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## WHY CAN'T TELEMACHUS BE KING? THE GROWTH OF A YOUNG *BASILEUS*

This article seeks to offer some considerations on Telemachus' journey to Pylos and Sparta (Hom. *Od.* 1–4), interpreting it in the light of his social position as heir of a *basileus*. Can the beginning of the *Odyssey* represent a sort of formation for the young prince? And how does the text support this reading? After a brief review of the features of a Homeric *basileus*, it will be argued that the narrative presents the growth of Telemachus as that of a young prince who needs to comply with those features, and become acquainted with the heroic world he lives in at peace.

**Keywords:** Odyssey, Telemachy, journey, education, kingship, three functions

### Homeric 'kingship' and its requirements

At the beginning of the *Odyssey*, we are introduced to Odysseus' homeland and family. The hero has been away from home for twenty years, and Ithaca has come to a very stressed political situation. The island is *abasileutos* ('without a king'), and suitors from the local aristocracy are seeking to marry Penelope in order to take Odysseus' royal dignity. One question emerges from this picture of Ithaca, as presented in the first two books of the poem: why can Telemachus not rule, taking the place of his father?

Moses Finley raised this question in his very well-known treatise on *The World of Odysseus*.<sup>1</sup> After all, the young prince is twenty years old at this point, and Laertes, Odysseus' father, also lives on the island. The right of succession by birth is well known, as can be seen from

<sup>1</sup> M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (New York, 1954), 84–90.

Antinous' reply to Telemachus during the assembly in Ithaca, when he says to the young man: 'It is to be hoped the son of Cronos does not make you king in the island of Ithaca, a thing which is your heritage by descent' (*Od.* 1.386–7)<sup>2</sup> – but this right is not enough.<sup>3</sup>

One must consider that a Homeric *basileus* ('king') is not a monarch with full powers, as in the ancient Eastern kingdoms or in the modern European monarchies, but rather a *primus inter pares* ('first among equals'). The Ithacan society counts many *oikoi*, households with their own chiefs. Both the king and the householders are said to rule (*anassein*). What is the difference, then, between the two figures? According to Finley, the text gives an answer to this question: *basileis* are said to rule over the other households in one way, that is, *iphi* ('by might'). Homeric kings are first of all warriors, great heroes who command armies and gain honour in the battlefield. Indeed, the *Iliad* presents the *basileis* in time of war. But what about the *Odyssey*? In the younger poem, apart from some briefly referred to episodes of warfare,<sup>4</sup> we find situations in which the warrior's might would not be adequate, and we are shown examples of kings and societies at times of peace.

So which are the requirements to be a Homeric *basileus*? In the *Iliad*, Nestor claims that Achilles and Agamemnon are 'chief among the Danaans in counsel and chief in war' (*Il.* 1.258).<sup>5</sup> *Basileis* are expected to be skilled not only in combat, but also good speakers to win the favour of the *boule* ('the council'), and of the *agora*, the assembly of the people reunited.<sup>6</sup> Assemblies are normally convoked to resolve conflicts, very often between high ranked members of society.

<sup>2</sup> All translations of passages from the *Odyssey* are from R. D. Dawe, *The Odyssey. Translation and Analysis* (Sussex, 1993). From this point on, when not specified, all the in-text references of books and verses are to the *Odyssey*.

<sup>3</sup> Some scholars have seen a direct correlation between the right of succession and Penelope. Cf. Finley (n. 1), 90–4; H. W. Clarke, 'Telemachus and the Telemacheia', *AJPh* 84.2 (1963), 129.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. the Ciconian expedition (*Od.* 9.39–67), the raid in Egypt narrated by Odysseus dressed like a beggar in Eumaeus' hut (*Od.* 14.257–84), and the tales about the Trojan war told by the singers in the courts, by Odysseus in the *Apologoi*, or by his comrades (Nestor in Book 3, Menelaus in Book 4).

<sup>5</sup> Translation from A. T. Murray (ed.), *Homer. The Iliad* (Cambridge, MA, London, 1924).

<sup>6</sup> On the importance of the voice of the people and the need for *basileis* to win consensus in the *agora*, see D. Hammer, 'Homer, Tyranny, and Democracy', *GRBS* 39 (1998), 331–60; K. S. Raaflaub and R. W. Wallace, "'People's Power" and Egalitarian Trends in Archaic Greece', in K. A. Raaflaub, J. Ober and R. Wallace (eds.), *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2007); R. W. Wallace, 'Councils in Greek Oligarchies and Democracies', in H. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Greek Government* (Oxford, 2013); K. Nikias, 'The Voice of the People in Homer', *Pólemos* 13.2 (2019), 349–77.

At war, assemblies are mostly summoned to discuss warfare matters, and therefore the warrior-heroes must possess the skills to deliver authoritative speech-acts to prevail over their opponents.<sup>7</sup> Action and speech (ἔργον τε ἔπος τε) are indeed two sets of skills that the Homeric warrior has to master, but what about when war is not involved? In the world at peace shown by the *Odyssey*, the *agora* often constitutes the context of resolution of 'civic' conflicts. Here, the *basileis* are expected to be fair judges, and give straight judgements with eloquence.<sup>8</sup> When this requirement is fulfilled, prosperity for their land and people is said to follow. This can be inferred from the depiction of the *eunomie* ('good government') in the description of the shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.490–508) and from the claims made by Odysseus himself, disguised as a beggar, in dialogue with Penelope (*Od.* 19.107–14).

The pattern of *eunomie* and prosperity seems to be common to almost all extant philosophical works *On Kingship* (περὶ βασιλείας) – the treatises on good kingship, written at the time of the Hellenistic monarchies first, and then in the Roman late Republic and Empire. Homeric *basileis* were frequent examples in these works.<sup>9</sup> It is a theme surely shared with Hesiod.<sup>10</sup> In the *Works and Days* (*Hes. Op.* 225–33) we find the same picture:

As for those who give straight judgments to visitors and to their own people and do not deviate from what is just, their community flourishes, and the people blooms in it. Peace is about the land, fostering the young, and wide-seeing Zeus never marks out grievous war as their portion. Neither does Famine attend straight-judging men, nor Blight, and they feast on the crops they tend. For them Earth bears plentiful food, and on the mountains the oak carries acorns at its surface and bees at its centre.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See R. P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes. Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca, London, 1989), 22–6.

<sup>8</sup> On the administration of justice in Homeric society, see K. A. Raafaub and R. W. Wallace (n. 6); Nikias (n. 6), 366–73. On the role of *basileis* in the resolution of *neikos*, see K. A. Raafaub, 'Homeric Society', in I. Morris and B. Powell (eds.), *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden, New York, Köln, 1997), 645; G. Lentini, *Il 'padre di Telemaco'. Odisseo tra Iliade e Odissea* (Pisa, 2006), 163 ff.; D. Cairns, 'The First Odysseus: *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and the Ideology of Kingship', *Gaia* 18 (2015), 60–3.

