnston (2007) 98-99, 108-9, 117, 119-20 point out the significance of waters of Memory and of Lēthē in the Underworld, as well as their relevance in the Orphic tablets; according to the Orphic tablets, the initiate should drink from the 'safe' spring (the Lake of Memory), rather than from the 'dangerous' one (the Spring of Forgetfulness).

[41] Circe's island is located at the edge of the known world. It is far away, and it seems to be the coincidence of opposites, North, South, East and West, which understandably creates a sense of confusion for Odysseus and his companions (*Od.* 10.190-92). More important is the fact that it is situated near the entrance of the Underworld, and therefore constitutes a transition to another realm. Odysseus and his comrades have to pass through Circe's domain to reach the Underworld, but they also have to return there before they re-enter the world of the living. (The Elpenor episode contributes to give the island a connotation of a kind of gate). Not only is her island liminal, but also Circe herself is a liminal character: she is not a stereotypical female figure, because she crosses boundaries; she is not married and therefore is not subjugated to a man; she possesses magic powers which render her a worthy opponent of males; she helps Odysseus to make an effective transition into a different realm (the Underworld) and then reintegrate into society. On Circe's liminality, see Marinatos (1995) 133-40.

the present and the past.[42] Secondly, according to some mythical accounts, he experienced both male and female sexuality, and thus transcended the distinction between men and women.[43] Finally, his condition of seer enabled him to mediate between the present and the future. Already when alive, therefore, Tiresias transcended the primordial temporal divisions, and almost considered time from an atemporal point of view.[44] Being a seer, moreover, Tiresias also mediates between human and divine realm. He gives voice to the divine in its higher sense, transcending the capriciousness of individual gods, and somehow speaking Fate. His longevity on the one hand and his powers of divination on the other thus render him very close to the divine. His peculiar condition after death, then, just reinforces his proximity to the divine sphere, inasmuch as he can retain his mental faculties, never really experiences death as the rest of humankind does, and is able to deliver to Odysseus forceful, authoritative, and divinely inspired instructions.

Tiresias can be useful to Odysseus in virtue of his powers of divination and his role of mediator, which he maintains also in the Underworld. In fact, not only does he

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[42] Eur., *Bacch. passim*; Eur. *Phoen.* 834-45, 931-59, 1589-91; Schol. *Eur. Phoen.* 1760; Soph. *Ant.* 1045-90; Soph. *OT* 430-62; Nonnos, *Dion.* 45.52-53; Apoll., *Bibl.* 3.6.7; Ov., *Met.* 3.511-24, Statius, *Theb.* 10.594ff., 756ff.; Hygin., *Fab.* 68. Turner (1969) 45 considers Tiresias' long life, and thus his direct knowledge of the different phases of human life, the reason why the seer was able to solve the riddle of the Sphinx.

[43] *Fragmenta hesiodea* 275, p.136 MW = Phlegon, *Mirab.*, c.4 (O. Keller, *Rerum naturalium scriptores graeci minores* I, pp. 73-74); Hygin., *Fab.* 75; Lactantius, *Comm. In Statii Thebaida* II. 95 (R. Jahnke); Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.7; Ov., *Met.* 3.316-39; Eustathius, *Comm. ad Hom. Odyss.* 10.494 (1665.42); *Schol. Ambros. ad Hom. Odyss.* 10.494; Fulgentius, *Mitologiarum libri tres* II.5 (R. Helm); *Scriptores rerum mythicarum latini* I.16, p.5; II.84, p.104; III.4, p.169 (G.H. Bode); Antoninus Liberalis, *Met.* 17.5; *Schol. Marc. ad Lycophr. Alex.* 683 (II, p.226, O. Scheer). For a complete survey of the variants of the myth of Tiresias, see Brisson (1976) 11-28 and Ugolini (1995).

[44] Brisson (1976) esp. 41-45.

foresee what Odysseus will have to face before and after his return to Ithaca, but he also gives him instructions on how to interrogate other dead spirits. The *Nekyia* almost in its entirety, therefore, is made possible by Tiresias' directions about the function of the sacrificial blood. Yet, the narratological function of Tiresias is in no way confined to the *Nekyia*: rather, his influence extends far beyond this limited episode, and even constitutes the connection between the *Nekyia* and the rest of the poem. On the one hand, his instructions (together with Circe's) will facilitate Odysseus' return to Ithaca; on the other hand, and more importantly for the present study, his words seem to provide the hero with the solution to his helpless condition. In order to illustrate in more depth the role of Tiresias as a helper in this respect, we will first of all focus on his words to Odysseus: not only the content, in fact, but also the form of his speech seems particularly relevant.

Let us begin by considering Tiresias' prophecy. We have already pointed out that Circe's directions at *Od.* 12.37-141 seem to be more immediately helpful for the hero to overcome the dangers that he will have to face once he leaves Aiaia. And we have also noticed how Circe's warning not to touch the cattle of Helios on Thrinacia (*Od.* 12.127-41) repeats and confirms Tiresias' similar admonition (*Od.* 11.104-15). Both speeches have a hypothetical form, inasmuch as they leave a choice to Odysseus: if he and his men do not harm the cattle of the Sun, they will be able to return to Ithaca; but if they kill or hurt the cattle, death and destruction will fall upon them.

Yet there is one fundamental difference between the two speeches. Tiresias, after revealing to Odysseus that Poseidon is enraged against him because he blinded his son

Polyphemus, explicitly points out to the hero what he will need to do in order to survive: αἴ κ' ἐθέλῃς σὸν θυμὸν ἐρυκακέειν καὶ ἑταίρων ("if you can restrain your own spirit and that of your comrades," *Od.* 11.105). Just as his θυμός caused Odysseus' hybristic boasting against the Cyclops, and ultimately originated Poseidon's wrath as well as the dimming of his μῆτις, so in his subsequent adventures he should avoid the same mistake, and restrain his and his comrades' θυμός. Tiresias' words thus focus on the possible catastrophic effects of unrestrained human θυμός. His words represent for Odysseus a moral lesson that is all the more forceful inasmuch as it is divinely inspired. The core of his message is a strong command to restrain his θυμός, which constitutes the foundation for the instructions Odysseus will receive from Circe.

Circe, on the other hand, emphasizes the divine nature of the cattle on Thrinacia: they never give birth and never die, and their guardians are nymphs who are daughters of the Sun (*Od.* 12.130-36). Her words thus seem to focus on the boundaries of the human realm, and on the necessity for men not to commit crimes against the gods. Her words somehow complete and specify Tiresias' warning: men should restrain their θυμός, and in particular they should refrain from challenging the gods.

On Thrinacia the presence of the cattle of Helios constitutes a major risk: it represents another chance of committing ὕβρις against a god, which would once again incite divine wrath against the hero. Tiresias does not blame his θυμός directly as the cause of Poseidon's wrath against Odysseus, but he reveals that the blinding of Polyphemus enraged the sea-god against him, and institutes a subtle parallel between

what happened on the island of the Cyclopes and what might happen on Thrinacia. By warning the hero to restrain his θυμός on Thrinacia, where another occasion to commit ὕβρις will be offered, Tiresias thus gives a precise hint to Odysseus about the cause of his present condition of misery and helplessness.

Tiresias' prophecy then mentions the troubles Odysseus will have to face upon his return to Ithaca, where the Suitors devour his goods and woo his wife. Odysseus, he says, will punish their violence and will kill them ἠὲ δόλῳ ἢ ἀμφαδὸν ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ ("either by guile or openly with the sharp sword," *Od.* 11.120). Upon his return home, Tiresias clearly indicates, Odysseus will be able once again to resort to trickery: considering the strict relation between δόλος and μῆτις, which we have pointed out in chapter 2, Tiresias' words should comfort the hero and reassure him that his helpless condition and the dimming of his μῆτις will soon be over. Later on, after punishing the Suitors and reasserting his authority in Ithaca, Odysseus will start a new journey, that will end when the hero finds what Tiresias calls "a very manifest sign" (σῆμα... μάλ' ἀριφραδές, *Od.* 11.126). This sign will not escape Odysseus' notice (οὐδέ σε λήσει, *Od.* 11.126). Not only the dimming of his μῆτις, but also the λήθη induced by Circe's magic will soon end. Not only his νοῦς, therefore, but also his φρένες, through which forgetfulness and lack of notice pass, will soon be healed. Tiresias' prophecy thus emphasizes the role of psychological elements in Odysseus' future, and in so doing stresses the fact that his future is possible only if he is capable of sound mental activity.

The prophecy ends with the assertion that his words are νημερτέα ("without error," *Od.* 11.137).

This element of truthfulness leads us to the second aspect of Tiresias' instructions, namely the directions on how to interrogate the other dead spirits in the Underworld. At the very beginning of their dialogue, Tiresias clearly told Odysseus to let him drink the sacrificial blood, so that he might speak the truth (νημερτέα, *Od.* 11.96). In a similar way, he tells the hero, the spirits that will be allowed to drink the blood will speak the truth (νημερτές, *Od.* 11.148), while the others will return to Hades.

The sacrificial blood, therefore, seems to have a very precise function: it ensures the truthfulness of the dead spirits in a twofold way. On the one hand, as we have already observed, it allows them not to be deceived by the forgetfulness that generally accompanies death, and thus enables them to recognize Odysseus; on the other hand, it guarantees their veracity so that they will not mislead the hero with deceitful words. Tiresias, thanks to the steadfast φρένες and νοῦς that he is permitted to retain by the gods, is able to recognize Odysseus and talk to him even before drinking the blood. Yet he still needs the blood to ensure the truth of his words. What type of truth is he referring to?

The term used to indicate the truthfulness granted by the sacrificial blood is consistently and significantly νημερτές. A few considerations on this term will enable us to connote Tiresias' truthfulness more precisely. As Marcel Detienne has pointed out, νημερτής (="unerring, infallible") is an epithet peculiar to the Old Man of the Sea: in

the *Odyssey* it repeatedly connotes Proteus (*Od.* 4.349, 384, 401, 542; 17.140); moreover, Νημερτής is the name of one Nereid (*Il.* 17.46), namely the daughter of the Sea's Ancient Nereus whom Hesiod defines as ἀψευδής, ἀληθής, and νημερτής.[45] Νημέρτεια generally indicates the absence of errors (from ἁμαρτάνω), and Homer often uses it in the sense of "precise, meticulous, clear:" while ἀψευδής seems to indicate the lack of intentional lies, νημερτής and ἀληθής include the unintentional lack of precision and forgetfulness. In other words, ἀλήθεια excludes forgetfulness, νημέρτεια connotes the precision of exposition, and ἀψευδής signifies the absence of trickery.[46]

Detienne argues that the association of these three epithets is "in all likelihood traditional, since we also find them linked in this way in the description of the highest form of mantic speech, that of Apollo."[47] Tiresias appears to Odysseus holding the

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[45] Detienne (1996) 53-56 and notes p.158-60. See Hes., *Theog.* 233-36: "But Pontos was the father of trustworthy (ἀψευδής) Nereus, who does not lie (ἀληθής), the eldest of his sons. They call him the Old Man because he is unerring (νημερτής), and kind, and never forgetful of what is right (οὐδὲ θεμίστων λήθεται), but the thoughts of his mind are mild and righteous (δίκαια καὶ ἤπια)." Ramnoux (1962) 141ff. points out the affinities between Poseidon and the Old Man of the Sea, and observes that in his appearances Poseidon often adopts the likeness and characteristics of a wise old man or a diviner (*Il.* 13.43-72; 14.135-54). Guido (1975-76) 17 emphasizes the μῆτις of the ἅλιος γέρων Nereus, and points out that Nereus' truthfulness seems to involve both prophecy and justice.

[46] Detienne (1996) 159 n.4 rightly points out that "the fundamental opposition is not between ψευδής and ἀληθής, but between ψευδής and ἀψευδής", where ψευδής means speech that aims to deceive, or also "without fulfillment devoid of efficacy". As is clear from the words of Odysseus in disguise in *Od.* 17.561 and 19.269, νημέρτεια is possible even in a context of lies and trickery: Odysseus can be νημερτής, and thus make precise accounts, even if he is deceitfully hiding the truth from Eumaios and Penelope.

[47] Detienne (1996) 53. In *Hom. Hymn. Herm.* 368-69, Hermes declares that he will tell the truth (ἀληθείην ἀγορεύσω), for he is trustworthy and is not able to lie (νημερτής τε γάρ εἰμι καὶ οὐκ οἶδα ψεύδεσθαι). On the relevance of ἀλήθεια in the realm of mantic speech, see also *Hom. Hymn Herm.*

golden scepter, that is a sign of authority as μάντις (*Od.* 11.91): given the unquestionable relevance of truthfulness in mantic speeches, it is not surprising that Tiresias describes his own words, as well as what other dead spirits will be able to tell Odysseus, as νημερτής.[48] Detienne's observation, however, and in particular the fact that all three epithets are associated with and connote different aspects of the truthfulness of mantic speech, raises the question of why Tiresias consistently uses only one of these terms. He uses neither ἀψευδής nor ἀληθής to refer either to the truthfulness of his prophecy or to the veracity of the other spirits.

