

Complex Unity:
“Self” and Deliberation in Homer’s
Odyssey and Iliad

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“With regard to the superstitions of logicians, I shall never tire of emphasizing a small, terse, fact, which is unwillingly recognized by these credulous minds—namely, that a thought comes when ‘it’ wishes, and not when ‘I’ wish; so that it is a *perversion* of the facts of the case to say that the subject ‘I’ is the condition of the predicate ‘think.’ *One* thinks; but that this ‘one’ is precisely the famous old ‘ego,’ is, to put it mildly, only a supposition, an assertion, and assuredly not an ‘immediate certainty.’ After all, one has even gone too far with this ‘one thinks’—even the ‘one’ contains an *interpretation* of the process, and does not belong to the process itself. One infers here according to the usual grammatical formula—‘To think is an activity; every activity requires an agency that is active; consequently’ ...” (Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, §17).

Who has not had an experience of inspiration—a thought manifesting itself long after conscious effort has subsided, or a melody springing suddenly into consciousness? In less profound situations thoughts are said to “pop” into our heads. How can they be called “our own” if they seem to come from without, and not from within? The etymological origin of the word “inspiration,” from *inspirare*, connotes this externality—something is “breathed into” a person. Inspiration is often an explanation for otherwise unknown mental events: if it doesn’t come from within myself, it must come from somewhere else. The mysterious origins of our thoughts and feelings demand explanation. From Homer to Plato’s tri-partite soul; from Descartes’ *res cogitans* to Kant’s autonomous will; from Hegel’s *Geist* and beyond, there is an increasing complexity in the explanations of selfhood and identity. Despite the increasingly refined analyses of selfhood, inspiration remains problematic. Theories of selfhood following from Descartes’ take self-certainty for granted; in order for the soul to be autonomous, it must be the source of thought and desire, and not the receptor. The externality of our thoughts and feelings are cast aside for an understanding of the self as *res cogitans*. But anyone who has been inspired will understand that there is a limit to our self-inspection. How can thinking penetrate the depths of consciousness when thinking itself is in question?

Nietzsche’s direct attack on Cartesian self-certainty points out a dilemma confronted by those wishing to explore mental motivation: the exact causes of our thoughts, and many of our actions, are not *directly* accessible to us. To say, “I think,” implies a voluntary, willed act, if only, as Nietzsche points out, due to the restrictions of grammar. But, “I think,” may be a simplification of the mental event; it is clear that a thought is not willed into being, but comes when “‘it’ wishes.” Granted, our conscious effort can have something to do with thoughts coming to fruition, but it would be impossible to trace a particular thought back to its cause with any certainty. Nietzsche is right to point out that all interpretations of this nebulous mental process by which a thought “appears” to us are just that—interpretations. Basic assumptions about our own psychology lurk in our common forms of speech. Anyone speaking about human action is going to have some ideas about volition and mental motivation. Answering these universal questions necessitates a general conception of what it means to be a fully functioning human.

Homer, singing his songs long before the time of Descartes, is surely not thinking of a Cartesian mind/body distinction, or a Kantian “will,” or a Hegelian *Geist*, and unsurprisingly, we look in vain for these modern notions in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It may seem striking that such an intuitive thought has to be made clear: Homer is pre-philosophic, and therefore should not be judged on these philosophers’ specific terminology. Unfortunately, many interpretations of Homer have focused on the apparent lack of sophistication in Homer’s self-understanding, until recently.¹ Such anachronistic readings of Homer have infected our understanding of his characters, to the point where Bruno Snell, in his seminal work *The Discovery of Mind*, claims, “Homer does not know genuine personal decisions.”² Not only is his claim false, as a considered reading of Homeric deliberations scenes will show, but the question is also misdirected. What we can understand from Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* need not be indicative of “Homer” or “Homeric Man.” The focus should be on Homer’s *characters*, as creations of a conscious artist.³

In asserting that Homer’s characters make decisions, I have not committed myself to saying we are just like archaic Greeks; nor that we are vastly different. The question of similarity (or difference) has not proved fruitful over the years of scholarship: it tells more of the person investigating than the object investigated. There are important ways in which we are similar and others, equally important, in which we are different; a study with this question of similarity at its core always contains its answers in its inception. So, Snell encounters an absence of *Geist* precisely because he is looking for it, and Williams’ finds similarity because he believes in this similarity. The goal of this thesis is to explore, on Homer’s own terms, the conception of human decision-making and action—without the assumptions of subsequent philosophy.

In order to understand Homer’s characters, we must strive to understand the way they view themselves within the narrative. To do this, a detailed analysis of specific deliberation scenes is apt: Odysseus’ internal debate on the battlefield (*Il.* 11.401f.), Odysseus shipwrecked at sea (*Od.* 5.299f., 356f., 408f., 465f.), and Odysseus convincing himself not to kill the maidservants (*Od.* 20.7f.).

Nietzsche’s criticism of self-certainty must be kept in mind throughout. We must not be so quick to see progress that we forget how we still remain a mystery to ourselves. And we must not be so quick to see similarity that we forget the thousands of years separating Homer from us.

Before embarking on this detailed analysis my vocabulary for discussing issues of Homeric deliberation must be clarified. When confronting words like θυμός, φρένες, or κῆρ in Homer, questions of interpretation are immediately present: how are these “entities” related to their possessor; in what way are they “entities”; are they always

¹ E.g. Snell (1953), Dodds (1953), Adkins (1960).

² Snell (1953) 21.

³ Clark argues well for this view of Homer as artist: “In short, the poet is the master and not the slave of his inheritance, while at the same time his creativity is intimately united with the canons which the tradition prescribes; so that when he expresses a world-picture in words and stories, his own creative power is part and parcel of what that world-picture is” (Clarke (1999) 19).

physical “organs;” in what ways are they internal; how do they differ from our own words of deliberation?⁴

The first question that arises from reading Homer is whether there is a dichotomy between mental and physical at all. Michael Clarke’s ambitious project is to remove this body/soul dualism that has pervaded most attempts to interpret Homer’s language of “mental life.”⁵ His main concern is to show that “soul” is a misreading of ψυχή that places it within a body/soul dualism that did not exist for Homer. He remarks, “Evidently *thumos* and the others are within the boundaries of the body...and their processes are those that would nowadays be assigned to the mind: thought, emotion, self-awareness, will.”⁶ Thus, he justifies using “mental” terminology because what Homer is describing is what we call “mental”: thought and emotion that occur within the boundaries of the body.