<sup>9</sup> See O. Murray, 'Philodemus on the Good King According to Homer', *JRS* 55.1/2 (1965), 165 ff.

<sup>10</sup> See R. P. Martin, 'Hesiod, Odysseus, and the Instruction of Princes', *TAPhA* 114 (1984), 34–6; also, Cairns (n. 8), 61–3.

<sup>11</sup> Translation from M. L. West (ed.), *Hesiod. Theogony and Work and Days* (Oxford, New York, 1988).

In Hesiod's account, Zeus is explicitly referred to as the guarantor of justice. Indeed, *basileis* are 'nourished by Zeus' in the *Theogony* (81–2) and in the *Odyssey*. Menelaus is *διωτρεφής* ('brought up by Zeus'; for instance in *Od.* 4.26) and Odysseus is *διογενής* ('offspring of Zeus'; *Od.* 11.60). Thus, Homeric kings are to some degree 'divinely ordained' judges when resolving communal conflicts.<sup>12</sup>

The judicial aspect of Homeric kingship has much to do with their speech in counsel. The justice of a *basileus* depends very much on his charisma and eloquence, and both symbolically derive from Zeus in the epics. The gods are symbolic patrons and guarantors of the act of holding an assembly and pronouncing fair sentences. Again, we can turn to Hesiod's account first. When speaking of the characteristics and effects of a rightful and respectable king's deeds and, most of all, of his speech, the poet asserts that while 'it is from the Muses and far-shooting Apollo that men are singers and citharists on earth', it is 'from Zeus that they are kings' (quoting West's translation of Hes. *Theog.* 94–6).<sup>13</sup>

In Homer, the bond between Zeus and the royal prominence in the assembly seems to be hinted at on various occasions. A relevant feature of this is the role of the *basileis*' sceptre. In the poems, a sceptre is often the object that symbolically confers to its bearer the right to call an assembly in order to discuss the matters that concern him. Some sceptres, when held by *basileis*, are a symbol of their kingship and show clear connections with divinity. The most famous example is Agamemnon's sceptre in the *Iliad*, which the *anax* ('high king') uses to address the other Achaeans from a prominent, royal position. This wooden staff derives directly from Zeus; indeed, it was made for him by Hephaestus, and then passed from the king of the gods himself to Pelops, for him to rule over Argos (*Il.* 2.100–9).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The judicial side of the Homeric *basileus*' rule is emphasized in Philodemus' treatise *Περὶ τοῦ καθ' Ὅμηρον ἀγαθοῦ βασιλείας* ('On the Good King According to Homer'), the *speculum principum* ('mirror of princes') written in the first century BC, based on the epicurean philosopher's interpretation of Homer. See Murray (n. 9), 165–8; Cairns (n. 8), 62–3. On the justice of Zeus in Homer, Hesiod, and the rest of archaic Greek poetry, H. Lloyd-Jones, *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1971), 1–64, remains fundamental.

<sup>13</sup> See West (n. 11), 5–6.

<sup>14</sup> On Agamemnon's sceptre, see Kirk's commentary *ad loc.* in G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary. Vol. I: Books 1–4* (Cambridge, 1985), 126–7. On the connection between divinity, the sceptre, and kingship in Homer, see R. Mondi, 'Σκηπτούχοι Βασιλείς: Divine Kingship in Early Greece', *Arethusa* 13.2 (1980), 206–11. Mondi argues for the value of the sceptre *per se* as an ancient token of divine kingship in the hands of the Homeric *basileis*. Contra, D. Unruh, 'Skeptouchoi: A New Look at the Homeric Sceptre', *CW* 104.3 (2011), 279–94, argues that the symbolical meaning of the object comes from its use in the action of the narrative.

Moreover, going back to the *Odyssey* (and, significantly, to the first books), Zeus is explicitly mentioned as guarantor of the assemblies by Telemachus, in his unsuccessful attempt to impose his will over the suitors during the assembly that he had convoked. The young prince invokes both Zeus and Themis, the goddess/personification of justice, who are the ones responsible for calling and solving the *agora* (*Od.* 2.68–9). It is clear, then, that there is a symbolic and traditional connection between the divine sphere and the charisma and justice of the *basileis* when speaking in the *agora*, especially when it comes to conflict resolution.

The bond with Zeus and, more generally, with the gods is then a fundamental requirement, one that the *basileus* needs not only to have by nature, but to be conscious of and to respect actively. Homeric heroes must concretely behave in a good way in respect of the gods. The worst sin for them is *hubris*, the arrogance that makes one offend or contend with the divinities.<sup>15</sup> An offence to Apollo caused the plague that led to the wrath of Achilles in the *Iliad* (1.5–12), and the offences to Poseidon's son Polyphemus (*Od.* 11.100–3) and to Helios (1.1–9) by Odysseus and his companions caused their long and unfortunate journey of return in the *Odyssey*.

Indeed, *basileis* are demanded to perform frequent sacrifices to the gods, and the non-compliance with this demand leads to bad consequences, too. That was Menelaus' case, when he remained stuck on the island of Paros during his *nostos* ('homecoming') from Troy, just because he did not make the necessary sacrifices before leaving Egypt (4.351–3).

Furthermore, as Finley insisted, *basileis* are first of all chiefs of their households, and the *oikoi* are always competing for prestige, wealth, and rank in the heroic world of the *Odyssey*.<sup>16</sup> Particularly, the *oikos* works as a 'unit of consumption', where all the goods belonging to the *basileus* are stored and distributed internally.<sup>17</sup>

Wealth is then the third fundamental requirement to be a *basileus*. The goods that form his wealth may come from looting – and therefore also give military honour to the chief – or they may come from gifts, exchanged with other *basileis*, creating stronger social relationships. In

<sup>15</sup> On the importance and consequences of *hubris*, see E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1951), 28–63.

<sup>16</sup> Finley (n. 1), 110–12.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 56–60.

the words of Robin Osborne, ‘material goods are important markers of status within epic society...Negotiation of position by material exchange is omnipresent, in private as well as public contexts’.<sup>18</sup> Wealth can be then exhibited widely in feasts and banquets on different occasions, such as weddings, sacrifices, or simple reunions with guests and singers.

We can now resume the considerations made so far, and divide the requirements for being a good *basileus* in three wide categories:

- i. First of all, he must be a brave, skilled warrior and commander in war, the most prominent characteristic for a heroic chief in the epics.
- ii. He must also be a fair and charismatic judge in the *agora*, and a pious administrator of religious duties. All these ‘civic’ functions come to him from his connection with the gods, Zeus in particular, and he must be conscious and respectful of this.
- iii. Lastly, he must be rich, know how to administrate his *oikos*, and exhibit his wealth through marriages, banquets, and gifts in order to maintain his household’s prosperity and social position.