Although a negative argument of this sort may not necessarily be able to prove a thesis incontestably,[49] I believe that the repeated avoidance of the term ἀλήθεια is extremely relevant in the context of the *Nekyia*. In the Underworld, in fact, forgetfulness is an essential characteristic of the dead spirits. Tiresias does not seem subject to it, but without drinking the sacrificial blood that makes his words infallible (νημερτέα), he is not able to prophesize. The blood, in other words, renders him very similar to Proteus, the infallible Old Man of the Sea who prophesizes Menelaus' future in *Odyssey* 4.472-

561; Pind., *Pyth.* 11.6 (on the oracle of Ismenion, known as the ἀληθής seat of diviners); Pind., *Ol.* 8.1-3 (Olympia is a "queen of ἀλήθεια", because there "men of prophecy, consulting Zeus' sacrificial fire, probe his will"); Soph., *OR* 299, 356, 369 (Tiresias speaks of his own knowledge as ἀλήθεια); Eur., *Iph. in Tauris* 1256-67, 1276-79 (the nocturnal oracles summoned by Gaia speak ἀληθοσύνη); Aesch., *Agam.* 1241 (Cassandra is ἀληθόμαντις); Plut., *Quaest. Conv.* 3.9.2.657E (ἀλήθεια was the name of one of the nurses of the great oracular god Apollo).

[48] On the significance of the scepter for mediating figures such as seers, priests, sorcerers, or heralds, see above, ch. 2 n. 63.

[49] At *Il.* 6.376 Hector asks the servants to tell him precisely (νημερτέα) where Andromache is; one servant woman, at *Il.* 6.382, begins her response using ἀληθέα to indicate the truth Hector demanded. In this context, therefore, there seems to be no substantial difference between the two terms.

569. Tiresias' φρένες are steadfast, and he is therefore able to recognize Odysseus from what he remembers from the world of the living; the absence of forgetfulness, assured by the fact that his φρένες are firm, guarantees the ἀ-λήθεια of his words.

Yet, following Detienne's analysis, ἀ-λήθεια alone is not sufficient, and some other element is necessary for a mantic speech to be trustworthy, namely the absence of trickery and the lack of other unconscious errors. Deceitfulness, as we have already observed, is a conscious process that can spoil and corrupt a prophecy just as any other type of speech. Yet trickery seems to be a secondary process: in spite of ἀλήθεια and νημέρτεια, a prophet who knows the truth in detail and neither omits nor forgets any aspect of it, can still decide to resort to trickery and thus render his speech untrustworthy.[50] Tiresias, instead, seems to want his words to be truthful, but clearly indicates that some sort of impediment blocks the νημέρτεια of his prophetic powers: without drinking the blood, he cannot guarantee that his words will be trustworthy. Death, we can thus infer, has spared Tiresias' φρένες, but has clearly corrupted some other faculty of his. The seer, no matter how privileged his condition, is still a dead spirit. He now needs some external help to make sure that his condition of dead does not involuntarily alter the truthfulness of his words.[51]

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[50] Thus Agamemnon accuses Chalcas of fabricating prophecies that are against him in *Il.* 1.106-13. The seer's trustworthiness is not mentioned explicitly, but Agamemnon's words seem to indicate the possibility for a seer to manipulate prophecies.

[51] The seer's standard claim to knowledge of τά τ' ἐόντα τά τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα (*Il.* 1.70, Hes. *Theog.* 38) comes to mind in this respect. The knowledge of the seer extends to past, present, and future: it is therefore threefold. In this line of thoughts, the three qualitative epithets for Nereus in Hesiod (see above, p. 207) may assume a new nuance and hint to this threefold knowledge.

The other dead spirits, whose condition is not privileged, need some external help even more than Tiresias, because their mental faculties have been destroyed by death and they are able neither to recognize Odysseus nor to utter any speech.[52] Yet Tiresias does not say that they need the blood in order to recognize the hero, or to talk to him *tout court*: he explicitly indicates that the blood will grant them νημέρτεια.[53] The rest is most likely implied: in order to speak the truth, the spirits need to be able to speak, and in order to speak reasonably to Odysseus they need to recognize him. Tiresias does not say explicitly that the blood will enable them to recognize the hero and talk to him: he already has those abilities, and almost takes them for granted in the other dead spirits, or rather he takes for granted that they will regain them at least temporarily so that they can talk to Odysseus, as if this was not a difficult obstacle to overcome. What matters to

[52] *Od.* 11.43 (θεσπεσίῃ ἰαχῇ), 605 (κλαγγὴ νεκύων ἦν οἰωνῶν ὡς), 633 (ἠχῇ θεσπεσίῃ); cf. Patroclos' shade in *Il.* 23.101 (τετριγυῖα). In the so-called *Deuteronekyia*, in which Hermes leads the slaughtered Suitors to the Underworld, these shades can only squeak like bats (*Od.* 24.5-9). Homer repeats the verb τρίζω three times in five lines, thus insisting that their voices are inarticulate. Bremmer (1983) 85 explains the use of τρίζω with the dead's obvious inability to speak. Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 94-106 sees a strong discrepancy between the inarticulate voices of the dead Suitors and their subsequent dialogue with the shades of Achilles, Patroclos, Antilochos, Ajax, and Agamemnon; she claims that this "faulty integration suggests an unsuccessful stitching together of the theme 'Suitors and Hermes' with the episode 'the shades of Achilles, Patroclos, Antilochos, Ajax, and Agamemnon in Hades.'" She considers the *Deuteronekyia* post-Homeric, incorporating eschatological ideas of a later period. Johnston (1999) 9 n.9 leaves open the possibility that the expression "uncanny cry" (θεσπεσίῃ ἰαχῇ) refers to articulate sounds as well, and concludes that when it is used in the Underworld it simply indicates a deafening, overpowering sound. Also the verb τρίζω may raise a similar problem, inasmuch as the high-pitched squeal that it indicates could be either "merely animalistic gibberish or it is a language of the dead, comprehensible to the deceased, but sounding inhuman to the living." Heath (2005) 57-58 n.63. Although the Homeric picture of the dead is certainly complex and ambiguous (see above, n. 29), I agree with Heath (2005) 57-58 that the apparent discrepancy between the inarticulate sounds of the Suitors and their subsequent dialogue with the dead Iliadic heroes can be explained by assuming that the dead can understand each other, but their words are incomprehensible to the living.

[53] Heath (2005) 59 hypothesizes in this respect that "perhaps the dead are not to be trusted," and mentions the wonderful debate about the veracity of a dead man in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 2.29-30. What I try to point out in this section is in what sense they are (or can be) unreliable, and the possible reason why the dead are not to be trusted.

him is what he himself lacks, namely νημέρτεια, that not even his privileged condition was able to preserve.

There is no indication in the text that the sacrificial blood reinvigorates the body of the dead so that they can speak, or awaken their minds so they can and want to talk to him. The term ἀυδή, "voice," on the other hand, is never used of the dead, "just as it is never used of the undisguised gods."[54] Even in situations like Elpenor's or Patroclos', in which the dead still retain some link with the living, the conversation cannot be just a regular exchange as we would see in the upper world.[55] Homer solves this difficulty by setting such exchanges beyond the usual realm of human communication, namely in a dream (in Patroclos' case in *Il.* 23.65-107)[56] and at the edge of the world, near the entrance of Hades (in Elpenor's case in *Od.* 11.51-83). It was probably inconceivable

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[54] Heath (2005) 60 also points out that "in later Greek, and often in Latin, the underworld was known as the 'silent regions' and the dead as the 'silent ones'." When Odysseus reaches Scheria, he is nearly drowned, at his physically weakest point in the poem: Homer describes him as "breathless and speechless" (ἄπνευστος καὶ ἄναυδος, *Od.* 5.456), thus connoting his proximity to death with the absence of speech. Cf. Hesiod, *Theog.* 795-97: to be speechless is as close as death as one can come. On the inability of the dead to utter proper speech, see Bremmer (1983) 84-85 and Jahn (1987) 36. On the fact that the Homeric gods speak a different language than our own, see Watkins (1970) 1-17; Nagler (1996) 148; Heath (2005) 51-57.

[55] For poetic or narratological reasons, Homer on occasions needed the dead ghosts to speak. Given the variety of ideas about death and the dead in early Greece, hinted at in the Homeric poems, Homer was able to make use of this diversity to his advantage. In the case of Elpenor and Patroclos, for instance, the fact that they have not received funeral rites yet provides an ideological explanation for the possible communication between the dead and the living. In a similar way, Heath (2005) 60 argues that the dead spirits are "only as 'witless' as the context requires."

[56] Patroclos' shade can still articulate his complaints, and Achilles recognizes him by his stature, eyes, and voice (φωνή, *Il.* 23.67). After having expressed his complaint, and having received reassurance that Achilles will give him funeral rites, "he is apparently already more at rest in death, for he quickly flits away from Achilles with an incoherent gibbering (*tetriguia*, *Il.* 23.100-1) identical to that of the dead suitors." (Heath 2005: 58). For a comparison between Achilles and Patroclos in *Il.* 22 on the one hand and Odysseus and Elpenor in *Od.* 11 on the other hand, see Reinhardt (1996) 114-16.

for the Homeric mentality to picture a dialogue between the living and the dead without any obstacles of any sort. In spite of Tiresias's intact mental faculties, he is unquestionably a dead spirit, who has lost any possibility of communicating directly to the living: he therefore needs some external help to recover what he has lost with death.

Ideological and poetic reasons are intertwined here: the barrier between the realm of the living and that of the dead was too insurmountable for the poet to ignore it, and some rite is necessary for the dead to interact with the living after having completed their transition to the Underworld. The rite of the blood aims to provide the dead spirits with something that they have all lost. The poet does not need to specify what exactly the spirits regain with the blood: it is enough for us to know that they are dead, confined in Hades, and separated from the upper world by the Ocean and by insuperable rivers (*Od.* 11.156-59). Death, according to archaic Greek mentality, did not grant any superior or god-like knowledge; not even in Tiresias' privileged condition did a dead spirit gain any special knowledge or faculty with death. Only some external help, and precisely some help coming from the upper world (such as the sacrificial blood), was able to supply symbolically for what they have irremediably lost.

In the course of this section we have examined what elements make the shade of Tiresias so peculiar and unique in the Underworld, and we have pointed out that his intact mental faculties render him very similar to the living, although his complete transition to Hades has made him unable to speak the truth to Odysseus without

resorting to the sacrificial blood. Tiresias is a seer, and therefore is endowed with a superior kind of knowledge that, combined with the guarantee that he will speak the truth, can certainly enable him to give directions to Odysseus. Yet are mere directions what Odysseus needs in order to reach Ithaca?

According to the Homeric mentality, eyewitness or direct observation can grant a much higher form of knowledge than hearing, and is inferior only to divine inspiration.[57] Although knowledge through sight is common to both mortals and immortals, divine sight (and therefore divine knowledge) surpasses that of mortals in its scope. Especially Zeus and Helios see and hear everything, but all gods in general possess an extraordinarily keen vision and are able to see from afar.[58] Not only Olympian gods, but also lesser divinities possess superior knowledge: the Sirens tempt Odysseus with it (*Od.* 12.189-91), and Circe herself demonstrates remarkable geographic knowledge and the utmost clarity in providing the hero with instructions to reach Hades and interrogate Tiresias (*Od.* 10.504-40). Following this line of thoughts,

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[57] Several Homeric passages exemplify the superiority of seeing to hearing: *Od.* 1.3; 3.184-87; 4.556; 16.470-75. See also Heraclitus Fr. 101a DK; Hdt. 2.99.1; and especially the beginning of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. For a modern discussion of this topic, see Snell (1924) 20-26; Bechert (1964) 21-22; Bremer (1976) 45-51; Lesher (1981) 2-24; Clay (1983) 12-14. The highest possible form of knowledge, however, is that derived either from the Muses or more in general from divine inspiration. On the blindness of poets (Demodocus, Homer) and seers (Tiresias), who do not derive their knowledge from their sight but from divine inspiration, see Clay (1983) 11-12.

[58] Zeus is repeatedly described as "wide-gazing" (εὐρύοπα), and his preeminence among the gods is illustrated both in terms of superior strength and as superior knowledge through sight (πλείονα ἴδῃ, *Il.* 13.355). Helios oversees and overhears all (ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούει, *Il.* 3.277; 11.109; *Od.* 12.323). Consequently, both gods are often invoked as eyewitnesses in oaths (*Il.* 3.276-80, 10.329-31). All the major Olympian gods share this ability to see from afar, like Poseidon at *Od.* 5.282-83, thanks both to their superhuman mobility and to their ability to see any action if they so chose. Snell (1924) 60-61; Pettazzoni (1956) 5-12; Clay (1983) 13-14.

the idea that Circe's divine knowledge is insufficient to give directions to the hero, and must be enhanced by Tiresias' human knowledge, would be inconceivable. Yet Tiresias is a seer, and is therefore inspired directly from the divine: his knowledge can thus be considered even higher than that of some deities, inasmuch as it is not affected by the capriciousness that often connotes individual gods. In other words, his condition of seer grants Tiresias superior knowledge, while the sacrificial blood provides him with the truthfulness that a devious goddess like Circe would not assure.

We may therefore reasonably infer that Odysseus receives from Tiresias two types of help towards the recovery of his mental faculties and the continuation of his homebound journey. On the one hand he needs directions. On the other hand, he needs to experience directly how a superior human mind should work. What Tiresias represents is the quintessence of steadfast φρένες and intact human νοῦς in their highest form, together with the highest possible knowledge humans can reach, namely the knowledge that seers derive from their connection with the gods.[59]

No living person would be able to provide a similar example, because in a living man the θυμός can corrupt rationality with the emotions and passions that it entails, just as it blinded Odysseus in the *Cyclopeia* and eventually brought about the utmost corruption of his μῆτις. Tiresias' θυμός is never mentioned in the *Nekyia*, and we can certainly

[59] Moreover, having experienced both male and female sexuality, Tiresias is the person who knows all that humans can know, transcending the barrier between men and women. See Brisson (1976) *passim.*

suppose that it has flown away with death, just as it happens to all other mortals.[60] Tiresias therefore represents intact human faculties that are not affected by passions, impulses, and emotions: following his example Odysseus can regain his ability to think rationally and devise wise plans. Tiresias is not only a model of intact mental faculties, but he uses his authority as seer to give moral directions to the hero: he explicitly warns him to restrain his own and his comrades' θυμός, and leaves responsibilities to Odysseus.