In contrast to Homer’s puzzling “mental” vocabulary, Homer has a clear conception of the body and its physical nature. He understands that certain organs have a completely derivative nature, like the eyes. The eyes never “see,” but often appear in the dative, combined with a finite verb or participle: “ἐπεὶ ἐκὰς ὀφθαλμοῖσι γαῖαν ἔγων ἰδόμεν.”⁷ Odysseus is clearly saying that he saw the land *with* his eyes, showing that the eyes are merely the part by which he sees. The only times the eyes are the subject of an active verb is when the Cyclops’ eye is sizzling, when a warrior’s eyes fill up with blood, or when they fall to the ground. Homer does not think of the “θυμός-family,” as Clarke calls them, in the same way. They are quite often the subjects of active verbs that motivate characters towards action, while still maintaining some aspects of their physical nature.⁸

While there is not a mental/physical duality in Homer, there are aspects of the θυμός-family that separate them from purely physical parts of the body. Homer’s models for the θυμός-family are physical organs, but he endows them with other qualities to distinguish them from “true” organs like the eyes or ears. They are understood through analogy with the organs, frequently given specific locations within the body, but Homer also imbues them with more of a fluid nature, suggesting their qualitative difference from the rest of the organs. Clarke makes this point clear: “The entity represented by the nouns in the *thumos* family stands in no fixed relationship with the human being, since it is sometimes the source of thought, sometimes its mode or instrument, and sometimes merely the locus of the thought-process.”⁹ The other organs do not have such a range of relationships to the individual. When the word “mental” is used to discuss the θυμός-family, I do not mean that they are not physical, because at the most basic level they are. What is connoted by “mental” is this: they are the faculties

⁴ I follow Clarke in his grouping of θυμός, φρένες, νόος, ἦτορ, κῆρ, κραδίη, and πραπίδες as the “θυμός-family”; these are all of the significant words of deliberation, thinking, and feeling in Homer. Cf. Clarke (1999) 61.

⁵ Clarke (1999) 53.

⁶ Ibid. 66.

⁷ *Od.* 5.358-359.

⁸ These entities are often given specific locations within the body, showing that Homer is not thinking of a non-corporeal entity.

⁹ Ibid.

by which Homer's characters comprehend the world around them, and the same faculties by which they make decisions, feel, think, and are urged to action.

It is clear why Snell maintains that these mental words "are separate organs, each having its own particular function."¹⁰ They are frequently given physical locations and so appear to be analogous to organs. But this approximation of mental words to organs does not necessarily lead to Snell's conclusion that "the *thumos* and the *noos* are so very little different from other physical organs that they cannot very well be looked upon as a genuine source of impulses."¹¹ Snell belies his philosophical prejudice here, asserting that a "genuine source of impulses" must be non-corporeal, because "in our eyes the ideas of the soul and of an organ are incompatible."¹² Thankfully, we no longer see with the shared vision that Snell is referring to. Clarke, among others, starts off on the same philological project as Snell, trying to demarcate the mental entities by showing how they relate to one another. But he certainly does not follow Snell in assuming that a "genuine" source of impulses must be found because organs couldn't be responsible for human volition and action. What we find in Homer is exactly that: these entities, which are understood on the most basic level as analogous to organs, are the very tools with which Homer's characters comprehend the world and survive in it. Clarke's use of "mental" must be understood as a direct response to Snell's understanding of the *θυμός*-family as physical organs.

Homer also does not distinguish sharply between intellectual and emotional sorts of activity. As Sullivan notes, "A verb for thinking may include...aspects of feeling, willing, or reacting."¹³ Thus, when the term "mental" is used, it does not mean "not-emotional." The connection between the intellectual and emotional faculties is an undeniable part of Homer's understanding of these words. All the words in the *θυμός*-family take part in what we call intellectual and emotional activities, so this distinction is not felt as strongly as it is in our language.

No matter where we turn to designate the *θυμός*-family as distinct from other kinds of organs—"psychic," "mental," or "deliberative"—we are met with interpretive problems. None of the words that we have actually describe the kinds of entities that Homer envisions. Any terminology that is chosen must be heavily footnoted and separated from the ideas that do not fit within Homer's framework. So, it doesn't matter much whether we use the term "psychic" or "mental." Regardless of what word we use to describe them, all of these concerns must be present in our interpretations. The use of "mental" will not infect our understanding of these words as long as the investigation is self-aware enough to point out the frequent divergences from what is most assuredly *our* word. Homer does not give us a word to describe the *θυμός*-family as opposed to other sorts of vocabulary, so we must use our own.

Now that the interpretive challenges of Homeric mental vocabulary have been laid out, it is time to inspect some deliberation scenes, starting with the lengthiest and most intense example: Odysseus' barking heart.

¹⁰ Snell (1953) 14.

¹¹ Ibid. 20.

¹² Ibid. 15.

¹³ Sullivan (1995) 15.

Odysseus' Barking Heart

Homer's description of Odysseus' barking heart at *Od.* 20.5-55 is perhaps his most vivid depiction of mental turmoil in the two epics. The passage is remarkable for the length of time Homer spends describing Odysseus' mental angst, "deploying in one context all three of the formulaic modes of Homeric deliberation."¹⁴ 1) Odysseus "considers (with his φρένες and θυμός) whether he should do A or B,"¹⁵ 2) he "considers how he might fight the suitors all alone,"¹⁶ and 3) he conducts a self-address.¹⁷ Not only are all the Homeric decision-making formulae present, but the self-address is emphasized by the similes that surround it: the first comparing Odysseus' heart to a barking dog, and the second comparing a restless Odysseus to a man rolling a sausage over a fire. As if these descriptions were not vivid enough, Athena comes from the heavens "δέμας δ' ἤικτο γυναικί" to settle Odysseus' concerns. Russo comments, "A scene of such length, deliberately extended by the juxtaposition of so many distinct units, is totally different from Homer's usual practice and is employed here to achieve an unusually strong intensification of the description of the hero's inner turmoil."¹⁸

The abundance of mental vocabulary heightens the pathos of this unique scene. The θυμός stirs (9), Odysseus ponders with his φρένες and θυμός (10), and then his κραδίη barks (13) and needs to be restrained through self-address. Nowhere else does the κραδίη assume such a powerful and commanding role in motivating a hero towards action.¹⁹ And nowhere else does Homer describe any part of the mental vocabulary through such a metaphor. This is also the only address to the κραδίη.²⁰ According to Sullivan, each of the "heart" words "serves as a location of different emotions, especially joy, grief, anger, and fear."²¹ The frequent association of the "heart" words—κῆρ, κραδίη, and ἦτορ—with physical and emotional pain suggests that the heart represents endurance, making it an obvious choice for a substitution in this self-address. The remarkable combination of so many devices and formulae resists any interpretation that insists Homer is incapable of using his formulae to display original and dynamic human portraits.

The presence of so much mental vocabulary in one narrative moment may seem to support Snell's thesis that Homeric heroes are really parts without a whole: Odysseus is not making a decision, but is fully controlled by his mental "organs" and the urgings of

¹⁴ Gill (1996) 184.

¹⁵ *Od.* 20.10-13: "πολλὰ δὲ μερμήριζε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατα θυμόν, ἦἔ...ἦ..."

¹⁶ *Od.* 20.28-30: "μερμηρίζων ὄππως δὴ μνηστῆρσιν ἀναιδέσι χεῖρας ἐφήσει μοῦνος ἐὼν πολέσι."

¹⁷ *Od.* 20.17-21: "σιῆθος δὲ πλήξας κραδίην ἠνίπαπε μύθῳ."

¹⁸ Russo (1992) 108.