This pattern recalls the three functions theorized by Georges Dumézil for Indo-European societies and mythical traditions, that is, the sovereignty/sacred function, the warrior function, and the productivity/fertility function.<sup>19</sup> Similar patterns may be seen also in other passages in Homer and in Hesiod, even if always in varied

<sup>18</sup> R. Osborne, ‘Homeric Society’, in R. Fowler (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (Cambridge, 2004), 213. On the gifts and exchanges in the Homeric poems cf. also Finley (n. 1), 61–5; W. Donlan, ‘Homeric Economy’, in Morris and Powell (n. 8), 649–67.

<sup>19</sup> Dumézil elaborated a flexible theory, mainly on the base of comparison between Indian, Germanic, and Roman myths, arguing that Indo-European myths and institutions reflect a tripartite division of social functions into those three types. See G. Dumézil, *L’idéologie tripartite des Indo-Européens* (Bruxelles, 1958); G. Dumézil, *L’héritage indo-européen à Rome: introduction aux séries “Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus” et “Les mythes romains”* (Paris, 1949), ch. 1; G. Dumézil, *Mythe et épopée. L’idéologie des trois fonctions dans les épopées des peuples indo-européens* (Paris, 1968). For an attempt of assessment of his theories, see C. S. Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology. An Anthropological Assessment of the Theories of Georges Dumézil* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1966). In the context of Greek myth, Dumézil found the three functions in the story of the choice of Paris (in *Mythe et épopée*, cited in this note, at 580–6) and in Heracles’ heroic ‘career’: see G. Dumézil, *The Destiny of a Warrior* (Chicago, London, 1970), 96–104. For further discussion on the theory applied to the Greek world, see B. Sergent, ‘Les trois fonctions des Indo-Européens dans la Grèce ancienne: bilan critique’, *Annales (HSS)* 34.6 (1979), 1,155–86; G. Nagy, ‘Comments on Comparative Mythology 5, An Afterthought of Georges Dumézil About Trifunctionality and the Judgment of Paris’, *Classical Inquiries*, <<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:42643066>>, accessed 2 June 2023. For more general criticism on Dumézil’s theories, see also J. Brough, ‘The Tripartite Ideology of the Indo-Europeans: An Experiment in Method’, *BSOAS* 22.1/3 (1959), 69–85; D. A. Miller, ‘Georges Dumézil: Theories, Critiques, and Theoretical Extensions’, *Religion* 30 (2000), 27–40.

forms. In the depiction of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*, for example, it has been found in the structure of the description of the 'two cities'.<sup>20</sup> In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Jean-Pierre Vernant argued the presence of this pattern in the myth of the five human races (Hes. *Op.* 106–202).<sup>21</sup> That myth certainly shows parallels with Eastern traditions (that of the four kingdoms in the biblical *Book of Daniel*, for instance), as well as with the Indian epic poem *Mahabharata*, and with the Persian tradition.<sup>22</sup>

But Dumézil's three functions, as has been argued after he proposed his theory, may not be restricted only to the Indo-European context. Some scholars have noticed that similar features can be found in the Hebrew Bible as well. Interestingly, they seem to play an important role in the narratives concerning biblical kings such as Saul and Nehemiah, and in the legitimation of their royal position.<sup>23</sup> However, it does not seem possible to closely follow Dumézil's theory in our analysis of Homeric kingship. Although some affinities may be found, the Greek epics show their own particular characteristics in the representation of society, Homer being a 'cultural and linguistic amalgam', as Geoffrey Kirk once wrote.<sup>24</sup>

Now let us turn back to our initial question: why can Telemachus not be a *basileus*? To answer this question, we may take a close look at the first four books of the *Odyssey* to find out which features the young prince lacks.

<sup>20</sup> See A. Yoshida, 'La structure de l'illustration du bouclier d'Achille', *RBP* 42.1 (1964), 5–15.

<sup>21</sup> See J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks* (New York, 2006), 25–112.

<sup>22</sup> See G. S. Kirk, *Myth. Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (London, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1970), 226–51; G. S. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths* (London, 1974), ch. 11; M. L. West (ed.), *Hesiod. Works and Days* (Oxford, 1978), 172–7; O. Murray, *Early Greece*, second edition (London, 1993), 90–2.

<sup>23</sup> On the trifunctionality of the royal prerogatives in Biblical narratives, see Brough (n. 19), with bibliography; A. Catastini, 'Deuteronomismo: lettura della storia a opera di profeti', in G. L. Prato (ed.), *Ricerche Storico Bibliche. La profezia apologetica di epoca persiana ed ellenistica. La manipolazione divinatória del passato a giustificazione del presente. Atti del X convegno di studi veterotestamentari (Rocca di Papa, 8–10 settembre 1997)* (Bologna, 1999), i.51–3; A. Catastini, 'L'attribuzione letteraria degli scritti biblici', *Materia Giudaica* 6.1 (2001), 26; A. Catastini, 'Giuda in epoca persiana', in *Il popolo del ritorno: l'epoca persiana e la Bibbia. Atti del seminario invernale (Lucca, 25–27 gennaio 2000)* (Biblia, 2001), 151–78.

<sup>24</sup> It is the title of G. S. Kirk, *The Songs of Homer* (Cambridge, 1962), ch. 9. Kirk wasn't convinced by Dumézil's theory, and criticized it in Kirk, *Myth* (n. 22), 210.



### Telemachus' journey: an education for the prince

Telemachus is first shown in his *milieu*, Odysseus' palace in Ithaca, among the suitors who feast and disrespect his family every day. He is an insecure (1.214–16), weak (1.250–1), and resourceless young man who cannot stop the suitors' arrogant behaviour.<sup>25</sup> Given this situation, Athena visits Ithaca to give some advice to him, in order to prepare him for Odysseus' return. She suggests he leaves for Pylos and Sparta 'to find out about the return of his dear father, if he can hear of it anywhere, and so that a fine reputation [κλέος ἐσθλόν] among men may be his' (1.94–5). So, the two explicit reasons for the journey are to seek for news about the return of his father and to gain *kleos esthlon* (a 'noble reputation').

Since antiquity, though, the two motives stated by Athena have not seemed enough to justify the journey, and ancient *scholia* ('annotations') – including Porphyrius' commentaries – suggest a further and deeper reason: the *paideusis* ('education') of Telemachus.<sup>26</sup> Many modern scholars have interpreted the journey in the same way.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, one could imagine something similar to the modern *Bildungsroman*, but actually Telemachus' growth is quite different. As Giuseppe Aurelio Privitera points out, in nineteenth-century novels, youth is a critical moment, and the young man with his travelling and experiences forms himself *in opposition* to his father

<sup>25</sup> Cf. J. A. Scott, 'The Journey Made by Telemachus and Its Influence on the Action of the "Odyssey"', *CJ* 13.6 (1918), 421–3; W. Jaeger, *Paideia. The Ideals of Greek Culture*, third English edition (Oxford, 1946), 30; C. M. H. Millar and J. W. S. Carmichael, 'The Growth of Telemachus', *G&R* 1.2 (1954), 58; J. C. B. Petropoulos, *Kleos in a Minor Key. The Homeric Education of a Little Prince* (Cambridge MA, London, 2011), ch. 4; M. L. West, *The Making of the Odyssey* (Oxford, 2014), 107.