On the other hand, gods would not be able to provide Odysseus with a good example of intact mental faculties either. The Homeric gods do have νοῦς and φρένες, but they are at times capricious and devious; moreover, the divine nature of their mind renders them unreachable for the mortal men, and they therefore do not constitute a significant example for a man to imitate. The role of Circe before and after the *Nekyia* is simply to guide the hero towards the restoration of his mental faculties. Yet the re-establishment of such human features can possibly come only from another human, by providing a reachable and imitable example of intact human νοῦς. At the same time, Tiresias' special contact with the divine allows him to give Odysseus a forceful and authoritative moral lesson.

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[60] At death, the θυμός flies away and unlike the ψυχή does not survive in Hades, and in fact is never heard of again. See above, pp. 193-94.

4.4.Odysseus in a minor key: Elpenor.

The spirit of Tiresias in the Underworld thus provides Odysseus with a twofold assistance: on the one hand, when he prophesizes the hero's future, he emphasizes both the dangers that follow an unbridled θυμός (*Od.* 11.104-15) and the importance of Odysseus' cunning in slaughtering the Suitors (*Od.* 11.120). On the other hand, he constitutes for Odysseus the model of pure and uncorrupted human νοῦς, which should inspire and speed up the hero's process of recovery.

Yet Tiresias is not the first shade that encounters Odysseus and talks to him in Hades: a multitude of shades crowds around the pit as soon as the hero slaughters the sacrificial victims (*Od.* 11.34-43); Odysseus keeps them away from the blood with his sword, thus preventing them from talking to him before he speaks to Tiresias, just as Circe ordered. While the terrified hero struggles to avert the other shades, the spirit of Elpenor comes forth, almost indifferent to the whole blood ritual and to Odysseus' sword (*Od.* 11.51). He is still unburied, and this explains on the one hand why he is among the first shades that the hero encounters, and on the other hand why he does not need the blood to recognize Odysseus and talk to him.[61] From a narratological point of view, Elpenor constitutes the link between the *Nekyia* and the Circe episode, inasmuch

[61] This is the explanation provided by the scholia to *Od.* 11.51: ἐπεὶ ἄταφος. (...) ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ τοῦ Ἐλπήνορος ἅτε δὴ μήπω ἐπιβᾶσα τῷ τῆς Λήθης πεδίῳ καὶ πρὸ πόσεως ἐπιγινώσκει τὸν Ὀδυσσέα). Ogden (2001) 140 observes that the unburied dead and the request for burial are integral to other necromantic scenes in Greek literature, and hypothesizes that "at some stage in the archaeology of this oral poem, Elpenor or an equivalent figure, as opposed to Tiresias, was the prime agent of prophecy in Odysseus' consultation." Ogden pushes his hypothesis even farther, and claims that Circe left Elpenor unburied in order that Odysseus could accomplish his consultation, and for this purpose she may have even contrived Elpenor's death.

as the crew will have to return to Aiaia to give him funerary rites. Once there, Circe will integrate Tiresias' prophecy with instructions and directions about the journey back to Ithaca.[62]

Furthermore, as the scholia to *Od.* 11.51 point out, Odysseus encounters neither the comrades that have been killed by the Cyclops nor those that have been slaughtered by the Laestrygonians. The scholiast's explanation simply infers that "though abnormally" (ἀθέσμως), those comrades must have been buried somehow: therefore, they are not among the crowd of shades that have not completed their transition to Hades and are ready to approach Odysseus as soon as he slaughters the sacrificial victims. This explanation, however, obscures Elpenor's relevance. Among all the comrades that are killed in the course of various adventures, before and after the *Nekyia*, Elpenor is the only one mentioned by name.[63] When Scylla grabs six men and devours them, Odysseus explicitly tells the Phaeacian audience that they were the best and strongest men in the crew (*Od.* 12.246), and seeing them perish in that horrifying way was the most painful sight his eyes had to suffer throughout his adventures (*Od.* 12.258-59). Yet not even then does he mention their names: the comrades that die during the Odyssean adventures do not stand out as individuals, but rather form a non-identified group whose death makes Odysseus' *nostos* all the more painful. Elpenor is the only one whose name

[62] On the idea that the Elpenor episode is a late addition to the story to bind in the Hades episode more closely with the rest of the Odyssean material, see Kirk (1962) 239-40, and Heubeck (1989) 73 *ad Od.* 10.551-60. Whether or not this episode is a late addition goes beyond the scope of the present work; yet its function in connecting books 10, 11, and 12, is undeniable.

[63] None of the men killed either by the Cicones (*Od.* 9.60-63) or by Polyphemus (*Od.* 9.289, 311, 344) or by the Laestrygonians (*Od.* 10.114, 122-24) is mentioned by name.

is mentioned, and whom Homer describes with brief but sufficient traits to let him stand out in the audience's memory. In this section I will explore the significance of Elpenor's individuality. His connotation as weak and unstable, I will argue, seems to constitute an interesting parallel with Odysseus' psychological condition on Aiaia. And the significant differences between the two of them will give us a clearer understanding of Odysseus' helplessness.

Homer's representation of Elpenor is unusual not only because he is the only comrade whose death is accompanied by his name and by a brief description of his character, but also because the traits that are used to describe him seem to make him absolutely unworthy of mention. Paradoxically, the one man who is described at some length is one who is less worth mentioning, especially according to the heroic system of values. What appears to be a most insignificant man is chosen to mediate between the world of the living and that of the dead, and his encounter with Odysseus even precedes the dialogues with Anticleia and with Tiresias.

He is introduced with the phrase "a certain Elpenor" (Ἐλπήνωρ δέ τις, *Od.* 10.552), evidence that the audience most likely never heard of him before, either in the Odyssean adventures or in the Iliadic battles. Possibly due to his extremely young age (νεώτατος, *Od.* 10.52), he may appear at first sight to be Odysseus' opposite,[64] inasmuch as he seems to lack the qualities that normally distinguish his captain: οὔτε τι λίην / ἄλκιμος ἐν πολέμῳ οὔτε φρεσὶν ἧσιν ἀρηρώς ("not terribly valiant in war

[64] Thus Spieker (1965) 60, who describes Elpenor as "Negativum zur Gestalt Odysseus." See also Rohdich (1985) 108-15.

nor well-fashioned in understanding," *Od.* 10.552-53). Yet in the light of our considerations of Odysseus' unusual condition of helplessness on Circe's island, we can argue that Elpenor is not meant to be Odysseus' opposite, but rather his double in a minor key.

Elpenor is not strong in fighting, and he cannot rely on outstanding mental faculties: his φρένες are not steadfast, like Tiresias', but rather unstable. Odysseus' physical strength, on the other hand, is unquestionable, although he stands out among the Greeks especially for his cunning. Normally, Elpenor would definitely be Odysseus' opposite. Yet on Circe's island the situation changes: when he arrives on Aiaia, Odysseus' νοῦς is corrupted and his customary μῆτις is dimmed. Circe's magic, then, as we have observed in chapter 1, does not have any effect on the hero's body, but it induces forgetfulness, and the hero forgets about his homecoming (*Od.* 10.472). In the Homeric poems, λήθη consistently happens in or through the φρένες. We can therefore reasonably claim that Circe's magic renders Odysseus' φρένες unstable, and thus unusually similar to Elpenor in this respect.

The forgetfulness induced by Circe's magic, however, just like the λήθη produced by Helen's νηπενθὲς φάρμακον in *Od.* 4.221, is presented as a powerful remedy against painful memories: it alleviates psychological distress and prevents further suffering without affecting any mental activity in any way. While Odysseus has to face severe mental disturbances caused by his own ἀτασθαλία, and Circe's magic possibly alleviates the consequent pain, Elpenor is subject to death because of some minor,

though equally destructive, disturbance, namely unstable φρένες combined with the disorder caused by excessive wine.[65] After the farewell dinner, in fact, he awakes from his drunkenness and, without knowing where he is going, he falls headlong from the upper story of Circe's house, breaking his neck. His ruin is significantly described in terms of forgetfulness: when he hears the voices of the companions who are leaving Aiaia, he wakes up abruptly and "forgot to go to the long ladder and come down again" (ἐκλάθετο φρεσὶν ἦσιν / ἄψορρον καταβῆναι ἰὼν ἐς κλίμακα μακρήν, *Od.* 10.557-58).

Wine in archaic poetry can have either a positive, invigorating effect, or a destructive effect that harms the function of psychological entities. The Elpenor episode illustrates the extreme consequences of the negative effects wine can have on human minds.[66] Elpenor thus represents a double of Odysseus, inasmuch as they both deal with mental disturbances: yet the latter has naturally good but temporarily impaired wits, suffers the painful consequences of his ἀτασθαλία, and is subject to a psychologically challenging journey, while the first one suffers the consequences of his lack of wits, which are further dimmed by wine, and bring about his death in a rather clumsy fashion.

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[65] As Sullivan (1997) 15 notes, in Homer wine has consistently a negative effect on the φρένες, destroys their function, and "leads the person to poor judgment and foolish behavior. It also makes someone act inappropriately. It leads to forgetfulness."

[66] On the possible destructive forgetfulness brought about by wine, see also *Il.* 6.265, where Hector tells his mother not to bring him wine μή μ' ἀπογυιώσῃς μένεος, ἀλκῆς τε λάθωμαι ("lest you cripple me, and I forget my might and my valor"). On the positive or negative effects of wine on psychic entities, see Sullivan (1997) 9-18. On wine as a drug, see Rigotti (1993) 229-52. See also Weinrich (2004) 16, who mentions that Alkaios calls the wine φάρμακον ἄριστον, while Euripides says that it "*drives cares away.*"

While in Odysseus' psychological journey λήθη plays an important role in his recovery, in the Elpenor episode λήθη irremediably causes death. Because wine is celebrated for its ability to make one person forget troubles very effectively, the Elpenor episode, placed in a crucial point of Odysseus' itinerary, signifies the dangers of non-guided, aimless, self-induced forgetfulness.

The comparison with the couple Thersites/Achilles in the *Iliad* comes to mind in this respect. Just as we have observed about Elpenor, Thersites' base traits make him unworthy of mention in a heroic context. Moreover, in *Il.* 2.225-42 Thersites makes many of the same points as Achilles against Agamemnon, only in a buffoonish fashion. Yet the audience has the impression that Thersites, "the most wretched man among those who came to Ilion" (*Il.* 2.216), attacks Agamemnon both intentionally and unsuitably: because his harsh criticism is out of proportion, coming from a person who is described in such low terms, he deliberately aims to provide his speech with more authority by imitating Achilles' speech in *Il.* 1. His self-imposed role of ἄλλος Ἀχιλλεύς has been variously noticed throughout the centuries: Eustathius (1.319.4-5) notes how the same speech has different validity when it is pronounced by Achilles (*Il.* 1.122-29, 149-71) rather than by Thersites (*Il.* 2.225-42), and appropriately quotes Eur. *Hec.* 294-95 ("for the same argument, when proceeding from those of no account,/ has not the same force as when it is uttered by men of mark"). Thersites' grotesque

imitation of Achilles induced Plato to picture his *post-mortem* transformation into a monkey (*Resp.* 620c).[67]

In the case of Elpenor, however, his being Odysseus' double is completely unintentional: he happens to resemble Odysseus only because the hero at this point in the narrative is still lost and helpless. There is no intentional imitation here, and no awareness of this resemblance on Elpenor's part; yet the parallel with the couple Achilles/Thersites may still be somewhat significant. Just as the *Iliad* points out that the same words can have different effects on the audience if people of different rank pronounce them, so the Elpenor episode in the *Odyssey* emphasizes how the same condition of helplessness has different effects for Elpenor and for Odysseus, inasmuch as for the hero it is temporary and transitory, while for Elpenor it is a natural endowment, and therefore beyond repair.[68] While Odysseus is indeed responsible for his

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[67] See also Schadewaldt (1938) 152 n.2, who calls Thersites "den Affen des Achilleus," Lämmli (1948) 90, and Ebert (1969) 161-63. On the fact that the Achilles/Thersites opposition was a commonplace both in the fifth century and later to indicate how the same words can have different validity, see Cairns (1982) 204. See also Jouanno (2005) 181-223.

[68] Aristotle's account of moral virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and in particular his doctrine of the mean, comes to mind in this respect. According to this doctrine, virtue is a mean between two opposing vices, one of deficiency, the other of excess, in emotions and actions. Characters, in other words, are built out of components that are present in varying amounts: the timid/courageous/rash character, for instance, is the result of an excess/ideal amount/deficiency of fear. The virtue of courage, then, lies at the mean between the excessive extreme of rashness, and the deficient extreme of cowardice. Aristotle's theory provides the seed from which Theophrastus' descriptions grow. In his *Characters*, instead of abstract circumstances and anonymous agents he gives us real occasions and individuals that are associated with each virtue and vice. Without wanting to exaggerate the similarities between Aristotelian ethics and the Homeric representation of characters, we should point out that the differentiation of Elpenor and Odysseus appears to be phrased in these terms: their mental capacity is endowed by nature with different degrees of firmness. While Elpenor represents deficiency, Odysseus at times (e.g. in the *Cyclopeia*) is excess.

helpless condition, Elpenor is certainly not: the opposition between them thus dramatizes the issue of responsibility.