¹⁹ At other times, it prompts them to do things, but not with the intensity envisioned here; cf. *Od.* 8.204, "κραδίη θυμός τε κελεύει."

²⁰ Characters often address their μεγαλήτωρ θυμός in similar situations: *Od.* 5.299.

²¹ Sullivan (1995) 70.

a god. Snell would have us believe that this passage provides a clear example of Homers' inability to recognize that his desires and decisions come from a locus of "will" that is Odysseus proper, and not Odysseus via his mental parts. Why else would there be such an amalgamation of mental words, except that Homer misunderstands human volition? If Homer understood that Odysseus himself were the source of the impulse to slay the maids (i.e. not his θυμός) and that his κραδίη did not function autonomously, we would not find this language of parts, but rather instances of conflict within one autonomous mental entity: the soul. But there is not only one kind of unity. Homer's unity is the ebb and flow of interdependent parts functioning together, rather than an isolated and self-willing ego.

While it is true that Homer uses an abundance of mental words in his description of this event, it is false to say that they amount to a piecemeal understanding of Odysseus' angst and its resolution. In line 9 ("τοῦ δ' ὠρίνετο θυμός ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισι"), the τοῦ clearly connects Odysseus to the θυμός—it is *his*.²² In the same formulaic line, the θυμός is located ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισι, indicating another kind of connection Odysseus has with his θυμός: it is physically within him. The "stirring" of his θυμός (9) causes Odysseus to "turn over many things" (10): "πολλὰ δὲ μερμήριζε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν." It is not that his "emotional" response in 9 is supplanted by the "intellectual" response in 10. The θυμός is involved in both the initial prompting and the pondering, showing its incommensurability with our own mental vocabulary, which posits an emotional/intellectual opposition. These lines are a perfect example of the harmony between the intellectual and emotional faculties in Homer. The "*angry impulse*," as Russo calls it, in 9 is included in the deliberative pondering in 10.²³ Thus, Odysseus ponders with his φρένες and the very same θυμός that just expressed his sudden outrage. Odysseus' deliberation with both of these faculties suggests a balancing between the two. This deliberative response—i.e. "should I do A or B"—is punctuated by yet another sudden emotional reaction to his situation: κραδίη δέ οἱ ἔνδον ὑλάκτεϊ. Once again, the mental entity is described as *his own*, this time by the dative personal pronoun οἱ and ἔνδον. The emotional and intellectual are not separate, warring forces here, but are presented side by side. Odysseus' emotional response triggers an intellectual one that, in turn, leads to another emotional response: his heart "barks." His heart only barks because of his pondering, and not in spite of it. The emotional and intellectual capacities are not presented as functioning against one another, but they do appear to respond to one another. They are related to one another in the same way Odysseus is related to them, through the exchange of dialogue. His heart barks, and he barks back at it.

²² Monroe (1891) 231: "This account does not apply to τῆς εὐνής (Il. 9.133, 275, 19.176) and τῆς ἀρετῆς (Od. 2.206). But here the [article] is probably substantial: τῆς εὐνῆς *her couch*, τῆς ἀρετῆς *her perfection*."

²³ Russo (1992) 108; this separates me from Russo's claim that the first instance of θυμός is essentially not the same as the θυμός found in the "stock" formula in 10. The first instance of θυμός must resonate within the second instance, even if the second is more firmly established formula.

The simile of a barking dog used to characterize Odysseus' emotional response does not appear elsewhere in Homer: ὡς δὲ κύων ἀμαλῆσι περὶ σκυλάκεσσι βεβῶσα ἄνδρ' ἀγνοιήσασ' ὑλάει μέμονέν τε μάχεσθαι.²⁴ The vivid image of a bitch standing over her puppies and barking at a stranger evokes the sense of ownership that Odysseus feels about his surroundings.²⁵ Though he is not revealed as Odysseus, he still sees himself as the master of his household, the rightful owner of everything within it, right down to the maidservants. Κύων, περὶ, and βεβῶσα are placed around ἀμαλῆσι... σκυλάκεσσι, providing a word order that compliments the meaning it conveys. The bitch is standing over her puppies and the word order heightens our awareness of this protective and possessive prowling. The two spondees that start off line 15, and the assonance with alphas and etas evoke the slow growling of this mother dog as she fends off the stranger.²⁶ Odysseus himself (or his κραδίη through metonymy) is also related to the man who is not recognized by the dog in the simile; he is concealed as a beggar sleeping on the floor, after all. This connection reminds us of the danger that Odysseus is in as a beggar within his own home. He is subject to the violence of the suitors, who do not recognize him and constantly threaten him.

The mental activities that Homer is describing here are thoroughly internal; they can only be understood as “external” if they are approached with a model of Odysseus himself as the inner center, and entities such as θυμός as external forces. The Cartesian model—i.e. the self as a unitary locus of will—has been a major influence on Snell's misinterpretation of mental vocabulary as external to the self. Gill criticizes him for this philosophical prejudice: “For them [Voigt and Snell], the fact that Homeric psychological processes (including psychological conflict) are couched in terms of the relationship between ‘I’ and something other than ‘I’ (*thumos* or ‘heart’) signifies that the processes involved do not occur within the self.”²⁷ And while Odysseus is not *merely* his θυμός, φρένες, κραδίη, and so on, they are the faculties by which he has an active, conscious life. The proper functioning of his mental entities is none other than Odysseus himself.

As we have seen in these lines, the emotional and intellectual are not opposed, nor are Odysseus and his mental parts. Gill notes this absence of opposition: “Nowhere do the entities... behave in opposition to each other, in the way that (for example) reason and passion or the heart and the mind might be opposed in our own language.”²⁸ It is tempting to interpret the barking of Odysseus' heart as his desire to immediately go slay the maidservants. The enjambment of ὕστατα καὶ πύματα, followed immediately by the barking heart certainly suggests that Odysseus has murder on his mind. But it is

²⁴ *Od.* 20.14-15: “Just as a bitch, standing over her weak pups, growls and prepares to fight when she fails to recognize someone.”

²⁵ Περιβαίνω “is regular Iliadic usage for the act of standing over (‘bestriding’) a fallen comrade to protect him;” Russo (1992) 108.

²⁶ Contraction occurs 40% of the time in the first half of the line. This does not deny that it has special significance here in conveying the meaning of the line; Morris, I. and Powell, B. (1997).

²⁷ Gill (1996) 188.

²⁸ Clarke (1999) 65.

impossible to tell what sort of internal reaction Homer has in mind for a barking heart. This metaphorical description only occurs here; in other places, as a few lines before, Homer often has τοῦ δ' ὠρίνετο θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισι. Perhaps we are accustomed to think that Odysseus' barking heart signifies his blood lust because of the connections we make between animality and our own blood lust. But Homer may have a more coherent picture of the human as animal, as he is frequently recasting human action in terms of animal action via similes. At the completion of the simile Homer supplies the reason for the barking heart: ἀγαλιόμενου κακὰ ἔργα. This phrase also makes clear the internal nature of this reaction. The heart is once again *his* (possessive genitive), and the participle explains this reaction. It is because he is marveling at the shameful deeds that his heart barks. The reaction is described as part of deciding what to do, not in opposition to it.