<sup>26</sup> See Scholl. Hom. *Od.* 1.93 and 1.248; I, pp. 25–6 and 51–4, ed. Dindorf.

<sup>27</sup> See Jaeger (n. 25), 29–34; K. Reinhardt, *Von Werken und Formen. Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Godesberg, 1948), 47; Millar and Carmichael (n. 25); Kirk (n. 24), 359; Clarke (n. 3), 140–2; G. P. Rose, 'The Quest of Telemachus', *TAPhA* 98 (1967), 391; N. Austin, 'Telemachos Polymechanos', *CLAnt* 2 (1969), 45–63; S. West, 'Books I–IV', in A. Heubeck, S. West, and J. B. Hainsworth, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey, vol. I* (New York, Oxford, 1988), 54–5; S. Reece, 'The Cretan Odyssey: A Lie Truer Than Truth', *AJPh* 115.2 (1994), 160; J. Heath, 'Telemachus ΠΕΠΝΥΜΕΝΟΣ: Growing into an Epithet', *Mnemosyne* 54.1 (2001), 129–57; G. A. Privitera, *Il ritorno del guerriero. Lettura dell'Odissea* (Torino, 2005), 56–7; I. de Jong, 'The Birth of the Prince's Mirror in the Homeric Epics', in J. Klooster and B. van den Berg (eds.), *Homer and the Good Ruler in Antiquity and Beyond* (Leiden, Boston, 2018), 27–9. See also A. Loma, 'Homer via Van Gennep: Some Initiatory Themes in the *Odyssey*', *Зборник Матице српске за класичне студије* 9 (2007), 21–39, who interprets the Telemachy as an initiatory education.



and to society, while in the *Telemachy* the protagonist wants to discover his father's personality and develop himself according to that model.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, Telemachus' education will proceed in a traditional Greek manner, that is, through the observation of *exempla*.<sup>29</sup> He will have different kinds of examples: his own peers (Orestes and Nestor's son, Peisistratus), his father's comrades-in-arms (Nestor and Menelaus), and ultimately his own father, from the tales he will listen to. In this way, Telemachus will build his own personality in compliance with the model of a heroic *basileus*, and particularly his identity will come to match his father's.<sup>30</sup>

So what does Telemachus need to learn in order to become worthy of Odysseus? Does he meet the necessary requirements to be a *basileus*? In the first book of the poem, he is incapable of action, and he even doubts if he really is the son of his father. At the arrival of Athena disguised as Mentès, the goddess speaks of Odysseus as a warrior, pointing to him as the solution against the arrogance of the suitors (1.255–6). She then suggests Telemachus should be ready to 'slay the suitors' in his house, whether 'by craft or openly' (1.295–6). Finally, she points out Orestes as a good example, exhorting the young Telemachus to imitate his fame (1.298–302), and she infuses in him μένος καὶ θάρσος ('strength and courage'; 1.320) to speak in the assembly in front of the suitors and the people of Ithaca.

The young prince has now started his growth, but he is still lacking the knowledge on how to become a hero and defeat his enemies. We can see from the following events that, when confronted with the suitors, Telemachus will not be able to prevail and impose his will. He is too weak, and he cannot use force for his purpose (2.58–62):<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> On the comparison with the *Bildungsroman*, see Privitera (n. 27), 56–7. See also Jaeger (n. 25), 30–1; West (n. 27), 54–5.

<sup>29</sup> On the use of *exempla* in the *Telemachy*, see Jaeger (n. 25), 31–2; Millar and Carmichael (n. 25), 61–2; Clarke (n. 3); N. Austin, *Archery at the Dark of the Moon. Poetic Problems in Homer's Odyssey* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1975), 182; Privitera (n. 27), 56–7; de Jong (n. 27), 27–9.

<sup>30</sup> On the identification between father and son in the growth of Telemachus, see especially H. M. Roisman, 'Like Father Like Son: Telemachus' κέρδεα', *RhM* 137.1 (1994), 1–22; Austin (n. 27); Austin (n. 29), 182–3; P. V. Jones, 'The Kleos of Telemachus: *Odyssey* 1.95', *AJP* 109. 4 (1988), 500–1; J. Latacz, *Homer. His Art and His World* (Ann Arbor MI, 1996), 144–5.

<sup>31</sup> All Greek quotations from the *Odyssey* are taken from S. West (ed.), *Omero. Odissea, vol. I* (Rome, Milan, 1981).

...οὐ γὰρ ἔπ' ἀνήρ,  
οἷος Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔσκεν, ἀρὴν ἀπὸ οἴκου ἀμύναι...  
ἦ τ' ἂν ἀμυναίμην, εἴ μοι δύναμεις γε παρείη.

There is no man over them, such as Odysseus was, to keep the plague away from the house... I would certainly keep it away, if only I had the power.

The only thing he can do is pray to the gods (*Od.* 2.68 and 138–47) and claim for himself the administration of his *oikos* (1.396–97).<sup>32</sup> This means that Telemachus already meets two of the requirements. Firstly, he has a clear connection with the gods; Athena in particular, to whom he directs constant prayers,<sup>33</sup> but he also seems to have Zeus' favour already, as we can infer from the omen of the eagles sent by the father of the gods at the end of one of Telemachus' speeches (2.146–7):

ὡς φάτο Τηλέμαχος, τῷ δ' αἰετῶ εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς  
ὑψόθεν ἐκ κορυφῆς ὄρεος προέηκε πέτεσθαι.

So spoke Telemachos, and for him wide-eyed Zeus sent forward on their flight two eagles from high up, from the peak of a mountain.

Secondly, he can already lead his household and all its activities, but he lacks the most important feature: he does not have any warrior might to use against the suitors. He cannot rule *iphi*, as Finley would say.

After Telemachus' first speech, it is significant that Eurymachus replies by acknowledging the young man's rightful claim on his house and family, but also his lack of might (1.402–4):

κτῆματα δ' αὐτὸς ἔχοις καὶ δόμασι οἴσιν ἀνάσσοις.  
μὴ γὰρ ὄ γ' ἔλθοι ἀνήρ, ὅς τις σ' ἀέκοντα βίηφι  
κτῆματ' ἀπορραΐσει', Ἰθάκης ἔτι ναεταούσης.

May you have your property yourself and be master in your own house. May that man not come who might tear away your property from you against your will by force, so long as Ithaca is still a place where people live.