4.4.1. Sleep, Death's brother

Elpenor's unstable φρένες are further weakened by the negative effects of excessive wine. Weak and damaged φρένες, as we have pointed out in chapter 1, are not (or no longer) able to retain knowledge and information, but let them slip away, thus causing forgetfulness. In Elpenor's case, however, there is a third factor that contributes to bringing about his fatal forgetfulness, and that is sleep. In this section we will consider the proximity of sleep and death from a cognitive point of view: this proximity, that several ancient authors refer to, is made possible by the forgetfulness that connotes both conditions, though to different degrees.

In this perspective, Odysseus' encounter with Elpenor in Hades acquires deeper significance: before talking to Tiresias, whose φρένες are steadfast, the hero can experience directly the devastating effects of deeply unstable and damaged φρένες. Odysseus' φρένες, we should remind at this point, were affected by Circe's magic, which made him forget about his homecoming, and the companions' rebuke at *Od.* 10.472 certainly made Odysseus aware of it. Yet this λήθη, which according to our interpretation aims to ease the pain of Odysseus' recovery, should remain a temporary condition in order to be useful: it is a help towards his recovery, and not a permanent

condemnation. Elpenor's destiny, instead, represents the dreadful effects of aimless forgetfulness, which causes his death and thus turns into a condition of consistent and undying forgetfulness. For this reason, therefore, Homer has Odysseus encounter Elpenor, and not any of the other companions who died during their *nostos*: he provides the hero with a negative example of forgetfulness, and thus offers a first guideline towards his recovery. But let us consider more in detail the proximity of sleep and death, as it is envisaged in the Homeric poems.

A survey of the Homeric passages in which sleep is mentioned immediately indicates as its main characteristic the ability to relax a person's body and to ease the suffering of the θυμός. A few passages, then, show that sleep has some effect on the φρένες too, and seem to suggest that the beneficial effects on the θυμός are due to the fact that sleep affects the φρένες in the first place, causes forgetfulness of pain and suffering, and therefore eases the anguish of the θυμός. Only in a couple of instances, then, does sleep have a numbing effect on the νοῦς too, most likely indicating that when asleep a person is not able to process sensorial data and ideas in the same way as when awake.[69]

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[69] On the relaxing effects of sleep on the θυμός: *Il.* 23.62; *Od.* 13.90-92, 15.7 (where the lack of sleep accompanies the anguish of the θυμός); 20.54, 23.16, 23.342. On the φρένες: *Il.* 2.33-34, 14.164 (sleep is explicitly poured both on eyes and on φρένες); *Od.* 13.92 (where Odysseus sleeps peacefully, forgetting his past sufferings; in ch. 1 we have pointed out that forgetfulness in the Homeric poems consistently happens through the φρένες); *Od.* 20.85-86 (where Penelope claims that sleep makes one forget all things, good and bad ones). On the νοῦς: *Il.* 14.160-64, 252. Sleep is often represented in the Homeric poems as an obstacle to the regular activity of the φρένες, and both intense thinking and painful thoughts are considered a cause of insomnia for men and gods. E.g. *Il.* 2.2-3; 10.4; 24.3-5; 24.637-40; 24.679-80; *Od.* 15.7-8; 19.515-17. In other instances, the processes of falling asleep (*Il.* 10.98-99) and waking up (*Il.* 2.33-34) may induce forgetfulness, which also seems to indicate the concept of sleep as affecting mental activity.

Particularly significant for our argument is the passage in which a Dream appears to Agamemnon in *Il.* 2.16-36, orders him to arm the Achaeans quickly, and deceitfully makes him believe that the end of Troy is near. To conclude his speech, the Dream warns Agamemnon:

> ἀλλὰ σὺ σῇσιν ἔχε φρεσί, μηδέ σε λήθη
> αἱρείτω εὖτ' ἄν σε μελίφρων ὕπνος ἀνήῃ.
>
> but keep this in your mind, and may forgetfulness
> not lay hold of you, when honey-minded sleep shall let you go.
>
> (*Il.* 2.33-34)

This passage seems to indicate that the φρένες are also the seat of mental activity when a person is asleep. The crucial moment that can cause forgetfulness is not so much sleep in general, but the passage from sleep to wakefulness (and possibly vice-versa). The same concept is expressed in a much more articulate way by Sextus Empiricus, who allegedly reports some thoughts already expressed by Heraclitus:[70] humans, according to Sextus, are forgetful during sleep, and when awake they are again in their senses (ἔμφρονες). The loss of the power of remembering (μνημονικὴ δύναμις) is accompanied by the loss of the power of reasoning (λογικὴ δύναμις), and comes through the loss of perception ("in sleep the channels of perception are shut"), since in sleep the only contact with the surroundings is provided by breathing.

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[70] Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos* 7.129-30 (DK 22 A16). While Kahn (1979) 294-96 is skeptical about the veracity of Sextus' report, other scholars believe that he does indeed report some genuine Heraclitean views on sleep: Kirk (1954) 341; Guthrie (1962) 430; Fränkel (1975) 390; Claus (1981) 126, 128; Kirk (1983[2]) 205-6. On this debate see Granger (2000) 265 n.14. On the concept of ψυχή in Heraclitus, see Nussbaum (1972) 1-16, 153-70. On the topic of sleep in Sextus and Heraclitus, see also Polito (2003) 53-70.

Without wanting to push the similarities between Sextus/Heraclitus and Homer too far, we may use Sextus' text to articulate the cognitive model that we have sketched in chapter 1. The senses, or even the νοῦς when it works as an organ of perception, are the first elements involved in the acquisition of notions and in the subsequent elaboration of ideas and storage of memories. If the "channels of perceptions" are shut, as happens during sleep, all cognitive faculties are compromised, and both the senses and the reason stop being fully functional.[71] When a person falls asleep, (s)he stops perceiving what happens in the outside world, loses (or at least changes) the power of reasoning (λογικὴ δύναμις), and also loses the power of remembering what one knew when awake.[72] This last element, namely the loss of the μνημονικὴ δύναμις mentioned by Sextus, seems to match perfectly the danger against which the Dream warns Agamemnon in *Il.* 2.33-34.

Just as falling asleep makes one forget what we know when awake, so waking up may cause us to forget what we have dreamt of.[73] In other words, during sleep we still

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[71] On the fragments by Heraclitus that compare the epistemic state of a foolish man to that of the blind and of the deaf and even of the sleeper, see Granger (2000) esp. 266-67: "he is cut off from reality, like a sleeper in a dream world of his own making who in his sleep is forgetful of reality, or who is forgetful of reality after the fashion of the waking who are forgetful of what they have dreamed." Both Granger and before him Hussey (1991) 521 view Heraclitus in the light of Homer, and suggest that Heraclitus viewed the mass of humanity as no better than corpses in respect of knowledge, and no better than sleepers; rather, they would be like the ψυχαί in the Homeric underworld.

[72] Kahn (1979) 214-15 contrasts Heraclitus' belief that in sleep "all we see is sleep", as well as his denial of a more penetrating life in dreams, with Pindar's view (fr.116 Bowra), according to which a phantom of life "sleeps when the limbs are active but shows to sleeping men in many dreams" the vision of things not seen by day. In spite of their opposite views, both Heraclitus and Pindar seem to imply the strong distinction between the psychic life during wake and during sleep.

[73] On the proximity of the themes of sleep and of forgetfulness in modern authors, see Weinrich (2004) 4-6.

retain some form of mental activity, but this is a very peculiar form of activity, that still takes place in the φρένες, but does not need the input of the organs of perceptions. The two types of mental activity, the one when awake and the one when asleep, are distinctly separated from each other by the crucial moments of passage between one state and the other. These crucial moments, that of waking up and that of falling asleep, cause or may cause an individual to forget what he knew or experienced during one state, before he passes to the other.

We have already pointed out in the previous sections of this chapter how relevant the element of forgetfulness is in the Homeric Underworld: with the exception of Tiresias and of the spirits whose bodies are still unburied, the shades in the *Nekyia* are deprived of their bodies and in particular of the φρένες. Therefore they retain no location for mental activities of any sort, including memory: without the help of the sacrificial blood, in fact, the dead spirits are not even able to recognize Odysseus. As soon as the dead spirits drink the sacrificial blood, they seem to regain all the knowledge they possessed in their life. The sudden advent of this knowledge gives the impression first of all of the return of their memory. Just as Homer in various instances seems to equate the senselessness of the dead with forgetfulness,[74] so in the *Nekyia* he describes the temporary return of the dead spirits to their senses as regaining memory.

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[74] The dead warrior Cebriones lies in the dust, "forgetful of his horsemanship" (λελασμένος ἱπποσυνάων, *Il.* 16.776); the same lines are referred to Achilles by Agamemnon in *Od.* 24.40. Achilles claims that even after death he will not forget his friend Patroclos, "though the dead forget the dead in the house of Hades" (εἰ δὲ θανόντων περ καταλήθοντ' εἰν Ἀΐδαο, *Il.* 22.389). On the proximity of death and forgetfulness in Odysseus' adventures, see Aguirre-Castro (1999) 9-22. Forgetfulness certainly furnishes a significant dimension of the life in Hades in the works of several ancient authors (see above n.

The parallel between sleep and death is rather straightforward: in both conditions cognitive powers, sensation, reason, communication, and the common behavior of a living person seem to be lost, and both conditions encompass forgetfulness to different degrees. Not only do these conditions appear quite similar from an epistemological and cognitive point of view, but in the Homeric poems sleep at times leads significantly to death, as the case of Elpenor illustrates.[75] Both in Hesiod (*Theog.* 756) and in Homer (*Il.* 14.231), Hypnos is the brother of Thanatos, they are both children of the Night (*Theog.* 211-32), and at times they are even referred to as twin brothers (*Il.* 16.672, 682).[76] This proximity certainly signifies that the sweetness of sleep, and the restoration of physical and mental strength that it grants both to mortals and to immortals, are very ambiguous.[77] Sleep, in fact, temporarily deprives an individual of the mental faculties

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40). See also Granger (2000) 272, who remarks that "the idea that the souls of the dead are in a state of forgetfulness, or what is comparable to forgetfulness, in their senselessness was already a part of the Homeric conception of the condition of the dead."

[75] Vice versa, when Odysseus returns to Aiaia after his journey to the Underworld, he and his crew fall asleep (*Od.* 12.7): sleep, in this case, represents the transition between the world of the dead and that of the living, the return to life from death.

[76] Hypnos is mentioned in connection to Thanatos also in *Il.* 16.453-57, when Zeus gives order to both of them to escort the body of the dead Sarpedon to his homeland for burial. On Thanatos and Sleep in early Greek visual arts, see Vermeule (1979). Marelli (1981) 127 n.15 mentions the anecdote about Gorgias (A 15 DK) who, waking up from a nap, says: "sleep begins to entrust me to his brother (ie. Thanatos)." Mainoldi (1987) 37 points out that oftentimes in vase paintings Hypnos and Thanatos are depicted while carrying dead bodies, and sometimes laying them next to the tomb. Their role has nothing to do with the spirit of the dead person. Hermes and Charon, instead, seem to be depicted in connection with the transition of the ψυχαί to the Underworld. On literary depictions of Hypnos and Thanatos, and their occasional erotic connotations, see Wöhrle (1995) 24-41. On Sleep's status as a mythological figure, both in literature and in visual arts, see Stafford (2003) 71-106. On the depiction of Thanatos and Hypnos on funerary *lekythoi*, see Giudice (2003) 145-58.

[77] Both men and gods are subject to Sleep, who at *Il.* 14.233 is called "lord of all gods and of all men." Most likely for the same reason, at *Il.* 2.19 Sleep is called ἀμβρόσιος, "immortal, divine:" it is not so much a gift from the gods to the men, therefore, but a condition that is shared by both. In Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 4.146-48, Sleep is invoked to charm even the chthonic goddess Hecate. Mainoldi (1987) 39 quite rightly

that he has when awake, and thus induces great risk: the danger is that the temporary suspension of mental activities puts the subject in a condition of utmost vulnerability.

The example of Elpenor illustrates eloquently (both to the audience and to Odysseus) the dangers of being unaware of and subject to dangers and external attacks in situations that would require the individual to be alert.[78] The unawareness and the unconsciousness brought about by sleep cause death when they replace the functioning mental faculties that an individual needs in order to face and overcome dangerous situations. Sleep prevents even the awareness that a danger is present or impending. The passage from sleep to death is therefore rather rapid: what starts out as a temporary loss of consciousness causes the individual to be susceptible to dangers that he is not able to face in this unaware condition. This temporary condition, then, ultimately becomes

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claims that the dangerous character of Sleep is emphasized in several myths by the fact that his victims are often gods or semi-divine figures. In a number of instances, sleep is induced or simply taken advantage of in order to conquer an enemy, or just to prevail in a hopeless situation. Since action is taken when the enemy's mental functions are not functioning properly, this use of sleep is certainly a form of deceitful δόλος. Scylla, for instance, deprives her father Nisus of the hair that renders him immortal while he is asleep and suspects nothing (Aesch., *Lib.* 619-21); Perseus, though endowed with magic attributes (he is invisible, has winged sandals, and the gods have given him a cap, a wallet, and a sickle) attacks the Gorgons during sleep (Apollod., *Bibl.* 2.4.2); Polyphemus himself is blinded when wine and sleep have rendered him harmless (*Od.* 9.371-90); Hera is able to trick Zeus in the so-called Διὸς ἀπάτη, with the help of Sleep (*Il.* 14.222-360); Argus, the hundred-eyed guardian (Bacchyl. 19), is caused to fall asleep by Hermes' "slumberous melody" (Aesch., *Prom.* 575; cf. Ovid, *Met.* 1.625-723). Hermes, the trickster-god, is significantly able to induce sleep, lower somebody's defence, and thus overturn situations in ways that would never be possible otherwise. On the positive or negative connotation of δόλος see §2.1.2 On the sleep dispensed by Hermes' wand, see ch.1, n.8. On iconographic sources in which Hypnos puts somebody's life in danger or even causes somebody's death, see Mainoldi (1987) 40-46.