In the direct address to his κραδίη, it is clear that Odysseus does not see himself as talking to a specific part of himself; we would say he is “speaking to himself.” Gill remarks, “The part is also treated as a whole person, with a life over time, in so far as it is reminded of past behaviour and urged to match this behaviour now... In effect, the heart becomes a partial substitute for ‘much-enduring’ Odysseus himself; it is treated as capable of ‘bearing’ short-term pain and outrage, though ‘expecting’ to die, until cunning or ingenuity (another Odyssean characteristic) brings relief.”²⁹ Gill’s language is not strong enough here: Odysseus knows he is talking to himself. The echo of the dog simile is felt in Odysseus’ choice of κύντερον. His heart, barking like a bitch, has endured “more dog-like” things before. Odysseus reminds himself of the incident with the Cyclops, calling to mind one of the most painful experiences he has had: having to watch his friends be killed so that some of them would escape.³⁰ Μῆτις echoes the famous trick he played on the Cyclops, but also may refer to the ἔτερος θυμός that prevented him from dooming all of his comrades.³¹ The message is clear: endure so that you can save yourself.

This monologue is littered with psychological vocabulary, but in line 24 Russo comments that “the poet presses the word αὐτός into service to denote the ‘whole’ psychological entity in opposition to its constituent impulses.”³² Common uses of αὐτός frequently denote the physical body, as opposed to the soul that goes down to Hades, but here it has the sense of Odysseus as the unification of multiple mental parts.³³ The nature of the description also shows that Odysseus, as a single functioning unity, contains all of these conflicts within himself—it causes “the man himself” to turn this way and that way.

²⁹ Gill (1996) 184.

³⁰ Cf. *Od.* 9.288-291: the Cyclops throws Odysseus’ comrades to the ground like puppies. A bitter echo of this incident is contained in the barking bitch simile.

³¹ *Od.* 9.300ff; If this is the case, it is curious that the “second impulse” that overtakes him in that scene is retrospectively viewed as μῆτις. Cf. page 18 and following where this curious scene is discussed in detail.

³² Russo (1992) 109.

³³ cf. *Il.* 1.3-4, where αὐτοῦς clearly means the material body that the dogs and birds feast on. “[Uses of αὐτός:] (1) To distinguish a person from his surroundings... So of the *body*, as the actual person, in contradistinction to the soul or life (ψυχή), *Il.* 1.4, *Od.* 11.602, &c.” Monroe (1891), 218.

Homer, always preferring to dwell on the outward manifestations of human life rather than those we would call “inner,” describes what a person looks like who has incredible mental angst rather than describing the angst itself. In this way, Homer does not ignore the self-conscious nature of angst, but chooses to describe its external manifestation by comparing Odysseus’ restless thrashing to a man rolling a sausage over a blazing fire: ὥς δ’ ὅτε γαστέρ’ ἀνήρ πολέος πυρὸς αἰθομένοιο, ἐμπλείην κνίσης τε καὶ αἵματος, ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα αἰόλλη, μάλα δ’ ὤκα λιλαίεται ὀπιηθῆναι.³⁴ The power of such feeling is not overlooked, but described in his own particular way: as an observer. Homer, aiming at “vividness,” according to Stanford, paints a picture of ordinary life: a hungry man cooking food.³⁵ Odysseus is immediately connected to the sausage that is being rolled around by the hungry man, but Russo also notes “the eagerness of the man to have it cooked quickly (27) corresponds to Odysseus’ eagerness to find a way to attack the suitors (28-9).”³⁶ Perhaps the reference to the sausage “filled with fat and blood” also has implications for Odysseus, reducing him to his most basic physical elements: meat and blood. The utter interiority of his conflict is highlighted in this simile; his insides, like the sausage, are boiling with activity and he is left to hold himself together. It is clear that Homer can display vivid images of mental turmoil.

During this lengthy passage of deliberation and hesitation, Odysseus does not ever appear at the mercy of his mental parts. The reciprocal reactions between Odysseus and his θυμός and κραδίη show that he is a functioning unity and not a disjointed amalgamation of parts without a whole. Homer presents us with a picture of a man who knows himself well and is finely attuned to his “inner” nature. Odysseus goes no further than his own heart when seeking the strength he needs to endure. This Odyssean virtue—endurance—is his defining feature and is emphasized throughout the work as his particular strength. Let us turn to Odysseus’ entrance in Book 5 of the *Odyssey*, where his endurance and self-reliance simultaneously thrust him into, and protect him from, calamity.

Odysseus at Sea

Book 5 of the *Odyssey* gives us our first glimpse at the poem’s heroic namesake—an introduction “singularly without fanfare,” according to Hainsworth’s commentary.³⁷ We would expect the poet to “impress upon us the morally important traits of the hero’s character... the moral courage that pervades the *Odyssey* as much as physical prowess does in the *Iliad*.”³⁸ But what is more indicative of Odysseus and his role as πολύτλας than our first encounter with him on Kalypso’s island?³⁹ We find him secluding himself

³⁴ *Od.* 20.25-27: “Just as when a man rolls a sausage, filled with blood and fat, this way and that way over a blazing fire, when he desires to roast it very quickly.”

³⁵ Stanford (1948) 342.

³⁶ Russo (1992) 110.

³⁷ Hainsworth (1988) 268.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Odysseus is the only one to receive the epithet πολύτλας, singling him out as “much-enduring.”

on an edge of the island, sitting all day on the rocky shore rending his θυμός, shedding tears and gazing across the barren sea (156-157). This scene characterizes Odysseus, and his role in the epic, perfectly; his definitive quality—endurance—is displayed clearly in this scene as endurance for pain. Soon enough he will have to endure not only mental anguish, but physical pain as well, struggling for his life on the sea. It is no accident that the poet uses the adjective μεγαλήτωρ seven times in this book, all with reference to Odysseus or his θυμός.⁴⁰

Endurance remains the focus of this book as Odysseus leaves Kalypso and suffers more pains on the sea. He willingly chooses to leave this life of inner pain for the life of physical pain, confident in his ability to endure (221-222). The return to the sea signifies Odysseus' return to mortal life after being held captive on an enchanted utopian island.⁴¹ He needs to return to the mortal life of pain, suffering, and progress—he needs to traverse the broad back of the sea once again, alone and enduring. Odysseus is confident as he returns to his mortal struggle: “τλήσομαι ἐν στήθεσσιν ἔχων ταλαπενθέα θυμόν.”⁴² He believes in his own ability: his pain-enduring θυμός.⁴³ And he receives what he desires: Odysseus is quickly shipwrecked and relying on himself to find a way to survive. This self-reliance, a necessary feature of his isolation on the sea, is expressed by his frequent addresses to his μεγαλήτωρ θυμός at 299-312, 356-364, 408-423, and 465-473. This book has more self-address than any other in either epic, but without accompanying formulas of “wondering whether to do A or B,” or “wondering how to.”⁴⁴ The lack of deliberative formulae, replaced by self-pitying self-addresses, reflects the utter lack of options present Odysseus. The self-addresses increase the pathos of Odysseus' sufferings on the sea.