<sup>32</sup> This was also noted by Scott (n. 25), 421–2.

<sup>33</sup> Let it be noted that the *Odyssey* seems reminiscent of the ancient, Mycenaean connection between Athena and the royal family and palace, as suggested by *Od.* 7.81 (with J. B. Hainsworth, 'Book VII', in Heubeck, West, and Hainsworth [n. 27], 325–6 *ad loc.*). This connection in Mycenaean times is suggested by some wall paintings in the Room of the Fresco, inside the Cult Centre in Mycenae. The frescoes show female figures, most probably goddesses, in scenes that have been linked to the investiture of power. One of the figures may be interpreted as Athana, the 'mistress [*potnia*] of the citadel'. See G. E. Mylonas, *The Cult Centre of Mycenae* (Athens, 1977); M. Cultraro, *I Micenei. Archeologia, storia, società dei Greci prima di Omero* (Rome, 2006), 169–71.

The insistence on Telemachus' possessions (κτήματα) is clearly opposed to the use of violence, *bie*, against which he would not be able to fight. Eurymachus is encouraging Telemachus to accept his role as a mere householder, and he leverages the prince's weakness. Nevertheless, Athena does not give up on Telemachus. The goddess reinforces his hope, telling him that if he truly is Odysseus' son, he must have inherited his father's heroic skills (ἔργον τε ἔπος τε, 'action and speech'), and the journey to Pylos and Sparta will help him rediscover them and claim them (2.270–80).

So, Telemachus undertakes his journey, during which he will be formed thanks to the *exempla* of the characters he will meet. In the third and fourth books, we are introduced to the heroic world at peace, of which the young prince will have to learn the manners, and where he will earn some *kleos* of his own, according to Athena's purpose.<sup>34</sup>

The first stop is Pylos in the western Peloponnese. Here, we are immediately presented with a very clear picture of sacrificial activity (3.1–11). Nestor is making sacrifices on the shore, with his family and other Pylians (3.4–6):

οἱ δὲ Πύλον, Νηληϊὸς εὐκτίμενον ποτλίεθρον,  
ἴξον· τοὶ δ' ἐπὶ θινὶ θαλάσσης ἱερὰ ῥέζον,  
ταύρους παμμέλανας, ἐνοσίχθονι κυανοχαίτη.

And they came to Pylos, the well-founded city of Neleus. They (sc. the Pylians) were sacrificing holy offerings on the shore of the sea, bulls entirely black, to the shaker of the earth with the dark-blue hair.

The ritual corresponds to the *thusia*: a domestic animal is sacrificed, and then its meat is distributed among the diners in a big banquet.<sup>35</sup>

Nestor, we may observe, is characterized as πεπνυμένος ('full of wisdom') in the description given by Athena (3.20). In his characterization one can recognize some themes present in a literary

<sup>34</sup> On the *Telemachy* as introduction to the heroic world and its social forms, see Clarke (n. 3), 130 and 140–2; Austin (n. 29), 182. Some scholars consider the *Telemachy* 'a form of modified *aristeia*, comparable in its way with that of Diomedes in *Iliad* 5.1 ff. ... For the same purposes but in an unmilitary context': see Jones (n. 30), 497 (with bibliography at n. 4). For Petropoulos (n. 25), ch. 4, the constituents of Telemachus' social identity – that is, his *kleos* – are precisely his ἔργον καὶ ἔπος.

<sup>35</sup> On the *thusia*, see J.-P. Vernant, *Mythe et religion en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1990), 69–79. See also M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks* (Chicago, London, 1989) on the link between sacrifice and banqueting in Ancient Greece.

genre of wisdom poetry common to other traditions, not only Greek but also Oriental. It is the *speculum principum*, the ‘education of princes’, where a preceptor gives advice on kingship to kings or princes.<sup>36</sup> Similar admonitions can be found, for instance, in the *Mahabharata*.<sup>37</sup> In the *Iliad*, Nestor often appeared as a preceptor, for instance giving advice on royal behaviour to Agamemnon and Achilles, much younger than him (*Il.* 1.247–91).<sup>38</sup> In the *Odyssey* he is connoted by the theme of the ‘sweet respect’ (αἰδώς μελιχίη) of the king’s eloquence (for example in *Od.* 3.96), which is a typical theme of the *speculum principum* shared also with Hesiod.<sup>39</sup> As we argued earlier, this kind of eloquence is part of the fundamental features of Homeric *basileis*.

Telemachus in turn, according to the narrator, will answer *pepnumenos* (‘wisely’) to Athena’s description (3.21). Now, as John Heath quite convincingly showed, in Homer, *pepnumenos* refers to ‘a wisdom through experience and age, and is very closely connected with speech’.<sup>40</sup> This is odd, because Telemachus still does not demonstrate effective wisdom in speech and action. That is precisely the goal, the reason for the journey, in Athena’s words. This oddity may be explained partly by the formulaic use of the epithet, but there may also be an intentional game played by the poet with his public, giving emphasis to the contradiction between the meaning of the word and the contrary behaviour of Telemachus.<sup>41</sup> That might explain the use of the epithet in two subsequent verses, the first referring to Nestor

<sup>36</sup> For a recent survey on the genre of the *speculum principum* in different traditions, see J. Klooster and B. van den Berg, ‘Homer and the Good Ruler in Antiquity and Beyond: Introduction’, in J. Klooster and B. van den Berg (eds.), *Homer and the Good Ruler in Antiquity and Beyond* (Leiden, Boston, 2018), 1–13. See also West (n. 22), 3–21; Martin (n. 10); Lentini (n. 8), 162; de Jong (n. 27), who discusses the presence of the genre in Homer.

<sup>37</sup> See West (n. 22), 15.

<sup>38</sup> See Martin (n. 10), 43. Also Martin (n. 7), 22–6, on Nestor’s advice to Diomedes in Book 9 of the *Iliad*.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 81–92; with Martin (n. 10), 42–3.

<sup>40</sup> Heath (n. 27), 133. Heath argues that the whole growth of Telemachus in the course of the poem can be followed by the use of *pepnumenos* in reference to him: his growth is that from a *nepios*, a ‘childish’ young man, to a *pepnumenos* adult.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 136 (with bibliography at n. 16). On the ‘meaningful’ or ‘intentional’ use of epithets by Homer, see M. W. Edwards, ‘Homeric Style and Oral Poetics’, in I. Morris and B. Powell (eds.), *A New Companion to Homer* (Leiden, New York, Köln, 1997), 272–7; D. Beck, ‘Speech Introductions and the Character Development of Telemachus’, *CJ* 94.2 (1998–9), 121–40; I. de Jong, ‘Narratology and Oral Poetry: The Case of Homer’, *Poetics Today* 12.8 (1991), 417–20. Cf. also J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford, 1980), 50–80, on the use of formulas and characterization.

and the second to Telemachus, as in an explicit opposition between 'someone who is' and 'someone who wants to be' *pepnumenos*.