[78] For other instances of the dreadful consequences sleep can have, we should remember of the Aeolian episode (*Od.* 10.31), when the crew opens Aeolus' bag of winds while Odysseus is asleep; on Thrinacia too (*Od.* 12.338) the comrades take advantage of Odysseus' sleep and kill the cattle of Helios. In the *Cyclopeia*, Odysseus takes advantage of Polyphemus' sleep and manages to blind the monster (*Od.* 9.371-74).

permanent. And the permanent loss of psychic activity is death, a condition in which the individual can no longer engage in the activities he only seems to lose in sleep. As Plato's Socrates says (*Apol.* 40c), death is like a sleep in which the sleeper has no senses and no dreams.[79]

Elpenor thus embodies the dangers brought about by a psychological condition of weakness and unawareness that somehow resembles Odysseus' situation on Aiaia: not only are their mental faculties weak, but they are both subject to forgetfulness. Yet the forgetfulness brought about by Circe's magic, according to our analysis, aims to ease the pain involved in the recovery of the hero's mental faculties: its function is very limited, and so should be its extension in time. Elpenor's sleep, instead, turns into death, and thus shows (both to us and to the hero) how dangerous unconsciousness and obliviousness may become.

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[79] On Hypnos as a dangerous figure very close to Thanatos, see Mainoldi (1987) 39-46, and Granger (2000) 269. The ambiguity of sleep is evident in *Od.* 13.80, where sleep is called ἥδιστος, θανάτῳ ἄγχιστα ἐοικώς ("most sweet, and most similar to death"). In *Il.* 14.482, the dead Promachus "sleeps" (εὕδει); in *Il.* 11.241, a warrior struck down in battle "lay down to sleep a brazen sleep" (πεσὼν κοιμήσατο χάλκεον ὕπνον); in *Od.* 11.207-08, the spirit of the dead Anticleia flies away from Odysseus' embrace "like a shadow or a dream" (σκιῇ εἴκελον ἢ καὶ ὀνείρῳ). Granger (2000) 269 notes that Homer "locates 'the country of dreams,' although without elaboration, near the abode of the dead (*Od.* 24.12-13)." Granger (2000) 270 pushes the analogy between sleep and death even further when he claims that "Homer's view of the dead lends itself to the analogy with the sleeper, since the souls of the dead are alive, but remain in a state devoid of the capacities and activities typical of human beings. As Rohde (1925[8]) 24 puts it, the souls of the dead lead an 'unconscious half-life'." What Granger does not seem to take into account, however, is that during sleep a person does retain his mental faculties, and dreams represent in fact a form of mental activity. In the Homeric poems, Sleep is often personified and "sits upon" or "envelops" somebody's eyelids (e.g. *Il.* 10.26; *Od.* 20.86), just as Dreams are depicted as outside entities that visit a sleeper and talk to him (on iconographic sources, see Mainoldi 1987: 43-44). Even in this scenario, where Sleep and Dreams are viewed as external factors rather than psychological processes, there is room for mental activity, inasmuch as Dreams converse with the sleeper (e.g. *Il.* 2.20-36).

4.5. Odysseus' recovery

4.5.1. The *Nekyia*

The fundamental element that assimilates sleep and death seems to be λήθη: just as a person who falls asleep loses perception of the world and forgets about things that he knew when awake, so the people who die, after their body has been burnt during funerary rites, lose their φρένες forever, and thus forget the world of the living. In the case of sleep, forgetfulness is a temporary and liminal condition, whereas with death it becomes a permanent state. With these considerations in mind we should now go back to Odysseus' condition after his encounter with Circe.

Like Tiresias, Odysseus' companions retain firm mental faculties after Circe's φάρμακον. The companions retain their νοῦς while they are swine, but lose their memory. Odysseus' νοῦς already appears damaged when he arrives at Aiaia, and after Circe's magic he loses the memory of his return. Odysseus' oblivion is very close to that of a person who falls asleep and momentarily forgets about the pain that troubled him when awake. In this sense his λήθη works as preventive remedy, inasmuch as it facilitates the recovery of Odysseus' νοῦς by alleviating the suffering that this process entails.

In the light of our previous considerations, we can now understand better in what exactly Odysseus' process of recovery consists, and why his journey to the Underworld is presented to him as a necessity. During the *Nekyia* Odysseus first encounters Elpenor, who represents for the hero a negative example he should not follow, and the

embodiment of the extreme danger brought about by forgetfulness and unstable φρένες. The other spirits that Odysseus encounters in Hades have completed the transition to the Underworld, and clearly show the difference between the dead and the living. They are mere shadows of what they were when alive: in particular, they have no φρένες. When they drink the sacrificial blood they apparently regain their memory, and seem to recuperate enough of their mental faculties to communicate with Odysseus. Yet this retrieval of mental activity seems to aim solely at making the interaction with Odysseus possible: once the shades have spoken to the hero, we know that they return to the house of Hades,[80] and we can reasonably infer that they return to their previous witless condition too. Odysseus realizes that not even his own mother is able to recognize him and interact with him without the help of the sacrificial blood: no memory of the world of the living and no mental activity is retained in Hades, the φρένες are irremediably lost and there is no trace of νοῦς. In order to be considered a living person, Odysseus should therefore both regain his memory and restore his νοῦς.

The only positive example that the hero encounters in the Underworld is that of Tiresias, whose φρένες are steadfast and who was able to retain his νοῦς after death. He does not regain some sort of weakened mental faculty like the other dead spirits, but he is the embodiment of strong and sound human psychological activity. He is able to speak the truth to Odysseus (νημερτέα, *Od.* 11.96, 137), and in his address to him he

[80] *Od.* 11.150 (Tiresias); 11.385-86 (heroines); 11.538-40 (Achilles); 11.563-65 (Ajax); 11.627 (Heracles).

emphasizes the dangers of unbridled θυμός and the necessity for solid φρένες and sound νοῦς, as we have pointed out above.[81]

Yet are the negative example of Elpenor and the positive model represented by Tiresias sufficient for Odysseus to regain his mental faculties? My suggestion is that the encounters with the other dead spirits contribute to the hero's recovery too, only in a different way. While Tiresias' words emphasize the necessity for sound mental faculties in the future, the other dead spirits bring back to Odysseus' mind the memory and the awareness of his renowned μῆτις in the course of his past life.[82]

The restoration of Odysseus' mental faculties, therefore, is not described in terms of a cure granted from outside; rather, it seems to be envisaged as the result of a laborious and very human process that essentially aims at self-awareness, and is only initiated by divine guidance. In the *Nekyia* he significantly encounters no guiding figure: Circe gives him directions on how to arrive at the entrance of Hades, and on how to sacrifice the victims, but on his journey the hero is alone.[83] Generally, Hermes in his function of

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[81] Immediately after talking to Tiresias, Odysseus has a further demonstration of how deceptive the θυμός can be: his θυμός urges him to embrace his mother Anticleia, at *Od.* 11.206, while his rational mind should have realized that it is impossible to hold a shadow.

[82] Williams (1972) 75-78 argues that the *Odyssey* is "a work of art about man's struggle for self-awareness." Nagler (1980) 91, slightly demeaning the role of Odysseus' encounters with the other dead spirits, notes that Tiresias is answering two questions: the first, how Odysseus is to get home, and the second, who Odysseus is.

[83] Persephone does cause things to happen: she sends forth the heroines' shades (*Od.* 11.225, 385-86), and Odysseus fears that she may send him Gorgo's head (*Od.* 11.633-35). Yet she does not appear to him. See Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 72: "in Hades, unlike Heracles, Odysseus only sees the human experience after death." Tiresias, on the other hand, cannot be considered a guide *stricto sensu*: he stands out from the other dead spirits, and reveals to Odysseus the function of the sacrificial blood; yet he does not accompany the hero, and somehow represents the purpose of the hero's journey. He is an exemplar for Odysseus' life, rather than a guide for his journey.

psychopompos leads the ψυχαί to the Underworld, as it happens in the so-called *Deuteronekyia* in *Od.* 24.1-14.[84] He does help Odysseus on Aiaia, but in the Underworld the god is significantly absent. Not even Athena is ever mentioned in the *Nekyia*. All the hero encounters are the shades of dead people.

After his adventures in lands populated by monsters, Hades appears to be strikingly human and normal: the monstrous element resides in the fact that no living being arrives there in the course of their lives, since it lies beyond the limits of human experience. Yet death and Hades are a normal and unavoidable part of human experience. When he reaches it, the hero comes into contact with the humanity that has been completely absent from his adventures to this point. And, by interacting with the spirits of dead people, he is reminded of his own mortality and of the boundaries of his human condition. By gaining awareness of his human condition, and of the limits of the human mind, he makes the first step towards his reintegration into human society.

More specifically, Odysseus' interlocutors in the Underworld seem to indicate strong points of his character, and his responses to them seem to testify that he is gradually

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[84] Hermes and Athena both escorted Heracles to Hades, according to what Heracles tells Odysseus at *Od.* 11.626. The presence of Hermes *psychopompos* was so common in the scenes of somebody's descent to Hades, that some iconographic sources introduce the figure of Hermes also in representations of the Homeric *Nekyia*. See Brisson (1976) 168, Planche VI (Etruscan mirror, end of the fifth century B.C.). On the similarities between Tiresias and Hermes, see Brisson (1976) 62-63. On the absence of Hermes in the Homeric *Nekyia*, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1995) 72. Also in later poems the presence of a guide to explain the Underworld to the visitor was commonly accepted, and the audience possibly expected it. In book 6 of Vergil's *Aeneid*, for instance, the Cumaean Sibyl has a role that may resemble that of Circe in the *Odyssey*, inasmuch as she provides him with practical instructions on how to reach the Underworld; yet not only does she accompany Aeneas giving him plenty of explanations, but once in the Elysian Fields the hero can benefit from the speech of his dead father Anchises. Similarly, in the *Divine Comedy*, Dante is guided step by step in his journey by Virgil (*Inferno* and *Purgatorio*) and by Beatrice (*Paradiso*).

regaining a certain self-awareness: by conversing with them, the hero is thus made aware both of his human condition, and of the salient elements that distinguish him from the rest of humankind. His reintegration into human society, therefore, is not envisaged as the reintegration of any given man into any given society, but as the specific reintegration of Odysseus into his own society.

A closer look at Odysseus' Underworld dialogues will give us a clearer idea of the self-awareness the hero is able to regain from them. Elpenor first refers to the hero's cleverness (πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ, *Od.* 11.60), then explicitly illustrates to him the dangers of unstable νοῦς (*Od.* 11.61-65). He appeals both to his family values (*Od.* 11.66-68) and to his social and religious responsibilities (*Od.* 11.72-76), and demands proper funeral rites for himself, lest he becomes a cause for the gods' wrath. Family values are quite unsurprisingly the core of Anticleia's speech: she immediately and powerfully addresses him as τέκνον ἐμόν (*Od.* 11.155) and awakens in Odysseus an apprehensive series of questions both about her death and about his own father, son, and wife at Ithaca (*Od.* 11.171-79). Anticleia's words sketch a quite unusual, intimate picture of Odysseus, and describe him as intelligent and tenderhearted (*Od.* 11.202-3): the longing for their gentle and illustrious son has caused bitterness and pain for Laertes and death for Anticleia herself. Strictly connected to the condition of his family is the question of Odysseus' γέρας (*Od.* 11.174-76): by asking whether his family is still awaiting his return, or rather somebody usurped his honor and authority, the hero can

have an idea of the political situation at Ithaca, and can thus sketch a mental plan of what steps he will have to take in order to be reintegrated as king.

The encounters that follow seem to emphasize Odysseus' qualities as clever and formidable warrior. The transition from Anticleia's words to a more traditional picture of Odysseus as wily hero is provided by Agamemnon, who refers briefly to Odysseus' family, and confirms Anticleia's reassurance about Penelope's loyalty (*Od.* 11.444-46). Yet the attention now shifts to Odysseus' πολυμηχανία (*Od.* 11.405) and to his virtues in battle: while describing his own violent death, Agamemnon evokes the gory duels and massacres that the warrior Odysseus knows so well (*Od.* 11.416-20). Both the audience of the *Odyssey* and the Phaeacian audience know very well that during his adventures with various monsters Odysseus had to witness more recent and equally painful carnage, which Agamemnon is unaware of. The poet thus seems to take advantage of Agamemnon's partial knowledge to bring both our minds and Odysseus' memory back to how he was before his adventurous *nostos* even started. And Odysseus' mind, in fact, immediately returns to the numerous warriors that died at Troy because of Helen (*Od.* 11.435-39).

Odysseus' πολυμηχανία is emphasized by Achilles too: his surprise at seeing Odysseus in Hades before death immediately makes him ascribe such an outrageous deed to the hero's audacity (*Od.* 11.473-76). Odysseus' response, however, clearly indicates his achieved awareness that the human mind, even an excellent mind like his own, is not sufficient in every situation. On the one hand he recalls his past glories, the

achievements of his brilliant mind at Troy, and his decisive role in the sack of the city (*Od.* 11.510-36). On the other hand, however, he has to admit that in order to overcome his condition of helplessness, and thus reach Ithaca, his mind is no longer sufficient, and he now needs Tiresias' advice (*Od.* 11.478-82).