The relationship between Odysseus and his θυμός is at the forefront of this episode. Many scholars follow E.R. Dodds claim that “the *thumos* tends not to be felt as part of the self: it commonly appears as an independent inner voice.”⁴⁵ This theory is a short step away from Snell's theory of parts without a whole. Any time these two scholars see the θυμός as the subject of an active verb, they take this to mean a separate entity within the hero has caused something to happen. While it may be true that the θυμός is responsible for certain promptings, it is only used as explanation for what is regarded as the individual's own desire to eat, drink, or kill an enemy.⁴⁶ Thus, I do not follow Williams, who asserts that the psychological vocabulary of Homer “[does] not

⁴⁰ *Od.* 5.81, 149, 233, 298, 355, 407, 464.

⁴¹ Hainsworth (1988) 262; Calypso's home of Ogygia is like Elysium and many other paradises at the Western edge of Ocean. It might as well be death for Odysseus, who is characterized by struggle and pain.

⁴² *Od.* 5.222.

⁴³ Reading ἔχων as causal: “I will endure *since* I have a pain-enduring θυμός in my chest.”

⁴⁴ Poseidon even addresses his μεγαλήτωρ θυμός twice in this Book (285-290, 376-379).

⁴⁵ Dodds (1951) 16.

⁴⁶ Collobert (2002) 212; “Although sometimes subject to the influence of his *thumos*...nonetheless the hero is not its slave.”

seem intended to have any explanatory force,”⁴⁷ and that “the interventions of the gods...[are] far more pervasive, and, most importantly, [are] far more explanatory, than the references to the *thumos*, *noos*, and so on.”⁴⁸ Though it is hard to isolate completely distinct fields of operation for these psychic entities, and though they share many of the same functions, they are not a homogeneous group. Sullivan, after an extensive word study, says, “It is apparent that *noos*, *phren*, and *thumos*, though often sharing a similar range of psychological activity, have distinctive features.”⁴⁹ It is important to remember that the poet is a master of his formulae and not a slave to it; he makes choices about which vocabulary occurs where.⁵⁰ If there is hesitation about calling this “explanatory,” then at the very least the psychological language is “descriptive.”⁵¹ But Odysseus does cite his own θυμός as an explanation for how he will endure (222), suggesting that the quality of his θυμός will see him through his troubles. It is clear in the way he speaks about himself that these entities are meant to have explanatory force.

These self-addresses show that the θυμός is an essential feature of Homer’s characters, not a poetic fiction that is completely distinct from the “hero himself.” As we have seen in Book 20, these psychic entities functioning together define a character. It has been noted by Gill that, “what the use of monologue seems rather to signify is the exceptional isolation in which the figures find themselves at these moments, so that (as one might put it) they have no one with whom to share their dilemmas but themselves.”⁵² The θυμός stands out as the focal point for these self-addresses; before two of these self-addresses Odysseus’ knees and dear heart loosen themselves (296, 406) before he speaks to his greathearted spirit (297, 407). The physical loosening of his knees and heart leave him with only one entity left to address: his θυμός. As before,⁵³ all of these self-addresses include the possessive pronoun ὄν, showing that the θυμός is not represented as “other.”

The common beginning of self-address, “ὦ μοι ἐγὼ,” begins three out of four self-addresses contained in Book 5 (299, 356, 465).⁵⁴ This short phrase displays many ideas of self-relation very compactly. First, the long “oh” sound begins and ends the phrase, mimicking the gasps of horror that may escape the mouth of someone in such a situation; the phrase itself sounds like a sad lamentation. Secondly, the relational aspect of “me to myself” is also displayed. On this phrase, Burnett says, “not just, “Ah me!” as usually translated, but a call, “O ego of mine!”⁵⁵ Though he is using his own sense of

⁴⁷ Williams (1993) 27.

⁴⁸ Ibid. 33.

⁴⁹ Sullivan (1995) 73.

⁵⁰ Clarke (1999) 19.

⁵¹ cf. Snell (1953) 13; his reading of the psychological vocabulary gives different shades of meaning to the text.

⁵² Gill (1996) 58.

⁵³ Cf. pages 6-10 where all the psychic entities in the “barking heart” scene are clearly denoted as *his own*.

⁵⁴ The third self-address begins with just “ὦ μοι.”

⁵⁵ Burnett (1991) 279.

“ego,” it does not seem as if Odysseus is calling on a particular part of himself.⁵⁶ Rather, Odysseus is aware that he is speaking to himself. It is a cry of desperation that calls to attention the isolation the character is feeling; the relational quality of this phrase, “I (for me)” serves to heighten this sense of isolation. Odysseus stands (or swims) alone.

Most literature on Homeric self-address focuses on deliberation and its role in subsequent action.⁵⁷ Perhaps this explains why Book 5 is left out of many of these discussions. Odysseus’ first self-address in Book 5 (299-312) has nothing to do with a decision that has to be made, but serves to show his suffering and his acute awareness of it: “ὦ μοι ἐγὼ δειλός! τί νύ μοι μήκιστα γένηται;”⁵⁸ Here, Odysseus does not turn inward in order to make a decision about something, but to gripe about his current situation. By explaining it out loud to himself, he appears to comprehend the situation around him as foretold by Kalypso. This is a moment of terrible realization—all the goddess spoke of is coming true (300-302), and he will certainly die (305, 312). But the conclusions “νῦν μοι σῶς αἰπὺς ὄλεθρος”⁵⁹ and “νῦν δὲ με λευγαλέῳ θανάτῳ εἶμαρτο ἀλῶναι”⁶⁰ do not follow from the goddess’ admonition. Just three lines before, Odysseus states exactly what the goddess foretold: that he would suffer many pains on the sea before he returned to his fatherland. His ultimate uncertainty about both the goddess’ admonitions and his own safety are the focal points of this self-address. There is no decision to be made, but he if he said to be deliberating at all, it is about the truth of Kalypso’s prophecy.

His self-reliance comes to the forefront during his second self-address (356-364). Ino has given him the κρήδεμνος that will save him, if he will only abandon his raft (343-344). A trickster himself, Odysseus’ first thought is that one of the gods is attempting to deceive him by exhorting him to expose himself on the open water (356-357). Once again, his important epithet πολύτλας characterizes Odysseus’ choice to wait and weigh all of his options before choosing. Showing that he will rely on no one but himself, he says, “ἀλλὰ μάλ’ ὦδ’ ἔρξω, δοκέει δέ μοι εἶναι ἄριστον,”⁶¹ as a stark contrast to Ino’s imperative: “ἀλλὰ μάλ’ ὦδ’ ἔρξαί.”⁶² Odysseus clearly believes in his own ability to deliberate, and his self-addresses are shown as an integral part of this decision-making process. We can see Odysseus thinking through this situation as he is speaking to himself. He comes to this decision because it is not possible to plan anything beyond this (364). The formula “Ἦος ὁ ταῦθ’ ὤρμαινε κατὰ φρένα καὶ κατὰ θυμόν” shows that the self-address that just occurred is an explicated version of this compact expression.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 278: “I am using ‘ego’ to mean that part of the warrior that supervises the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain.”