Some verses later, though, we are introduced to Nestor's son, Peisistratus, who will be a companion to Telemachus in his journey. He is a young peer of Telemachus' age, worthy son of his father, respectful of social norms and of divinities (3.43–50). And Peisistratus, being himself brother and son of *pepnumenoi* (like Antilochus in the *Iliad*), will be a perfect *exemplum* for Telemachus, not of an adult hero as Telemachus needs to become, but of a young prince as he is. Peisistratus, one could say, can show Telemachus the right path, demonstrating the attitude of a young prince of their age, heir of a wise *basileus*. This is precisely what he does in 4.155–7, when he answers to Menelaus because Telemachus still does not know the appropriate response.

Nestor then starts talking to Telemachus, remembering the war of Troy and Odysseus. At a certain point, he makes an explicit comparison between father and son, saying (3.120–5):

ἔνθ' οὐ τις ποτε μῆτιν ὁμοιωθήμεναι ἄντην  
ἦθελ', ἐπεὶ μάλα πολλὸν ἐνίκᾳ δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς  
παντοίοισι δόλοισι, πατὴρ τεός, εἰ ἔτεόν γε  
κείνου ἔκγονός ἐσσι· σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντα.  
ἦ τοι γὰρ μῦθοί γε εὐκότεις, οὐδέ κε φαίης  
ἄνδρα νεώτερον ἄδε εὐκότα μυθήσασθαι.

There [i.e. in Troy] no one would ever consent to be compared directly with him in counsel, for the divine Odysseus was far superior in all kinds of tricks – your father, if indeed you really are descended from him: and awe comes over me as I look at you. Your words at any rate are fitting, and you would not think that a young man could speak so fittingly.

Further on, Nestor tells the young man about the returns of the Achaean heroes. During his own return, he was careful to be observant of the gods' wills, he made sacrifices to Poseidon (3.176–80), and he saved himself only because he understood the divine plans (3.165–6). Moreover, Nestor too mentions Orestes and his *kleos*, suggesting that Telemachus should follow his example (3.196–200). Telemachus again recognizes Orestes' example, but he shows himself still too insecure and passive about his destiny (3.209).

At the end of Book 3, Athena leaves, showing her divine presence. Nestor notices it and is amazed. He then acts immediately to honour

the goddess with more sacrifices – which will be accurately described in every detail (3.418–63).

In the whole episode at Pylos, the text abundantly insists that Nestor is a wise, eloquent *basileus*, particularly careful regarding religious activity, that is, one of the aspects of our tripartite pattern.<sup>42</sup> The book opens and closes with him offering sacrifices to the gods in an appropriate way, which is illustrated in detail to us and to Telemachus. The king is pious and respectful of the gods' will. He is also *pepnumenos*, and has a considerable eloquence, which he attributes to Telemachus too. Nestor is a good *exemplum*, then, and in the act of comparing Telemachus to Odysseus he is fulfilling Athena's purpose: to make Telemachus conscious of his true heroic identity. Now one category of the requirements is confirmed for the young prince.

After Pylos, Telemachus moves to his second stop, Sparta, accompanied by Peisistratus. As in Book 3, Book 4 opens with a very clear and vivid scene: Menelaus is offering banquets for the marriages of his daughter and son (4.1–15). Hermione, Helen's daughter, is said to be 'similar to Aphrodite' (4.13–15). The description of the scene is long and detailed, so that before the two guests are noticed and invited to come in, we see the diners, singers, and dancers all around, enjoying the feast. The two young princes are then invited and accommodated, and a first recognition of their royal appearance is hinted at by Menelaus, who still does not know his guests' identities (4.63–5). While everyone is dining, Telemachus makes a particular remark to Peisistratus (4.71–5):

φράζεο, Νεστορίδη, τῷ ἐμῷ κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ,  
χαλκοῦ τε στεροπὴν κὰδ δῶματα ἠχήμεντα  
χρυσοῦ τ' ἠλέκτρου τε καὶ ἀργύρου ἠδ' ἐλέφαντος.  
Ζηγὸς που τοιῆδε γ' Ὀλυμπίου ἐνδοθεν αὐλή,  
ὄσσα τάδ' ἄσπετα πολλά· σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσορόωντα.

Look, son of Nestor, delightful to my heart, at the flashing of bronze throughout the echoing halls, and of gold and electrum and silver and ivory. I imagine the court of

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Austin (n. 29), 186: 'In Pylos Telemachos meets a man who can teach him the right attitudes towards gods and men.' N. J. Allen, 'Why the Telemachy? Vyāsa's Answer', *Nouvelle Mythologie Comparée* 3, <<http://nouvellemythologiecomparee.hautetfort.com/archive/2016/05/04/nick-j-allen-why-the-telemachy-vy%C4%81sa-s-answer-5797402.html>>, accessed 4 June 2023, highlights the fact that Nestor's piety is here emphasized, while in the *Iliad* it wasn't particularly in evidence.

Olympian Zeus must be like this inside – there is such a huge amount of everything: awe comes over me as I look at it.

Telemachus is amazed by the wealth of Menelaus' palace, which plays an important and significant role in the episode. Norman Austin made an interesting observation on this fact:

The contrast between Pylos and Sparta is remarkable. . . Now the setting is a palace, and the palace itself becomes a significant part of this experience. . . The communal life in the palace is as elaborate and impressive as the architecture. The whole palace is a hive of activity; a wedding feast is in progress when Telemachos arrives, with a singer, dancers, and acrobats providing entertainment.<sup>43</sup>

In Pylos we were given almost no description of the setting. We only knew that the heroes were at first on the shore and then they moved to the palace, where little information was given of the scenario, such as the mention of Nestor's throne – not as an ornamental detail, but one with the function of highlighting the king's old age and his royal lineage (3.404–12). In Sparta, *au contraire*, the abundance of descriptions is overwhelming. The exhibition of wealth is a prominent motif.<sup>44</sup>

Menelaus explains the origin of much of that wealth, mentioning some details about his return from Troy, the second longest after Odysseus'. He says he was in Cyprus, Phoenicia, Libya, Egypt, and other places, where he gathered many goods. In his account, he pays particular attention to pastoral details, such as in the description of Libya (4.84–9):

Αἰθίοπας θ' ἰκόμην καὶ Σιδονίους καὶ Ἐρεμβούς  
καὶ Λιβύην, ἵνα τ' ἄρνες ἄφαρ κεραοὶ τελέθουσι.  
τρὶς γὰρ τίκτει μῆλα τελεσφόρον εἰς ἐνιαυτόν·  
ἔνθα μὲν οὔτε ἄναξ ἐπιδευῆς οὔτε τι ποιμὴν  
τυροῦ καὶ κρειῶν οὔδ' ἄλκυροιο γάλακτος,  
ἀλλ' αἰεὶ παρέχουσιν ἐπηετανὸν γάλα θῆσθαι.