Achilles' bitter remarks on the vanity and inconsistency of human glory after one dies further deepen Odysseus' awareness of the limits of values such as heroism and excellence (*Od.* 11.482-91), and in a way set the basis for the hero's encounter with Ajax. Odysseus knows from Achilles' words that the condition of the dead can never be considered desirable or admirable, not even if one was illustrious and glorious when alive. And he knows that Ajax's death was caused by the dispute the two of them had over Achilles' armor. Quite predictably, then, Odysseus feels guilty for being the cause of such dreadful fate for Ajax: he therefore implores Ajax to forgive him and to give up his resentment (*Od.* 11.562). Yet Odysseus' words of praise for Ajax's virtue and glory (*Od.* 11.555-58) can do nothing to soothe his wrath. Without wanting to make claims about the sincerity of Odysseus' remorse for Ajax's fate, we should notice how the hero's cleverness slowly appears to come back to life.

In the first place, Odysseus realizes clearly that he is (or may be considered) somehow responsible for Ajax's death, while during his most recent adventures (for instance with Polyphemus and with the Laestrygonians) he does not seem to admit the direct responsibility of his own recklessness and ἀτασθαλία for the slaughter of his comrades. The immediate consequence of this awareness about Ajax's death is the

frantic attempt to blame Zeus and his hatred for the Greeks (*Od.* 11.558-60): by doing so, Odysseus calls himself out and prevents any possible accusation on Ajax's part. Yet the unforgiving shade of Ajax neither accuses him nor listens to his agitated justifications, but silently walks away and disappears among the other dead spirits (*Od.* 11.563-65). It is at this point that Odysseus quite bafflingly claims that Ajax could have still talked to him, in spite of his wrath, and he to him, but Odysseus desired to see the spirits of other dead people (*Od.* 11.565-66). Ajax's proud and supercilious silence, which Pseudo-Longinus considers greater than any word (τοῦ Αἴαντος ἐν Νεκυίᾳ σιοπὴ μέγα καὶ παντὸς ὑψηλότερον λόγου, *On the Sublime* 9.2), thus seems to be trivialized and reduced to lack of time.[85] What I would like to suggest is that Odysseus' words appear to be a first, clumsy attempt to explain to the Phaeacians what is going on, a sign that his νοῦς is recuperating its strength. Moreover, the fact that this awkward explanation most likely aims to save his face with the Phaeacian audience may be a sign that also his πολυμηχανία is coming back to life, although it is not yet as subtle and sophisticated as it used to be. In other words, for Odysseus cleverness seems to be

[85] Page (1955) 26-27 ironically expresses his perplexities about this passage: "the silence of Ajax, then, was accidental, imposed by the requirements of a time-table. Given another moment, he would have spoken. And Odysseus' plea, that Ajax might forgive and speak to him, was nothing but formal politeness: Ajax was about to reply, but Odysseus is in a hurry, he cannot wait for the answer; another day, perhaps, but just now time is pressing." Page explains this oddity by ascribing these lines, as well as the following catalogue of Odysseus' encounters in Hades, to a later poet. Already Aristarchus expunged lines 568-627, noticing how different the style is from that of the first part of the *Nekyia*. Without wanting to deny the oddity of Odysseus' claim, I would like to suggest that this discrepancy may be explained without expunging an entire section of the poem. A stylistic analysis of this sort would go beyond the scope of the present work: what I would like to claim here is that in the Homeric text as we have it not only can this discrepancy be explained, but it may even be intentional and significant.

intrinsically connected to deceitfulness, and the restoration of his mental faculties necessarily involves the recuperation of duplicity to a certain degree.

Odysseus' πολυμηχανία reappears in Heracles' speech (πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ, *Od.* 11.617). Heracles' words are the last ones addressed to the hero by a dead spirit in Hades and somehow constitute the closure of the *Nekyia*. It is therefore understandable that Odysseus' cleverness is once again indicated as his most peculiar quality. Yet πολυμήχανε seems merely a formulaic epithet here. Heracles' brief speech, which is a monologue rather than a dialogue with the hero, mainly emphasizes Odysseus' miserable condition, rather than his cunning, and establishes an interesting parallel between the hero and the semi-god who descended to the Underworld to capture Kerberos.

On a more superficial level, the journey to Hades before death is what the two heroes have in common. Yet, if we consider Heracles' words more closely, the similarity between them appears to be deeper than that. Although Heracles is the son of Zeus, the two heroes, according to him, share an evil fate (κακὸν μόρον, *Od.* 11.618) while on earth: in the case of Heracles, this fate consists of being subject to a man far worse than he was, who imposed on him hard labors (*Od.* 11.620-24). And in the case of Odysseus? We are not told explicitly, but the present study has pointed out that, rather than being subject to an inferior man, Odysseus was subject to his own ἀτασθαλία, which in the final analysis forced him to interrogate the dead spirits in Hades in order to recuperate his mental faculties. Regardless of how we interpret Heracles' words, however, his

successful expedition to the Underworld prefigures Odysseus' achievement: the *Nekyia* is concluded, Odysseus has regained self-awareness on multiple levels, and is now ready for his reintegration into society.

4.5.2. Circe's instructions

So far in this chapter we have considered the necessity for Odysseus to go to the Underworld, encounter the shades of the dead, and talk to Tiresias, in order to regain his mental faculties. We have argued that his recovery is envisaged as a personal process that leads the hero to regain his self-awareness. By interacting with the spirits of the dead, on the one hand he can understand what differentiates the dead from the living, and on the other hand he regains awareness of what distinguishes him from other human beings. The first distinction, as it is phrased in the Homeric text, emphasizes the role of human rationality, steadfast φρένες and intact νοῦς. In particular, the difference between Tiresias (who is still the master of his νοῦς) and the other dead (whose νοῦς got lost with death) provides a good model for Odysseus to discern what firm νοῦς is. Tiresias' warning then points out to the hero the necessity for a steadfast mind to counteract the θυμός, which is able to obliterate somebody's rationality and ultimately bring about suffering and destruction. On this first, fundamental distinction the second differentiation is then grafted, namely the identification of the qualities that are peculiar to Odysseus, which emerge gradually from the hero's encounters in Hades.

The *Nekyia* thus constitutes the core of Odysseus' recovery. The Circe episode frames the hero's Underworld journey significantly: before the trip, her magic brings about forgetfulness in the hero, and thus allows him to go through his process of recovery without incurring excessive pain. Moreover, she indicates to him the necessity for the journey to Hades (and in particular for the dialogue with Tiresias), and provides detailed directions about how to get there. Circe does not tell Odysseus to return to Aiaia after the *Nekyia*, but we know from Elpenor's words (*Od.* 11.69-70) that he will stop on Circe's island and bury his dead comrade.[86] After the Underworld journey, her role in Odysseus' process of recovery appears to be once again crucially relevant. We may even argue that her last directions to the hero represent the last phase of his recovery.

Upon his return to Aiaia, Circe first makes sure that everything in the Underworld journey was as it was supposed to be (*Od.* 12.34-37). Once Odysseus tells her all that happened in Hades, she responds to him "all these things have been experienced thus"

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[86] The narratological reason why Odysseus returns to Aiaia is Elpenor's request for funeral rites (*Od.* 11.64-78). Yet Elpenor claims to know that the hero will return to Aiaia anyway, after his Underworld journey (*Od.* 11.69-70): the origin of this knowledge, however, is unclear. The scholia to *Od.* 11.69 report a reason *a posteriori*: the hero returns to Aiaia in order to receive from Circe the instructions he needs to face new dangers and thus reach Ithaca. In her instructions to Odysseus before his journey to Hades, however, Circe does not mention the fact that the hero should return to Aiaia before proceeding towards Ithaca. Her silence has fomented analytical interpretations that consider the Circe episode and the *Nekyia* as the work of two different poets. Bethe (1922) 131, for instance, argues that the Elpenor episode was composed by the author of the *Nekyia* as connection between the Underworld journey and the rest of the *nostos*. Hence the discrepancy with Circe's silence on Odysseus' return to Aiaia. See also Spieker (1965) 65-66. In spite of Circe's silence and Elpenor's obscure words at *Od.* 11.69-70, the narratological function of Odysseus' second stop at Aiaia is very clearly the one indicated in the scholia: without Circe's indications the hero would not be able to face the dangers in the last part of his journey. Circe thus represents a strong connection between the *Nekyia* and Odysseus' subsequent adventures that undermines the analytical interpretations of these episodes.

(ταῦτα μὲν οὕτω πάντα πεπείρανται, *Od.* 12.37).[87] She thus confirms the truthfulness of the account, and then immediately adds "but you listen as I will tell you" (σὺ δ' ἄκουσον / ὥς τοι ἐγὼν ἐρέω, *Od.* 12.37-38). Odysseus' itinerary, or rather what Circe knows Odysseus' itinerary should be, appears to be divided into two parts. The first one has been completed: the hero has reached Hades, has seen witless shades, has talked to Tiresias, and has thus experienced directly what steadfast φρένες and intact νοῦς are; then he has talked to some shades who have held up a mirror to him, so to speak, and helped him regain self-awareness. The second part of his itinerary now sees Circe play a more active role, inasmuch as she suggests to him some practical μῆτις to survive the Sirens and other dangers (*Od.* 12.39-141). Her instructions, however, appear far less precise and detailed than those before the trip to the Underworld (*Od.* 10.506-40). Now that Odysseus has successfully completed the first part of his recovery, she can leave him more and more free to make his own decisions, as she explicitly asserts (*Od.* 12.56-58). Let us now examine how exactly she leaves him increasingly more free.

When facing the Sirens, Circe asserts, Odysseus may decide to listen to their song: if that is the case (αὐτὸς ἀκουέμεν αἴ κ' ἐθέλῃσθα, *Od.* 12.49), then the comrades should tie him tightly to the mast; and if he implores them and orders to let him loose

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[87] The verb πειραίνω occurs in Homer in two other instances only, namely *Od.* 22.175 and 192, and in both cases it means "to tie together." Meuli (1921) 47 n.1 therefore wants to interpret Circe's words as "this has thus been tied together by fate," where "this" would be the fatal arrival at Thrinacia. I agree with Heubeck (1989) 118 *ad* 12.37 that the expression ταῦτα πάντα seems to refer rather to the journey to the Underworld.

(εἰ δέ κε λίσσηαι ἑτάρους λῦσαί τε κελεύῃς, *Od.* 12.53), they should bind him even more tightly. On the one hand Circe orders him firmly to anoint the ears of the comrades with wax (*Od.* 12.47-48); on the other hand she leaves it open for the hero to decide what he wants to do with himself. Unlike in the Cyclops episode, Odysseus can be curious again, but in controlled conditions. Circe offers guidelines, whatever Odysseus' decision will be, but the hypothetical clauses clearly leave the choice up to him.

After giving advice on how to survive the Sirens, Circe's directions become less precise:

> ἔνθα τοι οὐκέτ' ἔπειτα διηνεκέως ἀγορεύσω,
> ὁπποτέρῃ δή τοι ὁδὸς ἔσσεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς
> θυμῷ βουλεύειν· ἐρέω δέ τοι ἀμφοτέρωθεν.
>
> thereafter I shall not say precisely
> on which side your course has to lie, but ponder it yourself
> in your spirit, and I will tell you of both ways.
>
> (*Od.* 12.56-58)

She then mentions to Odysseus two alternative routes: either the Planctae[88] or Scylla and Charybdis (*Od.* 12.59-110).[89] What does this option imply? Even if we wanted to hypothesize that they were variants of the mythical account, this alternative seems to demonstrate either Circe's limited knowledge, or (more likely) her deliberate choice not

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[88] In *Od.* 12.61 Homer says that the gods call these rocks "Planctae," just as in *Od.* 10.305 he says that the gods call "moly" the plant that Hermes gives to Odysseus. On the opposition between the language of the gods and the language of men in the Homeric epic, see also *Il.* 1.403, 2.813-14, 14.290-91, 20.74; Clay (1972) 127-31 and (1983) 158-59.

[89] In *Od.* 12.81-82 and 108-10 however, Circe seems to assume that Odysseus will pass Scylla, thus implicitly eliminating the alternative of the Planctae. On the "description by negation" technique that Homer uses in the description of Scylla, Charybdis, and the Planctae, see De Jong (2001) 299.

to reveal everything she knows. In other words, she seems to know the dangers around her island, and is able to give Odysseus some general advice to face them, without necessarily knowing or (more likely) wanting to reveal what the outcome will be. Finally, Circe confirms Tiresias' forewarning about the cattle of the Sun on Thrinacia,[90] and once again her instructions take a hypothetical form: if they do not harm the cattle, they will be able to reach Ithaca, though after much suffering; but if they harm them, utter destruction will fall upon the entire crew, and only Odysseus will be able to return to the homeland, though after long suffering and having lost all his men (*Od.* 12.137-41).

The sketchy and inexact form of Circe's instructions after the *Nekyia* leaves a larger space to human decision making. The goddess just sets out various options, but she does not foretell Odysseus' adventures in detail because the outcome depends very much on his personal initiative. Yet has he regained full command of his mental faculties? When Circe talks about the danger represented by monsters like Scylla and Charybdis, the hero interrupts her and asks whether he might possibly escape Charybdis and fight Scylla (*Od.* 12.112-14). The goddess then vehemently rebukes him and in so doing she provides him with a most important piece of advice:

> σχέτλιε, καὶ δὴ αὖ τοι πολεμήϊα ἔργα μέμηλε
> καὶ πόνος, οὐδὲ θεοῖσιν ὑπείξεαι ἀθανάτοισιν;

[90] Circe partly repeats Tiresias' words (*Od.* 12.137-41 = 11.110-14), thus emphasizing the importance of the warning not to harm the cattle of the Sun, and partly expands them (*Od.* 12.129-34), providing the hero with more detailed information about Helios' cattle and their custodians. As De Jong (2001) 300 notes, "herself also a daughter of Helios (cf. 10.137), Circe is in a position to provide such detailed information." On the difference between Tiresias' and Circe's warnings, see above, pp. 204-6.