⁵⁷ E.g. Sharples, “But Why Has My Spirit Spoken With Me Thus?”; Gill, Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy; Burnett, “Signals from the Unconscious in Early Greek Poetry.”

⁵⁸ *Od.* 5.299.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 305.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 312.

⁶¹ Ibid. 360.

⁶² Ibid. 342.

Odysseus spends two days and nights trying to find a beach to approach (388-405). When all he can find are rocky shores and jutting cliffs his knees and heart go slack and he speaks for a third time to his μεγαλήτωρ θυμός. Like the first self-address, formulae expressing the possible options are not given before the speech, but are revealed as Odysseus complains about them. Allowing Odysseus to present the dire options to the reader himself, Homer heightens his sense of helplessness. We see the options exactly as Odysseus sees them, without the poet laying them out for us separately.⁶³ Both of his options, to approach the rocky shore or to swim until a better spot is found, are undesirable ones. The first option is presented as nearly impossible, and the second is just as risky, for he might be taken out to sea. Homer is showing us a deliberative process, but one that has no clear solution. It does not culminate in an action, either, as a wave sweeps him toward a crag, endangering his life. In the next twenty lines Athena is invoked twice in contrary to fact conditionals: “Odysseus would have died if Athena had not...” (426-428, 436-438). In both cases, Athena affects his φρένες: first she “ἐπὶ φρεσὶ θῆκε,” and then she “ἐπιπροσύνην δῶκε.”⁶⁴ Since his φρένες are the means through which he deliberates, it makes sense that Athena’s urgings are located there. It is clear that he is still doing the things Athena has incited through her affect of his φρένες; he has not lost any agency.

Odysseus’ final self-address in this book comes after he has won the battle for his life on the sea, yet he finds himself still fighting for his life. He needs to decide between two possible evils, just like his previous address: stay all night on the river where the frost might get him (466-469), or go up to the woods to sleep where he might be prey for wild animals (470-473). Though the decision itself isn’t contained in his speech, “Ὡς ἄρα οἱ φρονέοντι δόασσατο κέρδιον εἶναι”⁶⁵ shows that the decision does come about as a result of the direct-address: it appears to him as he is deliberating.

Odysseus successfully regains his identity through this struggle on the sea. As he suffers he is brazenly self-reliant, ingenious, and most importantly, πολύτλας.⁶⁶ When he crawls into the womb-like shrubs the reader is assured he will be reborn with new strength. The final simile elucidates this rebirth: “ὥς δ’ ὅτε τις δαλὸν σποδιῆ ἐνέκρυψε μελαίνῃ ἀγροῦ ἐπ’ ἐσχατιῆς, ᾧ μὴ πάρα γείτονες ἄλλοι, σπέρμα πυρὸς σώζων, ἵνα μὴ ποθεν ἄλλοθεν αὔῃ.”⁶⁷ Odysseus is like the man, far away without friends or resources, but his connection to the firebrand is clear: he is being buried for later use. The “spark of life” image is present here, much diminished in Odysseus at this point. But just as the man saved the seed of the fire so that it could crackle boldly at another time, Odysseus’ internal flame will convalesce.

⁶³ Cf. *Od.* 20.10-20: a scene that does present these options before a self-address. The options are more clear-cut in Book 20: either kill the maids or don’t.

⁶⁴ *Od.* 5.427 and 5.437: “she affected his φρένες” and “she granted him prudence.”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 474: “So it appeared more advantageous to the one considering.”

⁶⁶ The final epithet given to Odysseus in this book at 486.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 488-490: “Just as when a man from the farthest field, with no neighbors, hides an ember in black ash, saving the seed of fire, because there is nowhere else to get fire from.”

At the beginning of Book 5 he was held captive by Kalypso, a figurative “covering;” this same book ends with Odysseus “φύλλοισι καλύψατο,” covered by leaves.⁶⁸ The final word, ἀμφικαλύψας is a masterful way to end a book about the respective covering and uncovering of identity. Odysseus has only been able to return successfully to his identity by self-reliance, expressed through many self-addresses. His μεγαλήτωρ θυμός is the only means by which he has remained enduring. The interpretation of Odysseus’ μεγαλήτωρ θυμός as strangely “other” cannot be maintained.

Odysseus in Battle

The previous discussions of Homeric decision-making have focused on instances of practical deliberation rather than moral deliberation: Odysseus’ monologues in Books 5 and 20 do not suggest he is struggling with how he “should” act: rather, he is deciding how best to mitigate a particular situation.⁶⁹ To gain a wider perspective on Homeric deliberation, we will now turn to an example of a moral deliberation: Odysseus’ decision to fight or flee at *Il.* 11.400ff—referred to as the “*locus classicus* of Homeric decision-making” by Lawrence.⁷⁰ Examining a moral decision helps shed light on the evaluative terms that are used in all deliberations.

In this scene, Odysseus rushes to defend the wounded Diomedes (396-7) and remains alone on the battlefield (401-2), since fear has seized the rest of his comrades (402). Distressed, he speaks to his μεγαλήτωρ θυμός (403):

“ὦ μοι ἔγω, τί πάθω; μέγα μὲν κακὸν αἶ
κε φέβωμαι
πληθὺν ταρβήσας· τὸ δὲ ρίγιον αἶ κεν
άλῶ
μοῦνος· τοὺς δ’ ἄλλους Δαναοὺς ἐφόβησε
Κρονίων.
ἀλλὰ τίη μοι ταῦτα φίλος διελέξατο
θυμός;
οἶδα γὰρ ὅτι κακοὶ μὲν ἀποίχονται
πολέμοιο,
ὃς δέ κ’ ἀριστεύησι μάχῃ ἔνι, τὸν δὲ
μάλα χρεὼ
ἐστάμεναι κρατερῶς, ἢ τ’ ἔβλητ’ ἢ τ’
ἔβαλ’ ἄλλον.”⁷¹

Gill outlines Snell’s unwillingness to call this a true moral choice: “The fact that Odysseus refers to an ‘objective norm’ shows that his decision was not a genuine

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 491.

⁶⁹ “The famous deliberations of Achilles at *Il.* 1.188-221 and of Odysseus at *Od.* 20.1-30 do not revolve around moral considerations but involve conflicts between impulses crying for immediate gratification and *tactically* wiser courses of action,” (Lawrence (2003) 28).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 27.

⁷¹ *Il.* 11.404-410.

personal one (made by a self-conscious ‘I’) but one determined ‘from outside’; the decision is based on class-based considerations and not on an autonomous act of self-universalization.”⁷² Snell finds a lack of Kantian will in Odysseus’ deliberation and relegates it to a simple reflection on his social status: I, Odysseus, am a chieftain, and must do what is expected of my status, which is to stand my ground. Snell’s critique focuses on the fact that *κακοὶ* and *ἀριστεύησι* are class words, representing objective norms that exist outside the individual. On this understanding, Odysseus merely reminds himself of his aristocratic status, and applies the unwritten rules that apply to that status—it appears as no real choice at all, but a social compulsion. Snell’s assessment is fundamentally based in philosophical concepts that did not exist for Homer; a genuine choice, for Snell, is Kantian autonomy. Lawrence argues against this philosophical understanding of moral deliberation: “We need not worry if Odysseus has thought out his morality for himself or adopted it uncritically through social conditioning; it remains in either case a moral consideration.”⁷³ It may not meet Kant’s criteria for a decision, but even if Homer is not a Kantian that does not mean that his characters are ignorant of true moral decisions.