And I came to the Ethiopians, Sidonians, and Erembi, and Libya, where lambs become horned straightaway: for the sheep give birth three times for the year's full cycle. There neither king nor shepherd goes without cheese and meat, or sweet milk, but they always provide ample milk to be drawn for them.

<sup>43</sup> Austin (n. 29), 186.

<sup>44</sup> One can notice, for instance, all the references to banquets scattered throughout the episode (*Od.* 4.41 55–9, 65–7, 213–18, 620–3). S. Said, *Homer and the Odyssey* (Oxford, 2011), 140–8, commenting on the passage, emphasizes the contrast between Sparta and Pylos in terms of Menelaus' wealth – displayed in his palace and in his gifts – and of Nestor's piety.



Here the happiness of the Libyans is expressed in terms of pastoral prosperity. Further on, Helen arrives at the halls where the guests are dining, and she joins the conversation as well. She is said to be ‘similar to Artemis’, and she too, like her husband, is connoted by the abundance of gifts and goods that she has brought to Sparta (4.121–36).

Besides the banquets, another relevant feature asserted in Book 4 is the bestowing of gifts. At Helen’s entrance to the hall, we are told of the gifts she and Menelaus received in Egypt (4.123–32). Later on, Menelaus will take great care in offering enough adequate gifts to Telemachus before he leaves (4.589–92), while in Pylos there were no gifts, and the young man left only with some borrowed horses.<sup>45</sup>

When Telemachus tells the reason for his visit, he specifies that at home the suitors are consuming his possessions (4.318–20):

ἔσθιεταιί μοι οἶκος, ὄλωλε δὲ πύονα ἔργα,  
 δυσμενέων δ’ ἀνδρῶν πλείους δόμος, οἳ τέ μοι αἰεὶ  
 μῆλ’ ἀδινὰ σφάζουσι καὶ εἰλίποδας ἔλικας βοῦς.

My house is being eaten up, the rich fields are being ruined, and the house is full of my enemies, who are always slaughtering masses of my sheep and shambling black cattle.

Telemachus here focuses on his house and lands, his herds of sheep and oxen. Significantly, if we turn back to the same account in Pylos, the main point was the suitors’ *hubris* (3.205–7):

αἱ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τοσσήνδε θεοὶ δύναμιν περιθειέν,  
 τείσασθαι μνηστήρας ὑπερβασιῆς ἀλεγεινῆς,  
 οἳ τέ μοι ὑβρίζοντες ἀτάσθαλα μηχανόωνται.

If only the gods would invest me with as much strength, for me to punish the suitors for their painful transgression; they are violent and are laying wicked plans against me.

The ‘painful transgression’ is the suitors’ *hubris* (ὑβρίζοντες); ‘as much strength’ refers to Orestes, whose example Telemachus is eager to emulate. Indeed, Menelaus, too, makes a comparison between the two young princes (4.546–7).

Menelaus, Helen, and their palace are good representatives of the third of our three categories: productivity and economy. The marriages have first of all a reproductive function; the feasts and banquets aim to exhibit wealth, as do the gifts, which are an essential part of Homeric economy.

<sup>45</sup> See Austin (n. 29), 186.

Helen's daughter is compared to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and, therefore, of reproduction and fertility.<sup>46</sup> Helen herself was the gift of Aphrodite to Paris in the *Iliad*'s background myth (*Il.* 24.25–30). Here in the *Odyssey* (4.122) she is compared to Artemis, whose epithet χρυσηλακάτω seems to mean 'with golden distaff' in this particular context, linking her particularly to the semantic field of craftsmanship, therefore productivity.<sup>47</sup>

At the end of the book, Menelaus acknowledges Telemachus' manners and skills in speaking, and attributes them to his nobility of birth (4.611–12). In the same way as Nestor had already done before him, Menelaus confirms the young prince's royal character.

What conclusions can we draw from all these considerations? Telemachus has undertaken a journey during which, through examples of good *basileis*, he has been introduced to the heroic world and its manners. The gradual awakening of his royal prerogatives started in Ithaca, thanks to Athena's first encouragement, in the first confrontation with the suitors and other Ithacans. He then moved to Pylos, where he became acquainted with the treatment of gods and eloquence, thanks to Nestor and Peisistratus' examples. Finally, in Sparta, he had the opportunity to appreciate the wealth and prosperity of the heroic world at peace, resultant from the good ways of government that Telemachus' *exempla* represent.<sup>48</sup>

Telemachus can now be sure that following Nestor's and Menelaus' examples, confirming some characteristics he already had, he will be able to be a good *basileus*. Nevertheless, he still cannot be it. One fundamental requirement is still missing: the warrior function. This aspect of the Homeric *basileus* was highly insisted on at the beginning of the *Odyssey*, when Telemachus was in Ithaca. In fact, it would be

<sup>46</sup> In Dumézil's interpretation, Aphrodite was representative of the third function in the myth of the choice of Paris. See G. Dumézil, *Mythe et épopée* (n. 19), 580–6.

<sup>47</sup> On this unique use of χρυσηλακάτω, see S. West, 'Book IV: Commentary', in Heubeck, West, and Hainsworth (n. 27), 201: 'In Homer exclusively an epithet of Artemis (cf. *Il.* xvi 183, xx 70). The distaff is not readily associated with Artemis, and some ancient scholars argued that ἡλακάτη could be used for "arrow", and interpreted χρυσηλάκατος correspondingly (cf. ἰοχέαιρα). But the almost immediately following reference to Helen's χρυσέη ἡλακάτη (131) surely implies that the poet of the *Odyssey*... gave the epithet what seems its obvious sense, "with golden distaff"; it seems to have been similarly interpreted by Pindar, who applies it to Amphitrite, the Nereids and Leto, (*O.* vi 104, *N.* v 36; vi 36).' See also O. S. Due, 'The Meaning of the Homeric Formula χρυσηλάκατος κελαδεινή', *C&M* 26 (1965), 1–10.

<sup>48</sup> Clarke (n. 3), 140–1, n. 16: 'The Telemachus whom Odysseus meets in XVI has been abroad in the heroic world and has come to appreciate personally the glories of a settled kingdom enjoying the benefits of order and prosperity.'

more accurate to state that the *absence* of the warrior element was explicitly highlighted in our introductory books.

Since the first appearance of Athena to the young prince, the goddess has been presented as a warrior (1.99–101). When she arrives at the palace in Ithaca, she lays her ‘warrior spear’ (ἄλκιμον ἔγχος) near to Odysseus’ (1.126–9). This gesture subtly suggests that the goddess shares her warrior trait with Telemachus’ father. Further on, Athena speaks of Odysseus as a warrior, seeing him as the only solution against the suitors (1.255–66). She then suggests for the first time that Telemachus should follow Orestes’ example to achieve the same *kleos* as him, one based on a violent action, implemented by force. Telemachus, too, like Orestes, must be ἄλκιμος, that is, ‘brave’ in a warrior sense (1.301–2), something that Telemachus still is not. The warrior element is absent in him, and this fact is emphasized in the course of the narrative by the contrast with Athena (in the guise of a Taphian warrior), by the memory of Odysseus’ qualities, and by Orestes’ example.