> Rash man, now again you care for deeds of war
> and toil, and you will not yield to the immortal gods?
>
> (*Od.* 12.116-17)

The hero should not even think about repeating (αὖ) the same mistakes that have disrupted his mental faculties, and should finally realize that men can do nothing against the immortals. The *Nekyia*, and more precisely the encounter with Tiresias and other dead spirits, have provided Odysseus with a clear picture of how crucial steadfast φρένες and sound νοῦς are for a person to be considered a living human being, and not just a dreamlike shadow. Moreover, Tiresias' prophecy emphasizes the necessity for the hero to offer sacrifices to Poseidon, and thus stresses mortal limits with respect to the divine.

After his journey to Hades, Circe's advice is mainly and significantly aimed at reminding Odysseus of the undefeatable power of the divine. She claims that a god himself will remind Odysseus of her words (*Od.* 12.38),[91] mentions some dangerous rocks by their divine name of "Planctae" (*Od.* 12.61), points out that no mortal man would be able to climb on Scylla's cave (*Od.* 12.77); she argues that nobody, not even a god, would be happy to encounter her (οὐδ' εἰ θεὸς ἀντιάσειε, *Od.* 12.88), and no mortal man ever escaped from her with his ship without losing some companions (*Od.*

[91] Possibly in order to give more divine authority to her words, Circe adds "also a god himself will remind you of this" (μνήσει δέ σε καὶ θεὸς αὐτός, *Od.* 12.38). Yet Homer does not mention any other divine warning after Circe's. The scholia explain this textual discrepancy by claiming that this other god would be Poseidon: he will warn Odysseus with deeds (rather than with words) and thus confirm that Circe's words are true. Privitera and Heubeck (1983) 312 *ad Od.* 12.38 rather interprets this *colon* as the apodosis of a conditional clause: "also a god himself will remind you (*scil.* of what I told you, in case you forget about it)." In any case, Circe's vague reference to a possible divine warning in the future seems to confirm the divine authority and the trustworthiness of her words.

12.98-99). As for Charybdis, Circe insists that she is a divine monster, and not even Poseidon would be able to save Odysseus from her (*Od.* 12.106, 118-20). Finally, Circe lingers upon the divine nature of the cattle on Thrinacia (*Od.* 12.130-36), and emphatically concludes her speech with the warning not to harm them.

The second and crucial part of Odysseus' recovery thus aims to restore and strengthen his awareness of the boundaries between humans and gods. The mortals who – more or less knowingly – challenge the divine are doomed to succumb, just like the doves that unconsciously fly by the Planctae and get killed (*Od.* 12.62-64). Divine knowledge is certainly superior to human knowledge: Circe is able to give Odysseus valuable indications in order to overcome new dangers and finally reach Ithaca, and the gods may know the ineluctable outcome of certain alternatives. Yet men's fortune is very much determined by their own decisions, which are nothing but the outcome of human psychological processes. After the *Nekyia*, Circe's sketchy directions and the alternatives she leaves open to the hero clearly indicate the necessity for Odysseus to make his own decisions as a person fully responsible for his own actions. The self-awareness that he regained in the Underworld now enables him to devise plans and make decisions, and guides him towards his reintegration into society at Ithaca.

CONCLUSION

The main assumption of this dissertation is that a careful analysis of the Homeric text is able to provide explanations for elements that the modern reader may find unclear or obscure. In the case of Circe, poem-external approaches may have shed some light on the mythological figure of the goddess, and put her in relation with similar figures in various myths and cults throughout the Mediterranean. Yet they have proved insufficient to clarify her crucial relevance within the Odyssean narrative. The aim of this dissertation is therefore twofold: on the one hand I emphasize the importance of Circe in Odysseus' homeward journey, paying close attention to the Homeric text itself. On the other hand, on the basis of my account of Circe's magic as remedy, I propose a new reading of *Odyssey* 9-12 as psychological journey for the hero. This approach has proved capable both of clarifying the textual difficulties in the Circe episode, and of emphasizing some crucial themes that render the *Odyssey* a coherent narrative whole.

In the course of this study I have not considered the sequence of adventures following the order in which Homer presents them. Rather, I have started from the textual obscurity regarding the effects of Circe's magic in book 10. After suggesting that her φάρμακον works as preventive remedy for Odysseus, I have moved back in the text and considered the events in book 9, looking for possible disturbances that would require a remedy. Finally, I have extended my considerations beyond Circe's magic, and outlined Odysseus' process of recovery, as presented in books 10, 11, and 12. In sketching out the main conclusions that this work has achieved, I should now

return to the order in which Homer exposes Odysseus' adventures, thus following the hero's psychological journey from the audience's point of view.

On the island of the Cyclopes Odysseus' reasoning appears to be overcome by his curiosity, which pushes him into Polyphemus' cave and urges him to wait for the ogre. The gigantic tools that the hero and his men see indicate clearly that a monster inhabits the cave, and the comrades beg Odysseus to leave as quickly as possible. Yet the hero is not persuaded and exposes both himself and his crew to extreme danger. The Homeric poems envision human knowledge as the elaboration of sensorial data through the νοῦς, and the condition of the νοῦς is also responsible for more or less sound μῆτις. Upon arrival on the island of the Cyclopes, the hero's sound reasoning is overcome by curiosity. And curiosity, I point out, is originated by the θυμός, which is responsible for various emotions and capable of blurring a man's rational thinking. Moreover, the stubbornness that brings Odysseus to ignore the danger, as well as his deafness to persuasion, reveal his behavior as ἀτάσθαλος: his νοῦς is perfectly capable of realizing that waiting for Polyphemus is extremely dangerous, but his θυμός urges him to take the risk. Odysseus' μῆτις is thus partially and temporarily obliterated by the impetuosity of his θυμός.

When the Cyclops starts slaughtering Odysseus' men, the hero realizes that he must suppress his μεγαλήτωρ θυμός and resort to the highest possible μῆτις in order to escape from the cave. The *Cyclopeia* is Odysseus' supreme demonstration of μῆτις, and the hero himself repeatedly ascribes his successful escape from the cave of the Cyclops

to the excellence of his μῆτις (*Od.* 9.414, 9.422-23, 20.18-21). Yet the triumph of μῆτις itself paradoxically causes his θυμός to take over his νοῦς and suppress his μῆτις in what follows. Odysseus' proud boasting against the Cyclops is devoid of μῆτις, and is phrased in terms of ὕβρις. He takes for granted his outstanding μῆτις, forgets that his intellectual faculties reside on divine favor, and boasts arrogantly against Poseidon's son Polyphemus.

After the *Cyclopeia*, Odysseus' mental faculties, and in particular his customary μῆτις, appear considerably dimmed. On the one hand, his faculties are understandably weakened by his distressing adventures. On the other hand, because of his ὕβρις in the Cyclops episode, the gods seem to abandon him, and let him rely on his dim faculties alone. Weak μῆτις, I have pointed out, corresponds to a distressed νοῦς. With a distressed νοῦς, and with no divine help, Odysseus has to face his subsequent adventures, in which he appears unusually helpless. Both with Aeolus and with the Laestrygonians Odysseus lacks a precise grasp of the situation, his faculties appear inadequate for a leader, and he is unable to prevent death and destruction for his men. Once the decimated crew arrives at Aiaia, Odysseus admits explicitly his unusual lack of resources, and appeals for μῆτις (*Od.* 10.192-93). He therefore implicitly admits that his νοῦς is weakened and in distress. The hero perceives the emergency of the situation and is now aware of the inadequacy of his human faculties; Homer emphasizes this understanding by making Odysseus express his helplessness openly.

It is at this point that divine help comes to the rescue, and Odysseus humbly accepts it. In other words, once he realizes that his μῆτις is no longer outstanding and sufficient to overcome any situation, he accepts divine guidance. The hero resorts to lot to decide who should lead the expedition on Aiaia (*Od.* 10.206-7), and lots were believed to express some sort of divine communication with humans. Odysseus thus steps back, as it were, and allows the gods to speak and decide in his place. Subsequently Hermes gives him the directions he needs to approach Circe (*Od.* 10.275-306). The Homeric text does not mention the hero's reaction to the god's intervention: Odysseus just seems to follow his instructions to the letter, obediently and without adding any personal initiative.

Hermes' help allows Odysseus to avoid the bodily transformation that Circe's magic generally brings about. I have pointed out that the function of λήθη as pain reliever is fairly common in the Homeric poems, and within Circe's sorcery it probably aims to ease the suffering of her victims' metamorphosis. Odysseus' men, for instance, are subject to forgetfulness before they are turned into pigs (*Od.* 10.236). Λήθη in the Homeric poems consistently happens through the φρένες, leaving the νοῦς steadfast. This observation allows us to explain how Odysseus' men can retain steadfast νοῦς (*Od.* 10.240) while at the same time they are subject to λήθη.

In the case of Odysseus, Hermes' μῶλυ protects him from physical metamorphosis, but the hero is nonetheless subject to the preliminary phase of Circe's magic, namely forgetfulness (*Od.* 10.472). I suggest that λήθη has some therapeutic function for

Odysseus too: it eases the impending suffering involved in the process of recovery of his mental faculties. Circe's φάρμακον is therefore a remedy, rather than a poison, and it causes forgetfulness without affecting Odysseus' νοῦς. Yet Odysseus' νοῦς is already distressed and weakened as a result of his previous adventures, and Circe's magic constitutes the beginning of and the premise for his otherwise painful process of recovery. These considerations explain Odysseus' forgetfulness, and shed light on its relevance in the broader context of the hero's psychological itinerary.

The core of Odysseus' psychological recovery, in my analysis, is constituted by the *Nekyia*. Once again the hero obediently follows divine directions (in this case Circe's instructions, *Od.* 10.504-40), and accepts going to Hades to talk to the dead. In particular, Circe expresses the necessity for the hero to talk to Tiresias, who is the only one of the dead who is allowed to retain a steadfast νοῦς (*Od.* 10.492-95). The difference between Tiresias (who is still the master of his νοῦς) and the other dead spirits (whose νοῦς was lost with death) constitutes a good model for Odysseus to discern what firm νοῦς is. Moreover, Tiresias' special connection with the divine allows him to provide the hero with some forceful moral directions: he clearly warns Odysseus to restrain his θυμός, if he wants to reach Ithaca.

The dialogues with other dead spirits then point out to the hero how intrinsic in his nature μῆτις, sound νοῦς, and πολυμηχανία are. Odysseus' process of recovery in the *Nekyia* thus essentially entails the recovery of his self-awareness on multiple levels: by

listening to the point of view of the various dead spirits he talks with, he (re)gains awareness of the distinctive features of his personality.

When the Underworld journey is completed, Circe gives Odysseus some practical suggestions to survive the Sirens, Scylla, and Charybdis (*Od.* 12.41-124), and confirms Tiresias' warning about the cattle of Helios on Thrinacia (*Od.* 12.126-41). The goddess' instructions are phrased in a less precise and detailed way than her directions for the hero to reach the Underworld. Once Odysseus regains self-awareness, in fact, she can leave him more free to make his own decisions, and her advice mainly emphasizes the superiority of the divine over human limited faculties. After his retrieval of self-awareness in the *Nekyia*, the second and crucial phase of Odysseus' recovery thus aims to restore his understanding that the gods may know the inevitable outcome of certain alternatives, but men's fortune is very much determined by their own decisions. In all of Circe's instructions in fact there is room for individual decision-making.

In conclusion we should now consider how different Odysseus' behavior is after the *Nekyia*, or rather whether the text indicates that the hero has indeed restored his mental faculties. In other words, if the Circe episode really represents the full recovery of Odysseus' mental faculties before he can return to Ithaca, the text should show some change of behavior, from the helplessness upon his arrival on Aiaia to the usual cleverness that traditionally connotes the hero, or at least to a condition that allows him to face the new dangers of his journey.

The most immediate indication comes from the Phaeacian audience: during a pause in Odysseus' narration, first the Phaeacian queen and then the king praise the hero especially for his qualities as narrator, and notice both his "balanced mind" (φρένας ... ἐΐσας, *Od.* 11.337) and the excellence of his mind (φρένες ἐσθλαί, *Od.* 11.367). Not without irony Homer has Alcinous claim that Odysseus does not seem a liar, a dissembler, or a cheater (*Od.* 11.363-66):[1] the audience knows very well that the πολύμητις Odysseus, the dissembler *par excellence*, resorted to tricks and false stories both before and after the Phaeacian episode. This outrageous claim probably aims to catch the audience's attention: the excellence of Odysseus' mind, in fact, generally finds its most typical expression in trickery and deceit, although Alcinous seems to equate excellence of mind with honesty.[2]

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[1] On the inclination of wanderers towards lies, see above, ch.2 n.40. For ancient commentators, the discussion of truth and falsehood in the *Odyssey* focused mainly on Odysseus' Phaeacian narrative. Goldhill (1991) 47 argues that since Eratosthenes at least some critics regarded Odysseus' wanderings as a fantastic and untrue tale. The Homeric text, however, does not provide us with any element that indicates that Odysseus' adventures through books 9-12 are indeed a lie. See Strabo's discussion of Homer in 1.2.1, discussed by Schenkeveld (1976) 52-64 with bibliographical reference. See also Pindar's remark in *Nem.* 7.20-23 and Most's comment (1985) 149: "for the critical picture of an Odysseus who is all λόγος and no ἔργον, whose celebrity far exceeds any martial accomplishments he can claim, begins here in Pindar, and continues through Gorgias, Antisthenes, and the tragedians to become one of the clichés of Western literature."