Odysseus’ self-address is divided into two distinct parts, separated by the frequently discussed formula, “ἀλλὰ τίη μοι ταῦτα φίλος διελέξατο θυμός;” (*Il.* 11.407).⁷⁴ The first section presents his only two options, both stated negatively: it would be a great evil (*μέγα κακόν*) if he should flee (404), but it would be more dreadful (*τὸ ῥίγιον*) if he were captured alone (405-6). The second half displays Odysseus’ reasoning for risking what is potentially more dreadful: the man who would be best (*ἀριστεύησι*) in battle must stand his ground staunchly (*κρατερῶς*) and is either be conquered or conquer another (409-10). The very fact that the first of the two options is conceived in negative terms shows that Odysseus doesn’t really consider it an option, even before he explains why. Gill notes, “His initial characterization of the options is already ethically coloured.”⁷⁵ This fact is made clear by the early placement of “μέγα μὲν κακόν,” signifying the utter baseness of such an action. Snell’s argument that this decision is imported from social norms (in the second half of the speech) is undercut by the fact that the first option is prefaced by Odysseus’ reproach for it. It is not as if he presents two options to himself, devoid of ethical consideration, and chooses one because that is what an aristocrat (*ἀριστοσ*) does. Odysseus’ options, as he presents them to himself, already contain ethical considerations, showing that it is not a simple application of social norms that determines his action. While social norms may play a significant role, it cannot be argued that they are the only criteria for his decision.⁷⁶

⁷² Gill (1996) 69.

⁷³ Lawrence (2003) 28.

⁷⁴ Sharples discusses this phrase exclusively, and all assessments of Homeric deliberation (Gill (1996), Clarke (1999), Dodds (1951), Snell (1953), etc.); they all note the strangeness of a character speaking to his *θυμός*, but then regarding what they have said as originating from the *θυμός*.

⁷⁵ Gill (1996) 73.

⁷⁶ “It would be misleading to suggest that, in Homer, terms such as *kakoi* and *aristeuein* are ever *wholly* free of connotations of status; but it is also wrong to claim that such connotations are always at the forefront of the meaning” (Gill, 1996, 69).

When Odysseus asserts that it is more dreadful to be captured than to flee he shows his awareness of the some normative rule—it is always cowardly to flee from an enemy—yet simultaneously entertains the most self-interested option by saying it would be worse to be captured than to be a coward. By ultimately putting himself in the situation that would be more dreadful, Odysseus can clearly be said to have made a choice, and was not merely compelled by social expectation. Gill notes, “that there is no explicit reference to considerations usually thought to be central to Homeric ethics, namely, honour and shame.”⁷⁷ In other deliberative self-addresses shame plays an important role in the decision, as a character imagines how others would view him if he did such an act.⁷⁸ Here, Odysseus decides, as we would say, “for himself” what to do without considering the honor or shame he might accrue.⁷⁹

The formulaic line in 407 marks a turning point in his deliberation, as if to say, “But why am I thinking like this?” The particular phrase—“ἀλλὰ τίη μοι ταῦτα φίλος διελέξατο θυμός;”—has attracted significant scholarly attention because it calls into question the relationship between Odysseus and his θυμός. On this relational question Sharples asserts, “a milder form of that distancing of certain actions and impulses from the self that can be seen as underlying Homeric references to *menos* and *ate*.” He is essentially building on Dodds’ observation that the θυμός is thought of as an independent inner voice, a not-self.⁸⁰ It is odd to call this a “distancing” act, though, when taken with the adjective φίλος, which clearly shows Odysseus believes it to be his own. Perhaps this possessive adjective is why Sharples classifies it as a “milder” form of self-distancing compared to notions of *ate* or *menos* that appear to remove all notions of personal connection and agency to a given action. So, on the one hand, Odysseus recognizes that the things he has just said—i.e. it would be more dreadful to be captured alone—did come from within him, yet he frames it in such a way that the θυμός has said it *to* him. The meaning of this line is surely that Odysseus cannot believe that *he* is the one who thought such a thing; it is not that he passes responsibility for the thought on to some entity with which he is not connected. It is also important to note, with Bernard Williams, that “*dielexato*, refers, unsurprisingly, to a two-way discourse, and the formulae capture the idea that in talking to his *thumos* a man is talking to himself.”⁸¹ Therefore, Odysseus does not mean that his θυμός has dictated something to him, but that he regards the present deliberation as a conversation with himself.

There is one passage where the θυμός is most consistently interpreted as an independent inner voice. *Od.* 9.302ff is the very passage Dodds cites when he postulates that the θυμός is not felt to be part of the self. This passage is unique in its treatment of the θυμός and must be included in any interpretation of the the θυμός/“I” relationship in Homer. Here, Odysseus, narrating his own story, plots to kill the Cyclops (299),

⁷⁷ Gill (1996) 74.

⁷⁸ Cf. Hector’s deliberation at *Il.* 22.99-107, where he imagines being seen as a coward, and this hypothetical shaming plays a prominent role in his decision.

⁷⁹ The evaluative words κακός and ῥίγιος may contain notions of honor and shame, but these notions are less explicit here than in many deliberations (e.g. Hector’s). Odysseus is less focused on the personal rewards or dishonor he might receive.

⁸⁰ Dodds (1951) 16.

⁸¹ Williams (1993) 38.

drawing his sword and feels around for his liver to stab him (300-301). Then, he says, “ἔτερος δέ με θυμὸς ἔρυσκεν,” as he realizes they will all be destroyed if he kills the Cyclops because they are unable to move the boulder from the entrance to the cave (303-305). The θυμὸς is apparently acting as an independent inner voice, contrary to the planning of Odysseus himself. Sharples interprets this scene by asserting that “the eventual decision, to wait for the dawn, is one which Odysseus takes only reluctantly; thus, he presents it not simply as his judgment of the situation, but as a force holding him back against his inclination, even though the force is one which reflects his own sound judgment.”⁸² It does not seem likely that he takes this decision “reluctantly.” Rather, what we have here is one interpretation of the age-old problem discussed in the introduction: inspiration. If Odysseus had not used the word ἔτερος it would be easy to say that this life-saving epiphany manifested itself similarly to most impulses that are said to come from the θυμὸς. The presence of the ἔτερος seems to imply there is more than one, or that Odysseus regarded his original intention as a θυμὸς and not as a product of the θυμὸς. Yet, it is not as if Odysseus simply explains this revelation and doesn’t say why it was a good thing, he goes on to say exactly what dawned on him: they would all die if he killed the Cyclops now. Therefore, we have Odysseus’ own account of an inspired thought, immediately manifesting itself without explanation. It appears, then, that his description does not signify reluctance, but wholehearted acceptance of the second course of action.⁸³ Odysseus did not need the help of a god here, but recognizes that this epiphany has originated from within himself.