But if Nestor and Menelaus can only reassure the young prince on the importance of piety and wealth, who is going to be his *exemplum* for the warrior skills he is lacking? The most obvious answer can be the right answer in this case: his father, Odysseus. We may notice, at this point, the importance of the parallel with Odysseus in the formation of the heroic identity of the young prince. The fact that Telemachus’ ultimate term of comparison is his father is suggested by the single narrative structures of Book 3 and Book 4. In both, the accounts about Odysseus have a central position, between an introduction and an end highly connoted by the characteristics of each book (that is, piety in the third, feasts and wealth in the fourth).<sup>49</sup> It is precisely from those accounts that Telemachus can learn about his father’s ‘action and speech’, and take him as an *exemplum*. Certainly, not only Nestor, but both Menelaus and Helen compare Telemachus to Odysseus (even before his identity is revealed to them).

Indeed, Odysseus is constantly described as a warrior not only in the first four books, but in the course of the whole poem.<sup>50</sup> He has been one of the generals during the Trojan war. Despite the fact that he is not the

<sup>49</sup> See S. Bertman, ‘The *Telemachy* and Structural Symmetry’, *TAPhA* 97 (1966), 15–27; E. F. Cook, ‘Structure as Interpretation in the Homeric *Odyssey*’, in D. Cairns and R. Scodel (eds.), *Defining Greek Narrative* (Edinburgh, 2014), 83–6.

<sup>50</sup> See in general Privitera (n. 27).

same kind of warrior as Achilles, whose best quality is his *bie* ('force'), one of the main themes of the *Odyssey* is the presentation of the protagonist's particular ability, his *metis* ('guile'), as an equal quality for an epic warrior and hero.<sup>51</sup> In the younger poem we can observe a sort of 'revision of the heroic "ideal"', as Heath wrote, insofar as it shows a post-war world.<sup>52</sup>

So Telemachus is often matched to his father's qualities, and particularly to his *metis* or *dolos* ('trickery'; for instance in 3.118–25). This link is already present in Athena's suggestion, when the goddess for the first time establishes the parallel between Telemachus and Orestes: Telemachus must kill the suitors ἢ ἐ δόλῳ ἢ ἀμφοδόν, that is, 'by craft or openly' (1.296). Some scholars have indeed insisted on the fact that the ultimate goal in Telemachus' growth is to become 'cunningly intelligent' like his father. He must become *pepnumenos*, or *polumekhanos* ('full of contrivances'), this consisting primarily of knowing when to use his speech and action (*ergon te kai epos*) correctly and effectively, and when to hide his intentions instead.<sup>53</sup> That was exactly his problem in front of the suitors in the first assembly in Ithaca: despite his intentions and his discourse, he did not accomplish anything, apart from being mocked by Antinous (2.85–6).

It seems clear, then, that the ultimate scope of Athena's plan was to make a warrior out of the young, weak prince, after having introduced him to the heroic world at peace. This would have been necessary for the decisive moment of the revenge against the suitors, which Telemachus would have had to carry out with or without his father (1.265–97).<sup>54</sup> Since the first books, though, one could deduce that the young prince would have joined his father in the final revenge. In particular, it was the omen of the two eagles sent to Telemachus by Zeus, and interpreted by Halitherses (2.146–67), that suggested the

<sup>51</sup> On *metis* as a heroic and warrior quality, see G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans. Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore, London, 1979), 42–58; Griffin (n. 41), 78–80; Privitera (n. 27), 20–31. Particularly significant is the combination of *metis* and warrior powers in the figure of the goddess Athena, who is Telemachus' guide in the *Telemachy*. On the warrior *metis* of the goddess, see M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Chicago, London, 1991), 179–83.

<sup>52</sup> Heath (n. 27), 144–5. Odysseus, in Heath's argument, is more than a fighter, thus Telemachus must take the example of a more complex type of warrior than that of the *Iliad*, he must become also ingenious and *pepnumenos* like his father.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. mostly Heath (n. 27); Austin (n. 27), 51 ff. See also de Jong (n. 27), 27–9, on Orestes and Odysseus as *exempla* for Telemachus.

<sup>54</sup> See Rose (n. 27), 393, who argued that the fundamental reason for Telemachus' journey is the preparation of his revenge.

final united position of father and son in the killing of the suitors, although at that point the final result of Telemachus' growth was only subtly hinted at by the poet.<sup>55</sup>

We now have the answer to our initial question: Why can Telemachus not be king? Because of his lack of those warrior skills and attitudes that a *basileus* must show. On his return to Ithaca from the Peloponnese, we can see a different Telemachus, more responsible and independent, who is now sure of his lineage and of his duties.<sup>56</sup> With this new attitude he is ready to complete his maturation, meeting his father and joining him as a worthy ally against the suitors. Indeed, once reunited with Odysseus in Ithaca, Telemachus will see and experience not only the use of his *metis*, but also of violence in battle against enemies (even though in particular circumstances for a battle).<sup>57</sup> The absence of the warrior element will be then finally filled in, and Telemachus will have met all the requirements.

So, the *Telemachy* might indeed represent a sort of education or growth for Odysseus' son, who is introduced to the heroic world he belongs to. This education is carried out by examples of good kingship, observed by the young prince, organized into three groups of functional requirements: the warrior skills, the sacred and 'civic' functions, and the economic status. Naturally, Telemachus' *paideusis* is not all what the first four books of the *Odyssey* are about, but it seems to be a significant theme, and one worthy of consideration in regard to our conceptions of Homeric kingship.

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<sup>55</sup> See Dawe (n. 2), 102–3 *ad loc.*: 'The incident of a *pair* of eagles manifestly intended to be Odysseus and Telemachos.' But see also West (n. 47), 142: 'The numerical element, when there is one, is important in omens; yet Halitherses speaks as if only a single eagle had appeared. The poet cannot allow him to be too specific; a solemn warning against the vulnerable Telemachos would create difficulties in the development of the story at this point.'

<sup>56</sup> See Millar and Carmichael (n. 25), 61–2.

<sup>57</sup> See Privitera (n. 27), 259–65. Nagy (n. 51), ch. 20, highlights the fact that Odysseus and Telemachos must use *bie* as well as *metis* to kill the suitors, who had admitted to being inferior in *bie*. Loma (n. 27), 30–5, argues that the fight against the suitors represents Telemachos' warrior initiation, one that, on the other hand, the suitors themselves had never achieved.