[2] Cf. *Od.* 14.156-57, when an expression of distaste for deceptive wanderers' stories stands as a prelude to Odysseus' Cretan lie. Odysseus claims that he "will say these things quite truly" (*Od.* 14.192), a remark that leads Todorov (1977) 61 to comment "Invocation of the truth is a sign of lying." One of the first expressions of Odysseus' regained mental faculties is the Cretan tale he tells Athena in disguise in *Od.* 13.256-86. Athena rejoices in the hero's lying tale, and responds benevolently emphasizing Odysseus' outstanding cunning ("Cunning must he be and knavish, the man who would surpass you in all manner of guile, even if it was a god that met you. Bold man, crafty in counsel, insatiate in deceit, not even in your own land, it seems, do you want to cease from guile and deceitful tales, which you love from the bottom of your heart," *Od.*13.291-95). The goddess' benevolent smile most likely signifies her satisfaction at Odysseus' complete recovery: he is once again the best of all men in craftiness, just as Athena is the best of all gods.

Yet this indication of Odysseus' sound mind, though significant especially since it is placed within the account of what the hero saw in the *Nekyia*, is certainly not sufficient evidence of Odysseus' recovery. In order to understand whether or not the Circe episode indeed had some effect on the hero's mind, we should consider closely Odysseus' adventures after he receives Circe's instructions and leaves Aiaia for good.

While the ship is approaching Scylla, Odysseus' words of encouragement to his crew seem to be very aware of the importance of sound νοῦς. The strongest argument he finds to hearten his terrified men is to remind them of the danger they faced in the cave of the Cyclops:

> οὐ μὲν δὴ τόδε μεῖζον ἔπι κακόν, ἢ ὅτε Κύκλωψ
> εἶλει ἐνὶ σπῆϊ γλαφυρῷ κρατερῇφι βίηφιν·
> ἀλλὰ καὶ ἔνθεν ἐμῇ ἀρετῇ βουλῇ τε <u>νόῳ</u> τε
> ἐκφύγομεν, καί που τῶνδε μνήσεσθαι ὀΐω.
> νῦν δ' ἄγεθ', ὡς ἂν ἐγὼ εἴπω, πειθώμεθα πάντες.
>
> surely this evil is no greater than when the Cyclops
> shut us in his hollow cave by brutal strength;
> yet even from there, through my virtue and counsel and mind;
> we escaped, and I think that these dangers, too, we shall some day remember.
> But now come, as I bid, let us all obey.
>
> (*Od.* 12.209-13)

The *Cyclopeia* unquestionably represents the highest demonstration of Odysseus' μῆτις, and the hero certainly realizes it.[3] Yet he also has to realize that his behavior during the encounter with Polyphemus dangerously jeopardized his authority among the

[3] The *Cyclopeia* serves as a hortatory paradigm also in *Od.* 20.18-21. Cf. De Jong (2001) 304: "Odysseus' formulation (the Cyclops held us in his cave by force and violence, but we escaped through my courage, counsel, and intelligence) leaves no doubt that his adventure was an instance of the 'cunning versus force' theme."

crew, as Eurylochos' charge of ἀτασθαλία in *Od.* 10.431-37 demonstrated.[4] Now, in a situation of similar danger and terror, Odysseus compares the strength he demonstrated in the cave of Polyphemus with the force he feels he can use to face the new threat represented by Scylla. By urging the comrades to follow his orders, then, he wants to reassure them that his mind is once again as steadfast as it was and as it should be. The hero deliberately avoids mentioning Scylla to his men, wisely fearing that they would hide themselves and cease from rowing (*Od.* 12.223-25). And rowing is their only possible salvation, as Circe implies when she recommends Odysseus to row past it with all might (*Od.* 12.124). He therefore seems to use his regained mental faculties to the advantage of the entire crew.

Odysseus now seems definitely more aware of what is required from him, for he regains perception of the possible outcome of human actions. In one instance, however, this awareness seems to vacillate, namely when he arms himself and attempts to fight Scylla. The hero explicitly and surprisingly forgets (λανθανόμην, *Od.* 12.227) Circe's harsh warning not to wear his armor, and goes to the ship's deck fully armed. His impetuosity, we may think, once again overcomes both his rationality and Circe's divine warning.[5] In the *Cyclopeia* Odysseus' recklessness put his entire crew in danger when he decided to face a lawless monster, and we would expect a similar outcome with Scylla. Yet this time he never really gets to face the monster: his eyes grow tired of

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[4] On Eurylochos' charge against Odysseus on Aiaia, see above §3.2.2.

[5] According to our analysis in ch.1, forgetfulness does not affect the νοῦς. The fact that Odysseus forgets about Circe's warning, therefore, does not provide *per se* any indication about the condition of his νοῦς.

looking out for her, and he is not even able to spot her. His impetuosity soon vanishes miserably, and we no longer hear of any attempts to face her. Odysseus thus seems to realize somehow the folly of his original plan and quickly abandons it without yielding to the reckless perseverance that guided him in the *Cyclopeia*. Following our considerations in chapter 3, what connotes ἀτασθαλία is precisely the strong determination to take a dangerous course of actions in spite of warnings and rational pondering. In this case, Odysseus initially does forget Circe's warning, but soon enough he seems to find a way out of this mistake before proceeding.

What seemed to start out as ἀτασθαλία turns out to be a pathetic but harmless mistake that emphasizes even more vividly the immense distance between human and divine realm. Homer in fact presents the desire to fight the monster as vain, pointless, and even grotesque: the preparation for the encounter is not followed by any fight, and Odysseus' impetuosity clearly proves void and laughable. He can only watch Scylla grab and devour his six most valuable men (*Od.* 12.245-50). As a further confirmation of the limits of the human condition, Odysseus must realize that even the heroic values are void when facing an immortal creature: Odysseus' armor in fact is as useless as it is inadequate to face an immortal and undefeatable evil (ἀθάνατον κακόν...οὐδὲ μαχητόν, *Od.* 12.118).

On Thrinacia, finally, Odysseus seems especially aware of the disastrous consequences of human deeds against the gods. He only accepts to go ashore because the rest of the crew desires to do so (*Od.* 12.297), but in the comrades' desire to land on Thrinacia he perceives the evil scheme of some god (καὶ τότε δὴ γίνωσκον, ὃ δὴ

κακὰ μήδετο δαίμων, *Od.* 12.295). Adverse winds block them on the island for an entire month, and while he repeatedly warns his men not to touch the cattle of Helios (*Od.* 12.298-303, 321-24), they are beginning to suffer from hunger. Significantly enough, no deity appears to Odysseus, either to encourage him or to offer some helpful advice. He is still alone as he was during his journey to Hades, possibly to signify that his process of recovery is not complete yet. Before facing Scylla he explicitly referred to his own νοῦς as the element that could save the entire crew, just as it did save most of his men from Polyphemus (*Od.* 12.209-13); yet, in this situation of extreme difficulty on Thrinacia, the πολύμητις Odysseus does not resort to μῆτις. This time he realizes both that his human power cannot be sufficient, and that his authority with his men is not strong enough. He therefore prays to the gods and asks them how he and his men could possibly leave the island safely (*Od.* 12.333-37). Odysseus did not have the chance to demonstrate strength and reliability to his crew yet, and his leadership is still rather weak. However, Circe's instructions have had the successful effect of reminding Odysseus of the superiority of the gods, which humans should never challenge.

In this context of reestablished boundaries of the human condition, the slaughter of the cattle of the Sun appears all the more outrageous. The gods pour sleep on Odysseus' eyes, and once again slumber facilitates or prefigures death and destruction, as we have examined in the case of Elpenor. Just as Tiresias' words emphasized, the necessity for the hero to restrain his own and the comrades' θυμός, especially on Thrinacia, is of crucial importance. Odysseus seems to have learnt the lesson, and does not let hunger overcome his firm decision not to violate a divine command. Yet the action of the

θυμός on Thrinacia is more subtle than a sheer impulse guided by hunger. The crew expressly disregards Odysseus' orders, and the decision to slaughter the cattle is presented as a premeditated action, or rather as ἀτασθαλία: the comrades (and Eurylochos in particular, in *Od.* 12.340-51) are warned about the consequences of their deeds, ponder different alternatives, and still decide to follow a dangerous course of actions.

The Thrinacia episode is the demonstration that wrong or corrupted decision-making can be highly dangerous, and can have destructive consequences. When men indulge in ἀτασθαλία, they disregard the indications both of the senses and of the νοῦς, deliberately ignore other people's advice, and following the θυμός end up bringing about death and destruction for themselves. Zeus himself, in the proem of the *Odyssey*, ascribes the dire death of Odysseus' men to their own ἀτασθαλία (*Od.* 1.7): clearly the idea that men's fortune is determined by their own psychological processes is crucial in the entire Odyssean narrative.

The situation is in a way the reversal of the *Cyclopeia*: on Thrinacia, Odysseus is able to restrain his own θυμός, while the comrades yield to ἀτασθαλία. Then why does he not act more forcefully with his men to make sure that they would not touch the cattle of Helios? My suggestion is that at Thrinacia Odysseus' recovery is not complete yet, and the dreadful end of his men represents its last and necessary phase: once he has regained self-awareness, he must witness the dreadful consequences that the trespassing of human boundaries can have on others. Odysseus' process of recovery is now

complete: he has regained awareness of human boundaries, in contrast both with the dead (who have lost their mental faculties), and with the gods (whose knowledge is consistently higher than human comprehension). With this new awareness, almost to confirm and reinforce it, he has to witness the disastrous effects of his comrades' ἀτασθαλία.

Odysseus' psychological journey thus entails the temporary loss of his most distinctive feature, namely outstanding μῆτις, and a long process of recovery in which the hero, thanks to Circe's help, regains self-awareness, learns the limits of his νοῦς, and realizes that his human faculties, though exceptionally sharp, are necessarily subject to the gods. After losing all of his men due to their ἀτασθαλία on Thrinacia, πολύτλας Odysseus then remains long years with Calypso, without ever resorting to his μῆτις to try and escape: never again does his θυμός challenge the gods, and only when Calypso offers him help and reassurance does he build a raft and leave.

The payoff of Odysseus' humble attitude towards the gods is the reappearance of divine favor. Only Poseidon's wrath does not cease, and causes a terrible tempest that brings new sufferings for the hero (*Od.* 5.282-332). Yet Homer clearly mentions some signs of divine favor: Ino rescues him (*Od.* 5.333-55) and Athena causes the tempest to cease (*Od.* 5.382-87) so that he can avoid death and reach Scheria.

Athena's help in books 5 and 6 appears particularly significant for the present study. There is nothing a man can do to counteract the fury of a tempest, but the goddess grants him prudence (ἐπιφροσύνην δῶκε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη, *Od.* 5.437): he therefore looks for a spot where the coast is accessible, and when he sees the mouth of a

river he prays to the river-god in his heart and supplicates him to let him reach the shore (*Od.* 5.439-50). Once on Scheria, it is not divine inspiration, but rather his own thinking (φρονέοντι, *Od.* 5.474) that leads Odysseus to a good location where he can spend the night. Athena simply pours sleep on his eyes to alleviate his toil (*Od.* 5.491-92). The goddess then makes sure that Odysseus' encounter with the Phaeacians takes place in the best and most profitable way (*Od.* 6.11-40, 112-14, 139-40). Her help does not replace Odysseus' cunning, as Hermes' help did on Aiaia; her action rather sets the stage for the hero's cleverness to express itself. Odysseus' meditation scenes in *Od.* 5.465-74 and 6.141-48, and his "gentle and crafty" speech (μειλίχιον καὶ κερδαλέον, *Od.* 6.148) to Nausicaa certainly point out that his mental faculties are now sound.

When Odysseus finally reaches Ithaca, Athena reappears to him and expressly confirms that the hero's psychological journey is complete.

> κερδαλέος κ' εἴη καὶ ἐπίκλοπος, ὅς σε παρέλθοι
> ἐν πάντεσσι δόλοισι, καὶ εἰ θεὸς ἀντιάσειε.
> σχέτλιε, ποικιλομῆτα, δόλων ἄατ', οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλες,
> οὐδ' ἐν σῇ περ ἐὼν γαίῃ, λήξειν ἀπατάων
> μύθων τε κλοπίων, οἵ τοι πεδόθεν φίλοι εἰσίν.
> ἀλλ' ἄγε μηκέτι ταῦτα λεγώμεθα, εἰδότες ἄμφω
> κέρδε', ἐπεὶ σὺ μέν ἐσσι βροτῶν ὄχ' ἄριστος ἁπάντων
> βουλῇ καὶ μύθοισιν, ἐγὼ δ' ἐν πᾶσι θεοῖσι
> μήτι τε κλέομαι καὶ κέρδεσιν·
>
> Cunning must he be and a rogue, the man who would beat you
> in all tricks, even if it was a god up against you.
> Bold man, crafty in μῆτις, insatiate in tricks, so you do not intend,
> not even in your own land, to cease from guile
> and deceitful tales, which are dear to you through and through.
> But come, let us no longer talk of this; we are both crafty,
> you are by far the best of all men
> in counsel and in speech, and I among all the gods
> am famed for μῆτις and schemes.
>
> (*Od.* 13.291-99)

On Ithaca the goddess explicitly confirms with a benevolent smile (*Od.* 13.291-302) that the hero's cunning is as excellent among humans as her own is outstanding among the gods, and she is once again on his side (νῦν αὖ δεῦρ' ἱκόμην, *Od.* 13.303). He is back to being πολύμητις, and she is ready to help him devise a plan to face the Suitors (*Od.* 13.189-93, 220-440). Athena does not create and enact a scheme by herself, as she did on Scheria (*Od.* 6.14-40), but is now willing to devise a plan together with the hero. Odysseus' complete recovery could not receive a more authoritative seal.

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