Odysseus’ deliberation and noble decision to stand his ground in *Il.* 11.400ff displays a character deciding what to do and coming to a decision through an internal dialogue. He weighs his options, dire though they may be, and chooses the one that has worse possible consequences. Odysseus is not merely at the mercy of a heroic code that he applies as a rulebook, nor is his decision attributed to the gods. This example provides a working model of human deliberation that does not lack anything—except the presuppositions of Cartesian and Kantian philosophy.

Conclusion

From these three examples of Homeric deliberation it is evident that Odysseus not only has agency in his actions, but also conducts deliberations that inform those actions.⁸⁴ Odysseus is not at the mercy of his θυμὸς, φρένες, and κραδίη; they are the mental entities through which he comprehends the world, makes decisions, and acts. Though he may be incited or spurred on by these mental entities, and though they may be referenced as the agitators of action or emotion, they do not relegate Odysseus to a simple sum of his parts. Collobert argues for this kind of understanding:

⁸² Sharples (1983) 4.

⁸³ While ἔρυσκεν does show that he was “restrained,” it does not necessitate reluctance to accept the second course of action.

⁸⁴ Though Odysseus is the only character treated in this paper, the conclusions about deliberation can be applied to Homeric deliberation in general. Other characters follow the same patterns of self-address and deliberation; Odysseus merely provides the best examples of such scenes.

“The Homeric self is a set of interdependent organs within which emotional and cognitive processes—of which these organs are the seat—are unified. The self is an organised whole, where the various parts (organs) are linked together and each of them participates—in a similar or different way—to the performance of a hero within the world.”⁸⁵

The whole person is certainly nothing without the mental parts, but that does not mean that the parts are more important than the synthesized whole. Williams makes this point concisely, saying, “If people need a *thumos* to think or feel with, it is equally true that a *thumos* needs a person if any thinking or feeling is to go on.”⁸⁶ The Homeric individual is an assemblage of parts that each contributes to conscious awareness and action.

So, if Homer’s characters are unified agents, there is still the question of what the nature of this unity is. Though much of this paper has attempted to explore the Homeric conception of human unity on its own terms, using its own words, something must be said about its relation to later views of selfhood. Though I have tried to avoid importing later ideas to interpret Homer, it is impossible to fully eradicate these philosophical assumptions from my own interpretations.

It is clear that Homer’s characters do not have the same model of self-understanding that we do. Gill is right to point out that Homer’s characters believe “the mind constitutes a complex of functions which are unified (in so far as they are unified) by their interaction,” rather than “constituting the locus of a unitary ‘I’”⁸⁷ as we believe.⁸⁸ Our unitary consciousness is not unitary in the same way as Homer’s characters. I think of my personality or identity as existing separate from my body, and consisting primarily in the ability to think and act; in this self-understanding I show the latent Cartesian assumptions that “I” am distinct from my body, that “I” am an active, thinking thing that is separate from emotions which are said to overcome me,⁸⁹ and that “I” am a single entity which exerts control over my various bodily parts that form my life as an active agent. The unity we find in Homer is a unity that is created through interaction and fluctuation, rather than a static, constant locus of will. Homer’s unity is unity through multiplicity, while ours is an ethereal unity deduced by sectioning it off from other features of our life such as emotional, corporeal, etc.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Collobert (2003) 211.

⁸⁶ Williams (1993) 26-27.

⁸⁷ Gill (1996) 15.

⁸⁸ “We” are post-Christian, post-Kantian people. Though many of us may not believe in the eternal soul, there is still a culture of individualism that is the remnant of such belief. This individualism has a unitary locus of thought and will at its core, rather than the system of interrelated parts that are found in Homer.

⁸⁹ I.e. I am not in direct control of my emotions, therefore they are thought of as separate from my core identity.

⁹⁰ This does not suggest that “our” modern view of personhood does not include emotional states that define a person, but it does suggest that we believe our emotions to be something separate than our thinking, intentional identity. Emotions are something that we *deal with*; we tend to think that they exist separately from our volition, with which we identify heavily.

Homer's characters, Clarke argues, exist as "a whole where the complexities of mental life make sense best if apprehended without trying to divide man into mind and body," whereas we cannot imagine such a commingling of distinctly separate modes of being. For us, there is bodily and mental; for Homer, bodily is mental. This observation, that Homer's characters do not frequently second guess their *pathos*, or override their emotions with reason, has led scholars to suggest a simple, instinctual self-understanding for Homer's characters. The relative lack of second-guessing and anxiety that we recognize within our own actions does not suggest that Homer's characters are unthinking automatons that merely act out the will of their respective "organs." In the same way that the body/mind duality is not present in Homer, the categories of thought and emotion do not exist separately in his world. Clarke's observation that these mental entities do not oppose each other, but rather work together to form a unified individual must be kept at the forefront of our understanding.⁹¹ The identity of Homer's characters consists of the cooperation of all the mental parts; Odysseus is the interrelation of his mental parts, but not seen as the "ego" which attempts to exert control over them.⁹² His thoughts and emotions are bound together, showing how they cooperate rather than oppose each other.

The epic style, always viewing its characters and their actions from outside, generally avoids the internal, existential crises of decision-making that we tend to think of as the essence of our deliberations. Though his epic style generally avoids such internal points of view, the extended deliberations in *Od.* 5 and 20, and *Il.* 11, show that Homer is capable of displaying inner turmoil and angst. This does not suggest that Homer is at the mercy of his genre, but that his aesthetic choices help to form his view of human action and deliberation and do not limit it. If we find anything recognizable in his words, it is because there is some common ground between us. If we find his sentiments foreign and strange, but can still explicate the ways in which they are foreign and strange, we have met Homer on this common ground.

Our notion of inspiration provides this common ground on which we stand with Homer. Through this notion, we continue our attempt to answer the mysterious and unknown features of self-understanding—what is not felt to come from within must come from without. The ἕτερος θυμός of *Od.* 9.302 provides an early rendition of what we would call "inspiration:" the sudden, inexplicable welling up of a thought or emotion. The phenomenon, though framed with a different vocabulary, is still recognizable to us today. This common recognition shows that though we are clearly different from Homer's characters, there are also ways in which we are the same. It is certainly a mistake to suggest that we "know ourselves" better than they do. Our belief in rationality is superseded by a complete ignorance when it comes to the workings of our inner life. There will be no end or complete solution to Nietzsche's observation that a thought

⁹¹ Clarke (1999) 65.

⁹² Cooperation of the parts (or organs) is not a positive feature of Snell's analysis. He believes the characters fail to recognize that they are the sources of their impulses, not the gods or particular organs: "...the reactions of Achilles, however grand and significant, are not explicitly presented in their volitional or intellectual form as character, i.e. as individual intellect and individual soul" (Snell (1963) ix).

comes when “it” wishes.⁹³ There will only be different interpretations of the same problem, over and over again. No solution, only better guesses.

⁹³ Cf. page 1.

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